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## Kevin Volans and Hilary Bracefield

# A Constant State of Surprise: Gerald Barry and *The Intelligence Park*

Less than a week before the paste-up of this issue of *Contact*, Adrian Jack, Director of the MusICA series at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, announced that 'after one postponement of our production [of Gerald Barry's opera *The Intelligence Park*] originally intended for later this year, it is evident that we still cannot guarantee the necessary funding for a run in April 1988, so I have cancelled the project'. Jack has also tendered his resignation as Director of MusICA.

We looked down the list of prices in the [Irish] Arts Council shopping basket for new works. The most money you got was for an opera, so we decided we'd write an opera.<sup>1</sup>

Thus says Gerald Barry of the beginning of his collaboration with his librettist Vincent Deane, and after some six years of intensive work between them, without any definite commission, the opera, *The Intelligence Park*, is now nearing completion and was due to have been performed at the ICA in spring 1988.<sup>2</sup>

This contradiction between an ostensibly cavalier attitude and great personal commitment – an apparent gap between intention and execution – illustrates a trait in the composer's work which emerged in his student days in Cologne. Barry was born in County Clare in Ireland on 28 April 1952. He graduated with a BMus degree from University College, Dublin, in 1973 and then studied for just over a year with Piet Kee (organ) and Peter Schat (composition) in Amsterdam. After completion of an MA at University College, Dublin, in September 1975 he moved to Cologne, at that time a city of immense musical activity. The dominant figures at the Musik-hochschule were Stockhausen and Kagel; Barry studied with both. But this small city boasted some 150 composers and a vigorous concert life in which, beside the normal concert repertoire, there was a strong representation of contemporary American music, as well as European medieval, Far Eastern and African musics, all regularly performed by resident or visiting groups. In addition, a minor stylistic revolution – later to be misnamed the New Simplicity – was incipient among several young composers (Michael von Biel, Kevin Volans and Walter Zimmermann among others). It was a place in which a student of composition could easily lose his way.

Barry made his choices rapidly and sure-footedly. He rejected the dogmatism of serialism with its heavy diet of Germanic diligence and prepared surprises, but also mistrusted what he interpreted as the minimalists' bland pursuit of predictability (while noting the usefulness of transparency and clarity of texture). So, pausing only to gather a handful of techniques for generating musical material (pitches in particular), he headed for the theatre.

### Reversals and inversions

Here he developed his own techniques of what might be called unpredictable reversals and inversions. Some of his first efforts were effective, but perhaps patchy. For example, the piece *Beethoven WoO 80* of 1976 for five singers and three pianos is a veritable catalogue of reversals: a set of theatrical cameos based on Beethoven's C minor Variations for piano. It begins with the curtain calls: sopranos, tenor and basses, in full costume, come on and take their bows in elaborately choreographed opera-house style. What could be silly turns out to be a surprisingly fresh parody of the tripping contrary movement of the first few variations. Later on, the mezzo-soprano is discovered singing literally upside down: less subtle, but nevertheless disturbing.<sup>3</sup>

But inversion is perhaps more of a literary than a visual device, and it forms, moreover, the basis of a great deal of Irish wit. Witness the story of the people seeking permission to climb the hills on a farm who were told by the farmer's wife: 'Sure, you may as well. They've been idle long enough.'

So it is not surprising that Barry's first mature music-theatre piece had a literary base: not, as one might expect, Irish, but Japanese. For *Things That Gain by Being Painted*, a virtuoso *tour de force* for soprano, cello, piano and concealed speaking voice written in 1977, Barry extracted passages from *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shōnagon. This is a collection of short texts ranging from the poetic to the comic, the subtle to the ridiculous, and expressing opinions on every subject under the sun; it was written by a lady-in-waiting at the court of the Emperor of Japan towards the end of the 10th century AD. It provided Barry with a perfect vehicle for his own musical wit.

Mock orientalism is all but banished from the start – perhaps the only trace to be found is in the speaker concealed behind a screen – and Barry plunges us straight into the piece: the soprano, impersonating Shōnagon, is engaged in a (spoken) tirade against parents who encourage their sons to waste their talents by becoming priests. (In one performance the shock effect was heightened by this being delivered in a raw Texan accent, in another in a broad Dublin brogue.) Yet the real Shōnagon was no fishwife: her work is regarded as a pinnacle of refinement in Japanese literary style. Barry presents the divergent qualities of her writing separately: what appears at first to be a melodrama is, in fact, the polarisation between the soprano's 'hard hat' spoken delivery on the one hand and the serene and elegant instrumental music on the other. The cello plays a high flowing chromatic line; the piano accompanies it with restrained staccato triads –

Example 1 *Things that Gain by Being Painted*, bars 11-13

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for the SINGER, with lyrics written in a cursive hand. The lyrics are: "(Firmly and automatically) On the first day of the First Month and on the third of the third I like the sky to be perfectly clear. On the fifth of the Fifth Month I prefer a cloudy sky". The middle staff is for the CELLO, showing a melodic line with various intervals, slurs, and triplets. The bottom staff is for the PIANO, showing a sparse accompaniment with some chords and rests.

little more than dotting the 'i's' and crossing the 't's' (Example 1). In a sense, Barry has set content against style.

But further surprises are in store. The soprano suddenly starts to punctuate her spoken narrative with high A's and D's. As these sung notes proliferate and become entwined with the instrumental parts, one gains a converse impression: that of a *coloratura* soprano who is prevented from singing by having too much to say. From being mistress of the situation, she gradually takes on the quality of a ventriloquist's doll, subject to the control of the mysterious voice behind the screen who announces the topics on which she is to comment. This Svengali-like part gains ascendancy; at one point the soprano merely mouths a long passage spoken from behind the screen, on another occasion she sings a sustained note while being verbally attacked in a text originally written by Shōnagon's arch-rival at court, Lady Murasaki. Further struggles for supremacy are evident when the piano bursts forth in a virtuoso cadenza, only to be shouted down by the singer. But wit and good humour are never far beneath the surface and, as in all Barry's music, theatricality is prevented from degenerating into 'staginess' by the sheer vitality, elegance and inventiveness of his handling of the material.

With *Things that Gain by Being Painted* Barry had settled into some of the general features of his compositional style: a learned wit, a narrative but unpredictable sense of structure and an original handling of tonal material. What started as simple inversion (as in *Beethoven WoO 80*) has become a more subtle form of double reflexive statement, as, for example, in Shōnagon's sole comment on the subject of trees – 'Trees. I shall say absolutely nothing about the spindle tree!' – which tells us a great deal about Shōnagon's wit, but is tantalisingly enigmatic. Equally enigmatic is Barry's comment on two-piano music, the piece with the non-verbal title  $\phi$  (1979). This title is teasing enough, but the most remarkable feature of the piece is that the pianos play identical material throughout. Is this an 'orchestral' piece for two pianos, or is Barry ruthlessly pointing out a major drawback of two-piano music? Two pianos can never play exactly together and they're never exactly in tune: if they could and if they were, it wouldn't be two-piano music. (One is reminded of the student defending his use of note rows to Morton Feldman: 'You can't make something out of nothing', and Feldman's reply: 'I don't know about that . . .').

### The handling of pitch material

Barry's developing sense of the original in handling tonality is also evident in the pitch material of  $\phi$ . The pianos play a single line throughout, which is articulated in three different ways, as shown in Example 2. The pitches of this line are derived from the Irish folk tune *Bonny Kate*. As Deane has shown,<sup>4</sup> Barry takes the original tune and adds on either side of each note two pitches, a tone above and below, thus producing a new melody in which the original is buried unrecognisably (Example 3).

It would be easy to read political meanings into Barry's use of an Irish folk tune, but (as in his later use of passing chords from Bach chorales in *The Intelligence Park*) this kind of derivation is simply a device for generating appropriate pitches with which to work. The key word here is 'appropriate'. The new tune created by the addition of new pitches provides Barry with just the right kind of meandering line, with fluctuating harmonic suggestions, long arches and (implied) delayed cadences. This is not fortuitous and, furthermore, the technique is not mechanically applied: note the semitone step to D sharp in the fifth group of Example 3, which avoids undue emphasis on the important note E too early in the constructed line, as well as adding to the attractively undulating quality of the new melody.

Barry has also used this same set of pitches in other works. It was used for the orchestral score of the ballet *Unkrautgarten* (1980), written for the German choreographer Reinhild Hoffmann, and as a basis for the virtuoso piano piece *Sur les Pointes* (1981) which derives in part from the ballet. The title *Sur les Pointes* (On points) is, of course, a ballet term, but it could just as well mean 'on your toes'. The briskly poised *staccatissimo* rhythm of the opening stumbles occasionally with the addition of a half-beat rest. The tonality is alternately established, then undermined, by every second or third chord. (Barry's facility for harmony, along with his preference for parallel chords and parallel instrumental doubling, could be ascribed to his training as an organist.) The light eccentricity of the opening gives way, however, to a more menacing leadenness, which precedes a manic outburst of rattling octaves and extremely rapid repeated chords. The demands on the pianist (at one point beating out some 60 notes per second) can really be met only by a machine, and indeed a pianola was a source of inspiration for the piece. But the image is more of eccentricity

Example 2(a)  $\phi$ , page 1 (extract)

Musical score for Example 2(a), page 1 (extract). The score is for two pianos, Piano I and Piano II. Both parts are marked *Legato* and have a tempo of  $\text{♩} = c. 96$ . The music is written in treble clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes.

2(b)  $\phi$ , page 6 (extract)

Musical score for Example 2(b), page 6 (extract). The score is for two pianos, Piano I and Piano II. Both parts are marked *ff* and have a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 132$ . The music is written in treble clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score includes dynamic markings *sfz* and *sfz (simile)*, and a *Pedal* marking. The texture is dense with many notes.

2(c)  $\phi$ , page 9 (extract)

Musical score for Example 2(c), page 9 (extract). The score is for two pianos, Piano I and Piano II. Both parts are marked *fff* and have a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 168$ . The music is written in treble clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score includes dynamic markings *sfz* and *sfz (simile)*. The texture is very dense with many notes.

Example 3 Pitch material for  $\phi$ . The folk tune *Bonny Kate* is written in black notes; added pitches in white

Musical score for Example 3, showing pitch material for  $\phi$ . The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes. The original folk tune *Bonny Kate is written in black notes, and added pitches are written in white.*

Example 4(a) *Sur les Pointes*, page 6 (extract)

4(b) *Sur les Pointes*, page 13 (extract)

defective machinery, struggling at first to squeeze out a few chords, then suddenly spewing forth more material than it (or the audience) can handle. It is reminiscent of Jean Tinguely's automatic painting machine, which on its debut was powered by too energetic a cyclist, with the result that the audience was engulfed in yard upon yard of freshly painted paper (Example 4).

### Individuality of style

The world of clockwork mechanics, cardboard cutouts and in general an 18th-century sense of the theatre, in which overt artifice is as much part of the charm as genuine illusion, has long been an interest of Barry's. Precedents for his music are more readily found in the 18th century than in the recent past. Handel is one of Barry's favourite composers: he admires his transparent textures and what he calls his 'passion of abandon'. But it is really more the literature of the 18th century that springs to mind when discussing Barry's work, and the writings of the Irish-born Laurence Sterne in particular. The parallels one could draw with Sterne are legion: his intolerance of stuffiness or pretension, his wit, his continual sallies beyond the bounds of the medium and his refusal to do the obvious or even the moderately reasonable. Take only the titles of two of his books: *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, which never gets to Italy, and *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, which tells little of the life and nothing of the opinions of its hero. Similarly, Barry composes a two-piano piece which could more reasonably be performed by one player at a single piano ( $\phi$ ), a piano concerto in which the soloist's virtuoso part is at times overwhelmed by the *fortissimo* single notes of a pianist within the orchestra (*A Piano Concerto* of 1977), or narrative pieces, often in the form of elaborate *crescendi*, that lead nowhere ('Chorale II' from *Four Chorales* of 1984, further discussed below). It is not necessary for the music to 'go' anywhere. The pleasure lies in the conversation on the way, the artistry in handling the language. Thus there is elaboration

rather than development, and the structures are episodic rather than lyrical. In this respect, Barry has been able to develop a style which owes little to the main streams of musical thought we have inherited from the 19th century. By constructing a musical style which relates to the traditions of Hiberno-English literature, he has made a unique contribution to contemporary composition; this style is given its fullest expression to date in the opera *The Intelligence Park*.

### Origins of the opera

After completing *Sur les Pointes* in 1981, Barry, now back in Ireland after six years on the Continent (including a further year of study with Friedrich Cerha in Vienna in 1977-8 and another period back in Cologne), began work with his librettist Deane on the 'shopping-basket' opera. For a composer so interested in allusion and wit, in balance and clarity but also in unpredictability, a more appropriate librettist could hardly be found. Deane, who is best described as an Irish man of letters, had as his starting-point 'a series of visual images: static figures bathed in the inhospitable clear light of the 18th-century Enlightenment'.<sup>5</sup> Part of the background was the true story of the famous Italian castrato Giusto Tencucci, who after considerable success in Dublin in 1766 absconded with a young lady from Limerick, only to be pursued by her outraged relatives and eventually flung into prison. This incident became the germ of the actual plot of *The Intelligence Park* which is set in 1753.

The original meaning of an 'intelligence park' is a zoo, a menagerie: an exhibition of nature domesticated, caged and catalogued. So, of course, are the characters of an opera imprisoned in its setting and put on view for our inspection. Deane says that there is no particular reason for the opera to be set in 1753 except that Bishop Berkeley, the Irish-born philosopher, died at the beginning of the year, and that there was an eclipse of the sun at its end. Death in its literal and figurative senses is a theme of the opera; the mention of Berkeley's death at the beginning helps to give it a time-scale, and the solar eclipse accompanies the

climax of the last act, which also includes a death. One may also note that 1753 was the second year of Britain's new-style calendar and thus the 'beginning' of the 'modern era'.

### The plot and its arrangement

The slight story of Tenducci is used as a basis for the plot, but is extended with the addition of more characters. The first scene is set in the home of Robert Paradies, a composer (baritone), who has arrived back in Dublin from travels abroad with his companion d'Esperaudieu (tenor) on account of the death of his father, whose estate he cannot inherit until he has married. Work on his opera – with its two characters Wattle, a warrior, and Daub, an enchantress – has come to a dead stop. The scene changes to the house of a wealthy magistrate, Sir Joshua Cramer (bass-baritone), where Paradies, a reluctant suitor, has come with d'Esperaudieu to meet Cramer's daughter Jerusha (soprano). A chorus of 'dummies' discourses on the Dublin scene. Jerusha can only think of her next music lesson with the celebrated visiting castrato Serafino (counter-tenor), who eventually enters with his companion Faranesi (sung by a mezzo-soprano). Paradies rises to leave, having decided he cannot go through with the marriage; on hearing Serafino sing, he appears to fall in love with the beauty of his voice. As he and d'Esperaudieu journey through the Dublin streets, Paradies finds that his muse has returned, and back in his room he begins writing again. His characters Wattle and Daub come to life (sung throughout by the same soprano and counter-tenor respectively); Wattle is, like his creator, bound in love to an enchanter.

In Act 2, some months later, a game of blind man's buff between Serafino, Faranesi and Jerusha at Cramer's house suggests a growing attraction between Serafino and Jerusha, though Cramer is still planning her marriage to Paradies. Paradies himself can think of nothing but the writing of his opera and of Serafino. After Cramer has burst in on him with news of the disappearance of Serafino and Jerusha, Paradies breaks down.

Act 3 opens with a prelude: a series of dislocating visions or tableaux in which the events of the story and their consequences (yet to happen) are swiftly depicted. D'Esperaudieu reminds Paradies of his now considerable debts; Serafino sings in prison; Cramer appears from a coffin planning to entrap the elopers; Serafino is abducted (in dumb-show). In the first scenes of the act, we find that Cramer's ruse of pretending to forgive Serafino and Jerusha has worked; Serafino is imprisoned and Jerusha sent to relatives in the country. Paradies goes to Cramer to plead for the pair, finding him and the 'dummies' at a feast, during which there is an eclipse of the sun. As the eclipse happens, Cramer sickens and dies of an apoplexy. He attempts to leave all his wealth to Paradies, who cries that he wants no part of it. As Paradies prepares to leave Dublin, Serafino and Jerusha are transformed into Wattle and Daub. They, too, must part. The opera is over.

Deane arranges this scenario in three classically balanced acts: Act 1 moves from morning to noon to night; Act 2 takes place halfway through the year; and the action of Act 3, at the end of the year, is a mirror image, a shadow, of that of Act 1. The libretto also balances set-piece scenes with exchanges between two or three characters and solo sections. Some of the latter

are obviously suitable for setting as arias, including three actually labelled as 'ice-cream arias', after the 18th-century convention of a song sung during a refreshment break. The formal arias of Serafino are in Italian, as is the 'internal' opera of Wattle and Daub, thus setting it against the 'external' one. The apparently simple narrative, although still retaining a hard-edged clarity and economy of means, is clothed in rich language, full of imagery, allusion, quotation, wit, anachronism and anagram.

It is perhaps important to point out that despite the 'historical' setting, neither Deane nor Barry had any intention of writing an opera in a pastiche 18th-century style. Indeed for Barry himself, the plot and setting were of minor importance. Nonetheless, one can see that he would be attracted to a story that focuses on a composer in the throes of composition, and a libretto that dwells on such themes as patronage, creativity, inspiration and obsession, and delights in ambiguities about love, sex and death, and the nature of the creative act.

With such richness to set, Barry could easily have allowed the libretto to overwhelm the music. His own musical integrity, however, never allows this to happen. Rather as Merce Cunningham and John Cage prepare dance and music for a performance separately and then let the conjunction work as it will, Barry pursued his own musical invention for the opera, then let the text join the music as suitably as it might. This could have led to problems. 'People may accuse me of not setting the libretto but attacking it', he says. But his attitude to the text is in line with the need in Barry to keep himself, as he says, 'in a constant state of surprise', dealing with each moment as it comes. For him, as his earlier works already show, it is more fun to travel than to arrive. But the libretto in any case contains the sort of allusion and surprise that he needs, and both composer and librettist have the same goals of coolness of style and transparency of texture. In fact, given a text that can be studied with pleasure in its own right and music that is written to stand up on its own, it will be interesting to see how the further impact of designer, director and cast on the pre-existent material will add to an already heady brew.

The pre-existent material they have is a chamber opera, with six singers and an ensemble of thirteen players: flute + piccolo, oboe, two clarinets + bass clarinets, bassoon + contrabassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, piano, violin, viola, cello and double bass. With these resources, Barry cleverly covers every range of vocal and instrumental timbre, while allowing for interesting parallel doublings and chords. By keeping the number of singers to six, he has to double the parts of Serafino and Jerusha with those of Wattle and Daub in the 'internal' opera. This, though, serves to add to the ambiguity of all four characters, as well as mingling the life of Paradies, the composer (or 'puppet master', as he refers to himself at one point), with that of Wattle, the hero in his own opera, through the medium of his hoped-for interpreter, Serafino. Equally pragmatically, Barry turns the impracticality of using a chorus in the two big set-piece scenes in Cramer's house to good effect by deciding to use mute dummies on stage and by pre-recording the chorus music using the voices of the six soloists. Once having introduced the device, he inserts taped sections in other places with considerable effect. A further pragmatic solution to practical problems occurs when the musical line Barry wants moves out of the compass of the given singer. The composer's response is quite simply to allow another

suitable voice to help out for a few notes. This is, however, an extreme solution: he already demands considerable virtuosity from the singers and instrumentalists he has at his disposal.

### The Bach pitch source

But the starting-point for Barry was the pitch material. A set of pitches from a new source was needed, capable of generating a large amount of music, as he relates in conversation with one of the authors of the present article:

For some reason [Vincent and I] came independently to this idea of Lutheran music, chorales, and I always used to listen to the broadcasts on Radio 3 of Church of England services, and I just loved the whole ritual – so I decided that all the harmonies of the opera should be based on the passing notes of Bach's harmonisations of these chorales. You know what I mean – the chords formed by the passing notes. I extracted each chord, say in maybe fifty chorales, and I wrote out the chords, in series. And so I simply used them in all kinds of ways, horizontally, vertically, diagonally, etcetera – you know, the old Cologne techniques [laugh]. They're sometimes played extremely fast, flying by like the wind, as if Bach were flipping through a chorale book. It's also rather like a dizzy theological whirl, since in, say, about ten seconds, you might pass through forty chorales . . . it's probably safe to say that almost all of the harmony of the opera will have at some remove its origin in the original Bach, so from that point of view it's organic, held together.<sup>6</sup>

Barry has found this pitch material even more fruitful than he expected at the time of this interview in 1984. Though he will reluctantly leave the pitches aside for works he is planning for 1988, it is possible that he will find himself reaching for them again in the future, for they have not been exhausted. Not all the music of the opera is drawn from the Bach chords, but the composer's other sources are buried so deep within his compositional processes that they are virtually private wellsprings. Music by Arne, Buxtehude, Byrd, Dowland and Handel, among others, has been used as source material; but so, also, have the words of the 12.33 a.m. shipping forecast on BBC Radio 4 with its incantation of strange names and mysterious weather details (see below). But Barry's belief, in 1984, that almost all the material will have at some remove its origin in the chorale chords has been borne out. The number of ways in which the source pitch material can be used is almost limitless. There are two things to be said for the technique: one is that it gives the opera both a tangible and an intangible unity and through that a great musical strength; the other is that in Barry's hands it is never used mechanically. The set of pitches chosen for each section and the way that the pitches are used within it will be worked at until the result is musically satisfying; and to that end, any internal rule used to manipulate them can be broken.

The ways in which each scene or section of *The Intelligence Park* is then set are as diverse as Barry's forces allow. The opera opens with an unaccompanied solo voice; it ends with a unison chorus of all six soloists with chordal accompaniment from the full instrumental ensemble. Textures vary from the accompanying of a solo voice with one instrument in unison to the use of quite complicated chorale-like polyphony in several parts; from simple arpeggio-like instrumental writing to the opposition of hammering ensemble chords against soaring long notes in the voices; there are also instrumental interludes between scenes. The overwhelming movement is, however, homophonic, with voices and instruments moving in

parallel motion. In many of Barry's works, this has had the effect of a constant baroque walking bass, but the tempi and the variety of rhythms are so multifarious in the opera that this will not be the dominant impression; the homophonic texture, together with the singularity of the pitch material, still, however, gives the work a musical style which is original, effective and homogeneous.

### Musical materials and methods

A representative illustration of the music of *The Intelligence Park* can be found in Example 5, a page from Act 3 Scene 2. It falls into two sections: the first busy and fast (bars 580-93), the second simple and slow (bars 594-8). This second section forms the opening of an aria by Paradies.

The scene has in fact begun at bar 534 with a long recitative-like passage for d'Esperaudieu, in which he informs Paradies first of Cramer's trap and then of the fate of Serafino and Jerusha: 'The baggage he despatches to some rustic relatives, your singer he has clapped in gaol there to languish with variety of wretchedness, till the flesh rot from his bones.' From bars 570-9 this is set to music which has the same pitch material, speed (crotchet = 108), metre (mainly simple duple and triple) and dynamic (*fortissimo*) as bars 580-93 in Example 5; but it is only when Paradies joins in at the beginning of the example ('I must help him . . . What day is it?') that the lowest instrumental line also enters, underpinning the change of singer and increasing the textural density. The anguish of Paradies – unable to work on his opera since the disappearance of Serafino, who has become his inspiration – is being transformed into action, as he decides to plead with Cramer for the singer's release. This whole stretch of busy music – from bar 570 when d'Esperaudieu begins to sing of the fate of Serafino to bar 593 when Paradies breaks off – reflects Paradies's inner turmoil, his move to action and the approaching climax of the opera, signposted by d'Esperaudieu's reminder of the forthcoming midday eclipse.

The music for both voices is based on material generated from the Bach passing-note chords, presented in the instrumental ensemble in a dense chordal texture which itself uses passing notes; the melodic line is selected from the ensemble pitches to suit the effect Barry wants. D'Esperaudieu must enunciate clearly his information about the eclipse, and so that word is emphasised by its rising melisma. Paradies's melodic line also rises to its climax ('I need him for my opera'), continuing in falsetto until it breaks off. It is these three falsetto pitches that form the link between this section and his aria which follows (one of the 'ice-cream' arias). There is no other preparation, and the aria uses a new set of pitches, but Barry has been able to relate one section to the next by the articulation of three notes occurring in both sets.

The bizarre, rather dislocated setting of the text here is typical of Barry's operatic method. His concern that the *music* should be strong and able to stand on its own may lead one to suspect that he has been at his most cavalier when putting the libretto to music. He deals with it ruthlessly, even brutally. But in this treatment – at times what the composer calls a 'smashing' of the text – he seems to feel that the words are transformed to produce the particular 'atmosphere' he wants. As Humpty Dumpty said in *Through the Looking Glass*, 'When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.' An element of surprise

Example 5 *The Intelligence Park*, Act 3 Scene 2, bars 580-98

DESPERANDEU

[♩ = 108]

PARADIES

*Dotted 8th note in full score.*

0.

PARADIES

*d=72*

*mp*

*d=72*

*P*

Example 6 Pitch material for *The Intelligence Park*

The image shows musical notation for Example 6. At the top, the words 'N O P S I S A T' are written on a staff. Below this, there are two staves of musical notation. The upper staff is a vocal line with notes corresponding to the words. The lower staff is an instrumental line. A large, hand-drawn circle highlights a section of the instrumental line, containing several chords. Some of these chords are marked with 't' and 'b' symbols, likely indicating tritone and flat relationships. The notation is in a key with one sharp (F#).

enters in Barry's eccentric accentuation of the text, but even at speed it is singable and what he wants us to hear is always clear. This eccentric accentuation and the idiosyncratic fitting of the words to the melodic line can be clearly seen in Example 5.

When Paradies begins to sing of his love for Serafino in the aria 'Blooming, youthful' (the opening of which constitutes the last five bars of Example 5), we see an instance of the deliberate juxtaposition of two types of texture. The tempo slows, the dynamic is quiet and the accompaniment reduces to two lines, one doubling the singer. The pitch material of this aria was generated from the Bach chords via the radio shipping forecast mentioned above; this is illustrated in Example 6. All Barry did was to write out the words of the forecast, use 'musical' letters such as A or E or numbers (1 = unison, 7 = diminished seventh) to trigger an appropriate chord from his page of Bach derivations and fill in chords to the left or right of the triggered chord on this page to accompany 'unmusical' letters. He then had several lines of material with which to work.

For 'Blooming, youthful' he picked out a series of four chords found by applying this procedure to part of the words 'synopsis at' in the forecast. One can see how this material (circled in Example 6) is developed into the instrumental and vocal lines of the aria. The vocal part at first simply uses the tenor line of the chords, while the upper instrumental part doubles the voice and the lower instrumental part uses the bass line of the chords. Though these pitches are later repeated, derivation soon becomes more obscure. The pitches of the voice part, still doubled by the upper instrumental part, appear to oscillate around the G and F sharp to be found in the alto line of the chords. The B naturals, on the other hand, do not obviously derive from the chords at all, while the available B flat in the first chord remains unused. Harmonically, Barry makes use of, for instance, a major seventh, a major sixth and an octave offered by these chords, but not the also available perfect fifths: as always, the material generated is selected and manipulated until the effect he wants is achieved. In this case it is a moment of haunting reflection to end the scene, before a chorus of 'dummies' is heard off-stage during the scene change to Cramer's house for the climax of the opera. (It is curious, by the way, that this chorus begins on B flat, the note studiously avoided, indeed arguably replaced, in the aria itself.)

### Related works and their operatic deployment

As Barry has worked on *The Intelligence Park* over the last six years, he has been able to test out the musical material and the instrumentation in a number of other works, all in fact written between 1984 and 1987, which

have some relationship to the music of the opera. *Cork* for string quartet (which the composer is revising at present) and *Fouetté et Ballon* for organ, two works from 1985, have the least connection, but *Sweet Cork* for two singers and 'early-music' trio (1985), *Swinging Tripes and Trillibubkins* for piano (1986) and *Sweet Punishment* for brass quintet (1987) all use a substantial amount of material from it. (Incidentally, the intriguing title of *Swinging Tripes and Trillibubkins* is a phrase from Cramer's description of the food at the feast he offers to all and sundry just before the eclipse.) Three other works – *Four Chorales*, *What the Frog Said* (both 1984), and *Of Queens' Gardens* (1986) – are of particular significance, either because they work material which is also important to the opera itself, or because they use a similar instrumental ensemble, or both. Of all these pieces, however, only *What the Frog Said* actually sets any words from the libretto, though titles or (in the case of *Four Chorales*) prefixed quotations may come from it.

*Four Chorales* for two pianos was written for Aloys and Alfons Kontarsky; there were originally five but one has been withdrawn. Each chorale is prefixed by a quotation from the opera's libretto, though the musical setting of these words in the opera itself is sometimes quite different from the music of the respective chorale. *What the Frog Said* is scored for soprano, bass and instrumental ensemble. Its ten little movements – some vocal, some purely instrumental – muse on life, lust and death. It deals with a prince who prefers the kisses of an old man to those of the Sleeping Beauty: that is what the frog predicts. The work is not completely based on opera material; the last movement, 'Sir Walter', for example, uses the *Bonny Kate* pitches. *Of Queens' Gardens* is a substantial instrumental work using an ensemble very like that of the opera; sections of its material are particularly prominent in Act 1. Attention can usefully be drawn to some sections of these pieces because the material they have in common with the opera is particularly important to its themes and to its unity. By working on this material independently from the composition of the opera itself, Barry seems to have highlighted its importance for him.

For example, it has been mentioned above that the opera opens with a prelude, an off-stage solo song. This soprano solo (Example 7) is set to a passage from Act 1 which thus becomes a motto for the whole work. In Scene 1 it is Paradies who utters 'A curse on fathers/ and on fathering!', and d'Esperaudieu joins in with 'Amen! A trumpet blast / against the monstrous regiment of fathers!' This passage is at the heart of the machinery of the story; it can, of course, relate to the creative process of the artist as well as heterosexual presumption, and the words set up connotations ranging from the Bible to John Knox, from Sterne to T. S. Eliot.

Barry has already worked through this material in both 'Chorale I' of the *Four Chorales* and *What the Frog Said*. 'Chorale I' is prefixed by the complete text of the above exchange between Paradies and d'Esperaudieu. The chorale itself begins slowly in three-part harmony on piano 1 (Example 8), but after piano 2 has joined in (hammering out the three-part chorale in unison with piano 1), there follows what Barry calls a 'Wienerisch' middle section: in triple time, certainly, but rather too fast to be a waltz. Always remaining *pianissimo*, this accelerates through increasing dislocations of the rhythm to a sudden breaking-off. The relationship of the solo 'Fathers beget' in the opera to 'Chorale I' is

Example 7 *The Intelligence Park*, Prelude to Act 1, bars 1-16

$\text{♩} = c. 60$  Simply - without vibrato.

*mp*

Fathers be- - get, and so must make be- - getting The stiff and pier-  
-cing axel of the world. A curse on fathers and on  
fa- the- ring! A - men! A trumpet blast a - gainst the monstrous  
re- giment of fathers! *Attacca*

Example 8 'Chorale I' from *Four Chorales*, opening

$\text{♩} = c. 54$

8ve.

Piano I *fff*

Ped.

8ve.

revealed if one follows the upper line of the lower staff of Example 8 where the complete solo is articulated as the music continues. *What the Frog Said* actually begins with the complete solo (set to the same words), and follows this movement with a second one which is an ensemble version, complete, of 'Chorale I' of the *Four Chorales*, the solemn opening three-part passage similarly accelerating to destruction. (Barry enjoys offering differently scored versions of existing material: *Sur les Pointes*, for example, exists in several, ranging from piano solo, to orchestral, to choral with orchestral accompaniment.)

The opera's opening off-stage soprano solo is, in fact, an exact reproduction of the solo as it appears in *What*

*the Frog Said*. In addition, Act 3 opens with an ensemble version (similar to that of *What the Frog Said*) of the opening section of 'Chorale I', the three-part harmony of Example 8, thus linking Acts 1 and 3. Though Paradies's actual articulation of the words when they come in Act 1 Scene 1 is different, Barry returns to his original chorale material for d'Esperaudieu's reply. And there are echoes of this material elsewhere in the opera, such as the affecting 'Wienerisch' duet of Serafino and Jerusha in Act 3. Thus this particular musical material is not only well worked out, but seems to permeate the opera on several levels.

After the off-stage soprano 'motto' solo, the opera

Example 9 *The Intelligence Park*, Act 1, bars 17-24

Short score

Example 10 'Chorale II' from *Four Chorales*, bars 1-2

proper opens with an instrumental gesture (Example 9). Once again the material is important to the opera, linking the beginning to the end, for it appears, in augmented form, as the final chorus of Act 3: 'O forte ingrata, e avara!' (Oh thankless and greedy power!). It is this material which Barry uses for the chamber orchestral work *Of Queens' Gardens*. It too opens with the instrumental gesture of Example 9, and goes on to juxtapose driving parallel unisons and octaves in the whole ensemble with quiet sections for solo instruments or instruments in pairs. *Of Queens' Gardens* drives relentlessly to a conclusion; its manipulation of pitches and its experimentation with two-part textures are both important to *The Intelligence Park*. The music of much of the opening section of the instrumental piece has found its way into Act 1, in which Barry contrasts the accompaniment of solo voice by one instrument with passages accompanied by the full ensemble.

Barry's delight in mechanistic music is seen in the second of the *Four Chorales*. It is prefixed with words from the first tableau or 'station' in the prelude to Act 3 of the opera, in which d'Esperaudieu appears, which were used there to set the final moves into action:

Nature inanimate moves to its own Time;  
A secret tremor on the tautened wire,  
The spheres wheel round,  
The silver world awakes.  
Spring whirrs to blossom; lubricated buds  
Unfurl; birds click and chirr; from painted skies  
unfolding clouds release a scented rain.

In 'Chorale II', piano 2 sets up a mechanistic beat of hammered *martellato* chords, each followed by an off-beat hiccup in piano 1 (Example 10). The music lurches into a faster speed, then continues to accelerate; a final *piano* section comes, after a *crescendo*, to a sudden unexpected halt. But in the prelude to Act 3 of the opera, Barry does not follow the obvious path of setting the words to the mechanistic music he tried out in 'Chorale II', using instead a simplistic, triple-time accompaniment to push the words into relief. He still manages, though, to find a place for the 'Chorale II' music in Act 1, at the point when Paradies decides to remain in Dublin and re-commence work on his own opera, himself 'whirring' into action.

The musical material which eventually becomes used in *The Intelligence Park* for the eclipse of the sun offers another instance of the potency of Barry's musical ideas. 'Pallid the sun/ & turbid grows the air:/ Thy soul's imperilled;/ Man, for death prepare . . .', sings the chorus. The frisson of horror one feels as light is sucked from the world is exemplified in a ghostly chorale in two-part counterpoint. It was, in fact, inspired by a solo aria by Buxtehude, which has an accompaniment of unusual bowed string *tremolandi*: *Klagelied* (BuxWV 76/2), music written for the funeral of the composer's father. Barry uses this material in 'Chorale III' of the *Four Chorales*, in the third movement of *What the Frog Said* (in a chilly version for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, piano and *tremolando* strings) and then in the opera itself, the tune at first buried in a homophonic quartet of Faranesi, d'Esperaudieu, Paradies and Cramer at the moment of eclipse, but

emerging in its full version (as in the two related works) in a ghostly song sung, from afar, by the imprisoned Serafino. Again, Barry's previous workings of the material seem to establish how he can use it within the opera, and again it seems to assume some importance and effect when it appears.

The examples discussed above are, however, only illustrations of the diversity of material that *The Intelligence Park* contains, welded together by the underlying unity of the Bach chords and Barry's predominantly homophonic textures. One might expect that the opera will suffer from a bland uniformity; that this seems unlikely to be the case is due to the rhythmic intricacy, subtle harmonic changes, and apt vocal and instrumental colouring already perceivable in the score itself. Moreover, each act has been constructed as a whole, sections or scenes either flowing into one another or, even where apparently unrelated, connected motivically or by the use of identical or related pitch sets. Above all, Barry leaves an impression that his reaction to the story of a composer losing, then re-discovering, his inspiration has resulted in music of power mixed with tenderness and passion.

The works of 1977 to 1981 show Barry developing an individual musical style that, in the chamber works he has continued to write up to 1987, has now become well-established. In *The Intelligence Park* he has been able to apply his musical techniques, his love of the theatrical and his enjoyment of allusion and artifice to a large-scale work in which they create 'a constant state of surprise'. As Paradies, the composer of the opera-within-the-opera, finds when he hears Serafino sing in Act 1, it is by paradox, by an unexpected event, that the creative process can begin:

That voice has silenced silence. I grow blind  
With light and colour, passion is restored me.  
My January blood begins to thaw  
And flows. And flows.

## Selected Works

*This list includes all works which Barry still acknowledges. His compositions are published by Oxford University Press.*

- 1977 Things that Gain by Being Painted, soprano, speaker, cello, piano
- 1977-8 A Piano Concerto, piano and orchestra
- 1979 ———, 3 clarinets (2nd and 3rd + bass clarinets), 2 violas, 2 cellos, piano + harpsichord  
 $\phi$ , two pianos
- 1980 Sleeping Beauty, 4 performers, 5 bass drums, tape  
Unkrautgarten (Weed Garden), ballet, orchestra (on tape)
- 1980-1 Cinderella, music-theatre piece, 3 mime artists, tape  
Snow-white, music-theatre piece, 2 mime artists, tape
- 1981 Au Milieu, piano  
Sur les Pointes, piano
- 1981-7 The Intelligence Park, opera, soprano, mezzo-soprano, counter-tenor, tenor, baritone, bass-baritone, flute + piccolo, oboe, 2 clarinets + bass clarinets, bassoon + contra-bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, piano, violin, viola, cello, double bass
- 1984 What the Frog Said, soprano, bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, piano, violin, viola, cello, double bass  
Four Chorales, two pianos
- 1985 Cork, string quartet  
Sweet Cork, soprano, bass, treble recorder, viol, harpsichord  
Fouetté et Ballon, organ
- 1986 Of Queens' Gardens, flute + piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, marimba + glockenspiel, piano, violin, viola, double bass  
Swinging Tripes and Trillibubkins, piano
- 1987 Sweet Punishment, brass quintet

<sup>1</sup> Kevin Volans, *Summer Gardeners: Conversations with Composers* (Durban: Newer Music Edition, 1985), p.8.

<sup>2</sup> The work was eventually commissioned by the ICA with funds from the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Arts Council of Great Britain.

<sup>3</sup> *Beethoven WoO 80* has been withdrawn by Barry from his list of works available for performance.

<sup>4</sup> Vincent Deane, 'The Music of Gerald Barry', *Soundpost*, no.2 (June/July 1981), pp.14-7.

<sup>5</sup> This and all succeeding unacknowledged quotations come from conversations Hilary Bracefield had with Gerald Barry and Vincent Deane in June, July and August 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Volans, *op.cit.*, pp.6-7.

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