

# contact

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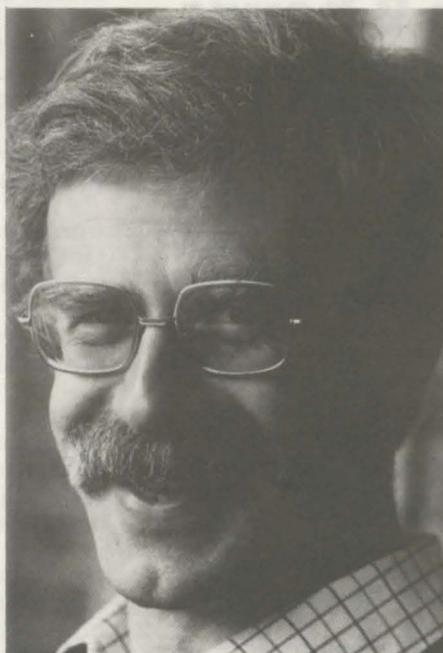
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# Novello Contemporary Composers

## Jonathan Harvey

Born Birmingham, 1939. Educated Repton and St. John's Cambridge. Studied with Erwin Stein and Hans Keller (composition and analysis). Attended Darmstadt, 1966 (contact there with Stockhausen) and a Harkness Fellowship took him to Princeton to study with Babbitt, 1969/70. Reader in Music, Sussex University since 1977. Frequent guest at IRCAM, and will visit MIT in 1987 to study computer music processes.

One of the most significant, respected and internationally performed of British composers, with series of major commissions from important bodies. Unique personal style displaying mastery of all forms, command of the largest forces, conventional and electronic, and total clarity of vision. Major contributions to orchestral, chamber, choral and church music.



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## Chris Newman: A self portrait.

Controversies incorporated takes temporary leave of absence in the present issue; in its place we offer the first of an occasional series of self-portraits, opportunities for composers to present themselves directly, rather than through the intermediary agency of a Contact contributor. Appropriately, the first self-portrait is of a composer whose work regularly extends beyond music to verbal and visual media – poems, prose-pieces, drawings and videos. Chris Newman was born in London in 1958 but has lived in Cologne since 1980. His work regularly divides critical opinion; indeed the decision of Contact's editors to publish the following text was by no means unanimous! When London New Music premiered Newman's ensemble work *Belgium* last season, Andrew Clements' review in *The Financial Times* described the

composer as a 'breath of fresh air, even within the broad church of experimental music' and the music as 'robust' and 'good-humoured'; Meirion Bowen in *The Guardian* found only 'gobbledegook'. Perhaps the last word should go to Michael Finnissy, a regular advocate of Newman's work and Newman's accompanist in performances of *The Moss* and other songs. In an interview with Richard Toop, quoted in *Contact* 32, Finnissy said of Newman's music, 'I feel close to it even if it seems different from anything I'm doing; it's all music that I passionately believe in, and needs hearing and cherishing'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Richard Toop, 'Four Facets of the "New Complexity"', *Contact* 32 (Spring 1988), p. 11.

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C. Newman

## Going to the station twice within 2 hours

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The first time catching a tram at 9.51pm and arriving at the station at around 10pm in order to meet a train at 10.19pm buying a loaf of bread and 4 rolls and an English newspaper in this intervening time, the 19 minutes mentioned, and being sadly disappointed by the content of the train it not carrying that which had been hoped for, been expected, unless the aforementioned had refrained, for some unaccountable reason, from alighting at this station, but had chosen another destination, returning to the tram stop and waiting for the return tram at 10.40pm simultaneously reading the English newspaper earlier bought, boarding that tram and being conveyed to the location at which it had been boarded at 9.51pm, it now being around 10.50pm, returning home by foot, setting off at 11.03pm in the direction of that location of alighting and boarding at 11.11pm arriving at the station at 11.18pm in order to meet the train at 11.19pm but the latter train with the previously mentioned time of arrival being delayed by 50-60 minutes so writing this.

As already mentioned, I use my work to transcend life, my work is made by transcending life, (comma) and with video one has the ability to transcend real life while keeping very close to it, closer to it than with other media. What interests me is to make a picture very close to life in that it represents that which you really see (or I really see) through your (or my) eyes (as opposed to thoughts), it is what you are seeing, you are placed inside the film, and the picture's function is as a catalyst to thought, just as in real life; I am not interested in trying to show or illustrate, or to present self-contained pictures or images which are more suitable to film. Thus I am interested in a 'real life' kind of filming, very close to real time, where the pictures aren't self-contained pictures but an extract from real life (the picture goes beyond the screen) in a constant flow which is then cut/presented formally in order to imbue it with emotional intensity and transcend it into (as opposed to life). A formalistic presentation of what could be described as subjective material. A very naturalistic surface which is cut and presented in poetry. Prosaic surface presented as poetry. Transcending the material through its presentation is the main concern of my work, usually an 'informal' material transcended through a 'formal' presentation; the imposing of a foreign 'method' on the material in order to transcend it. I am very interested in presenting sketchy personalness, and this is a very satisfactory way of doing it.

Glittering and gleaming and glimmering and bobbing up and down and white inside before I come home and waiting for me my pages transparent and radiant and raising themselves and bobbing up and white before I write my empty pages of paper. A hard piece of old apple has become lodged between 2 teeth and won't budge.

Writing about something which is nothing is that which produces great art. The material is immaterial, as long as it is presented in such a way as to make it immaterial (what kind of material it is). Sibelius's *Tapiola* is like filling in the

gaps between nothing. Life is sketchy and inconclusive. How to bring the unofficial on to the level of the official without losing anything (in music). Art is a reduction of life. Using music as a substance, not trying to portray it. Portraying it would be like painting pictures of it. Most composers try to portary music. To what extent should notation obscure the way in which music is written; to what extent should it reveal it? Transcended by revealing or transcended by obscuring? In this respect notation and instrumentation are the same thing (from a compositional point of view). In trying to get enough material, you make the piece. In trying to find enough to go on with, you make a piece.

My interest in combining words and music (whether songs or longer pieces of text) (the songs are like transcendence of life, the longer pieces are a more indirect transcendence), is to produce a third thing which is neither words nor music but a third thing, that to which the same attitude has been taken individually.

I make no distinction in value between the pieces I write for the rock group and those I write for the classical media. This is emphasised by the fact that the material originally intended for one is frequently re-completed/rearranged into pieces for the other.

Art is a matter of leaving out the 'I think' in 'I think the sky is blue'. The more precise you are, the more mystical it is. (Art is always a little pretentious, to be an artist you have to be a little pretentious.)

*Jeux* (Debussy) is the perfect combination of new music and old music. Instruments are usually a way of transcending the music, Feldman has transcended the instruments.

It is (not so much the intrinsic profundity, the depth on the surface, but more the depth of what lies behind the surface, it is not so much the depth, but more the width, the wide open spaces, more the mind when the phrase came into being, more the power of the phrase to point to everything in the width of the mind when the phrase came into being, to outline the borders of the mind when the phrase came.

Problems we have with others - not even reflected, just shown and remain our own, and have nothing to do with their problems, and the problems we have with them, although may point to problems of theirs, in that problems exist within them, but of a totally different nature, just as, when an audience reacts, it often reacts in the right way, but for the wrong reasons, or, as I was saying, like Gaddafi, reacting towards Thatcher, what he said happened to have an element of truth in it, but for the wrong reasons, and this happening to have (an element of truth but for the worn reasons) is the nearest most (people, who live everywhere) get to the truth of the matter when they have problems with another (person) or have problems with other (people).

How insubstantial this train is in the world (by comparison to the rest of the world).

Blake managed to make something out of the mustiness of (old) England.

Swimming through the stocking up wooden bits of tree sticking up like a sea in London bits of woody stick or trees and shrubs in winter where there is just the wood sticking up through which one should swim or sail through in London, the train travelling over the countryside, swans swimming over green fields, the train travel-

ling over the countryside, back at the mercy of English countryside, crossing out countryside, cancelling English countryside, money until none's left, *The Flooding of English Countryside*, riding a beautiful white horse over the wave caused by a dinosaur, not a dinosaur, a beautiful white horse (overtaking the horizon) forwards to France but backwards to Paris, eating an English white bread sandwich while going through Picardie, No, (comma) A BEAUTIFUL WHITE HORSE, Blocking out nature, from Lyon to Grenoble, through a landscape of scruffy farms.

Living in Cologne is like living in the north of Scotland, but without the Scotland.

My main problem is presenting my work (I mean the medium) because it isn't really anything

France is like everywhere else without the everywhere else

In Germany, it is more like being in England than being in England.

The English turn art into folklore

I like Germany because here I can imagine that I'm in England. (*Imagining I'm in England*)

Why must I always again realise (come to understand) the same thing?

Marcel Broodthaers in Galerie Werner (Tomatensuppe und Orangensaft) in Cologne in the Hauptbahnhof made official Belgium Industry in Belgium Belgium is a Land the Earth is Solid ground Everything I've written whole passing through (it) Belgium now it is come and paid for, (comma) and they (yesterday) at 5 o' clock in the afternoon) couldn't not understand why my music was life transcended twice. Why twice? (in German translation). Belgian Woman Belgian Belgian Colony, Valley of Smoke and flashing windows (between Verviers and Liege) the presence of other people makes things confusing

The unevenness of the countryside makes it impossible for me to write. Cutting through (the distance of) the imaginary countryside

Wiping your bum as a substance/  
 Pain as a substance/  
 Coal as a substance/  
 Fire-lighters as a substance/  
 Heat as a substance/  
 Cold as a substance/  
 Video as a substance/  
 Pictures as a substance (not colour etc.)/  
 Music as a substance (not sound)/  
 Songs as a substance/  
 the way words and music go together as a substance/  
 This piece as a substance/  
 Brackets ( ) as a substance/  
 A phonecall as a substance/  
 crossing out as a substance/  
 the whole of Cologne (including people)/  
 Pillow (as substance) with music (as substance)/  
 Mushrooms (as substance) with music (as substance)/  
 If you (he) didn't wear those V-neck pullovers you'd (he'd) paint much better/  
 Filming, the actual filming itself, as a substance/  
 Using mushrooms (spinach), portraying

them would be like painting pictures of them - Using them like a substance, a material, mushrooms (spinach) as a substance. Most composers try to portray music. Greenness (blueness) as a substance. Music as a substance. The friction between the vagina and penis as a substance.

It's a great pity that what the evil people want often happens to coincide with the right thing. A good person may tell you 'yes' and a bad person may tell you 'yes' and because you have also heard 'yes' from the bad person it may prevent you from doing it which is why bad people are dangerous.

People, (comma) the intertwining paths they make with their directions which on this cold, as the hat which I have on keeps the whole of me warm just like in bed at night when cold when warm inside the bed and your head is poking out of the coldness of your head is a warm and satisfying feeling because of the warmth of your body, so how the coldness to the marrow which has sunk in a pervading static coldness which is now coming from inside me out rather than as before the other way round, and the coldness on the outside being like an old pal very human, not like heat which is uncaring, coldness embraces you and you it like old pals, but then, after embracing for while and having got used to it and feeling fine, you suddenly notice this more abstract general feeling of coldness coming from the inside of you, the intertwining of the directions of people's feet intertwining with bits of litter like paper and cigarette ends and sweet wrapper and a piece of purplish grey fluff blowing among them, and, as I was saying, (comma) the heavy sadness being now at a point beyond distraction.

# The Moss

C. Newman

SING VERY QUIETLY, IN a cracked voice. (register ad lib)

SING ONLY

pp IN WIN-Ter comes the Moss, IT co-vers all the yard, IT

PLAY

makes the yard Look green AND plea-sant to be seen. La

SING & PLAY

La IT co-vers all the

square! IT co-vers ev-ry-where; IT co-vers You and

SING ONLY

me, IT makes us fe-el free. La La La La

SING & PLAY

La The green, IT makes us free, So through the air we

broader

fly; We fly IN cir-cles and IN squares, We fly ev'-ry-'

Piano

SING ONLY  
Almost NOTHING

where. La La La

23/Nov/81

# New Pianos/Nice Pages

C. Newman

Handwritten musical notation for the first system. The top staff (treble clef) contains a series of chords and eighth notes, with an 8-measure slur over the final two measures. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a series of chords and eighth notes.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system. The top staff (treble clef) contains a series of eighth notes and chords, with an accent (>) over the final chord. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a series of eighth notes and chords, with an 8-measure slur over the final two measures.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system. The top staff (treble clef) contains a series of eighth notes and chords, with an 8-measure slur over the final two measures. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a series of eighth notes and chords.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system. The top staff (treble clef) contains a series of eighth notes and chords, with an accent (>) over the final chord. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a series of eighth notes and chords, with an 8-measure slur over the final two measures.

Handwritten musical notation for the fifth system. The top staff (treble clef) contains a series of eighth notes and chords, with an 8-measure slur over the final two measures. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a series of eighth notes and chords, with an 8-measure slur over the final two measures.

Handwritten musical notation for the first system, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff begins with a series of eighth notes, followed by a dotted quarter note, a sharp sign, and a series of eighth notes. The bass staff contains a series of chords and a few notes.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff features a series of notes, a dynamic marking of *f*, and a slur over a group of notes. The bass staff contains a series of notes and chords.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#), followed by notes and a dynamic marking of *ff*. It includes a triplet of eighth notes and a slur. The bass staff contains notes and chords.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff features notes, a dynamic marking of *f*, and a slur over a group of notes. The bass staff contains notes and chords.

Handwritten musical notation for the fifth system, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff contains a few notes, and the bass staff is mostly empty.

16/Apr/88