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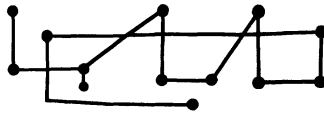
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## READING THE RUNES



RICHARD MCGREGOR

RESEARCHERS INTERESTED in the music of Peter Maxwell Davies have long been aware of a problem relating to the interpretation of the precompositional workings and first-draft scores in the available sketch material: the presence of a personal alphabet devised when Davies was in his early teens and used, sporadically, in his compositional workings. It was obvious that some sort of labelling process was being used in the preliminary workings for individual pieces, but its significance was unclear, while longer messages, found throughout the sketch material, were completely unintelligible. Sometimes such messages comprised only a few symbols, whereas in other places there were complete lines of the symbols.

As I have discussed in my article on the sketch material, printed in *Tempo* 196,<sup>1</sup> Davies kept/keeps a diary in this script and in some cases it

is said the content refers directly to specific compositions. He has suggested that these diaries will eventually come into the public domain, but only some years after his demise. Clearly it will be important for this script to be understood for the content to be of some use to scholars in the future. It is obvious to the eye that before the First Symphony (1975–76) the appearance of the script on the first-draft scores was particularly sparse, no doubt reflecting the use of the compositional diary. Subsequent scores have contained more or fewer annotations, possibly reflecting the speed of composition and/or the “status” of a work as a principal or a satellite.<sup>2</sup> It is also possible that Davies has used the “compositional diary” less in recent years than he did earlier. In this regard the works from the period between the First and Second Symphonies (1976–80) may be significant, and will be the focus of a later study.

Interpreting the script has been hampered by four particular factors. In the first instance one has to have sufficient material in the script to be able to find different contexts for words where repetition can be observed and for frequency of letters, vowels in particular, to be identified. Secondly, despite consistencies evident in the shape and content of his invented alphabet some specific shapes are simply not found in earlier works suggesting that an evolution of the script has taken place over time. Thirdly, Davies had let it be known that the script included German words with Greek grammar,<sup>3</sup> and it seemed that this fact alone would make identification of words more difficult. Finally, on some of the sketches the composer experimented with different stylized versions of his own, German, Gothic, and Roman script (such as on one folio of the *Worldes Blis* sketches owned by Karl Renner—copy in the British Library (hereafter BL)) making letter identification more problematic.<sup>4</sup>

Until the sketches became generally available it was just not possible to collect sufficient examples of the script and therefore a variety of different contexts in which to find the letters used. Even then, unless one were to have photocopies made of every example, it was important to make sure that every dot (literally) was accurately transcribed. Only one example of the script has so far appeared in print—a transcription of a sheet from the Third Symphony by Nicholas Jones in his article for *Tempo* 204.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, Jones’s transcription was not completely accurate.

In order to obtain a sufficient quantity of script material it was necessary to investigate all those manuscripts for which precompositional material and/or first-draft scores were available. Here the excellent handlist prepared by Arthur Searle proved invaluable (I summarized the relevant material in *Tempo* 197), and as a result I was able to examine all the early workings currently deposited in the British Library as well as

taking very full notes (including script transcription) for all the works from 1976 onwards.

Having a large number of transcripts of the script was subsequently to prove crucial. At first, however, it seemed possible that the letter *H* might refer to “Hauptstimme.” This was incorrect although it is not wrong to consider the, usually two, melodic lines which are the basis of many sections in Davies’s works as essentially *Hauptstimme* and *Nebestimme* (for example, in Add Ms 71389 f2v of Panopus D8-2 Ms where Davies writes, in script, “use diagonals throughout section for secondary voice”). However, he does not label lines as such. An essential clue to the script lies in Davies’s use of four symbols (s(e)t, squ, OT, NT) in labelling set charts, as I will discuss presently.

It was not the material deposited in the British Library which turned out to be most useful in providing the key to Davies’s script but the sketches for the Sixth Symphony which had been made available to me by the composer to facilitate the writing of an article on the later symphonies.<sup>6</sup> In this symphony the precompositional material is extensive and the labelling on the first-draft score remarkably consistent.

Initially in the Sixth Symphony the thematic material is labelled in the composer’s script but this later gives way to labelling in ordinary script using the first words of the “thematic” origin—*Amewara*, *Gesang*, and *Immolabit* (a longer discussion will be found in “Max the Symphonist”).<sup>6</sup> This led to the conclusion that the Davies script labels and the “thematic origin” labels were in fact the same, though the script labels were rather shorter, usually consisting of only two characters, and therefore were abbreviated in some way.

Study of the set charts at the same time, including those for the Fourth Symphony and those for the Fifth Symphony (some of the latter found to be bundled with the Sixth) showed a consistency of labelling which was suggestive—specifically that sets with the same number of notes had the same labels. Two possible interpretations seemed possible—either the number itself or the planetary name for the magic square was being used as the means of identification. As it turned out, Davies uses both methods of labelling, depending on the work.

A discussion of planetary names for specific squares related to Davies’s precompositional charts can be found in David Roberts’s dissertation,<sup>7</sup> but initial recognition of Davies’s script letters was effected through a square not mentioned by Roberts—the 10×10 square of Uranus.

In the Sixth Symphony this square is labelled [ 0 L J 7 0 3 ], the position of the vowels indicating that this was the correct interpretation. Confirmation was achieved by subsequently reusing the found letters to identify the remaining planetary squares on those charts for the Fifth

Symphony which were bundled with the Sixth Symphony sketches, where, as Davies told me, he had used them again.<sup>8</sup> As a result the symbols read as follows: Mercury  $\text{H} \text{L} \text{D} \text{L} \text{X}$ , Venus  $\text{V} \text{R} \text{O} \text{E}$ , Sol  $\text{S} \text{L}$ , Mars  $\text{H} \text{L} \text{E}$ , Jupiter  $\text{T} \text{O} \text{B} \text{O} \text{L}$ , Saturn  $\text{S} \text{J} \text{O} \text{D} \text{L} \text{E}$ .

From this it can be seen that some letters appear as diacritics. Thus an *o* in a word is a diagonal stroke through the letter, an *e* is a dot below the letter preceding it in the word, whereas the *i* is represented by a dot above the letter preceding it (when notated carefully by Davies the position relative to the letter determines which vowel comes first in the fully written sequence). On the other hand, *a* and *u* are full letters, never shorthand, and in due course it was possible to identify full script formulations for all the vowels. It seems likely that the diacritics were a later modification, as was the diagonal line above a letter (like an acute accent), which denotes the start of a new word, although in some earlier sketches it appears that Davies used shorter lines above or dots between words to indicate separation (some typical examples of this “style” can be found in the sketches for the First Symphony). The letter *h* has two diacritic forms thus:—  $\checkmark$  which indicates *h* as the first letter of a word (e.g.  $\checkmark \text{X} = \text{Hoy}$ ), whereas the inverted form thus:—  $\wedge$  indicates a letter *h* not in first place (e.g.  $\text{O} \cdot \wedge \text{O} = \text{eight}$ ). This seems to be modeled on Greek orthography, and in the sketches the composer does write occasional words or short phrases in Greek. He does not appear to have made symbols to distinguish between lower- and upper-case letters.

The letters thus far identified were then mapped on to the thematic labels of the Sixth Symphony, which confirmed that these were indeed abbreviated versions of the thematic ideas: *Ame*  $\text{JH}$ , *Gesang*  $\text{?} \text{E} \text{J} \text{L} \text{?}$ , and *Immol*  $\text{I} \text{K} \text{L}$ , the double letter being indicated in Davies’s script as a horizontal line across the letter being repeated.

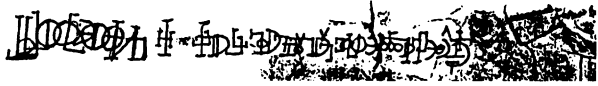
As a result of this breakthrough in reading the script it was possible to clarify that the set labels commonly used were therefore as follows:  $\text{O} \text{O} = \text{OT}$  (original or old transposition),  $\text{N} \text{O} = \text{NT}$  (new transposition),  $\text{S} \text{O} = \text{set}$  (that is, set square),  $\text{M} \text{H} = \text{square}$  (that is, magic square). Davies does not always use these labels, but OT and NT do appear also in Roman script in a good number of the sketches.

At this point it was possible to work out an alphabet containing fourteen of the twenty six letters of the Davies script. On this basis it became relatively simple to assign most of the remaining letters from context. Also from context it was clear that certain signs indicated common word endings or multiletter formulations (e.g. “tion”). As suggested earlier these abbreviations seem to have been a later modification of the script.

In order to clarify how the script is read, Example 1 below contrasts a section of script, in the composer’s hand, from *Worldes Blis* with the

portion of script taken from the Third Symphony quoted in Nicholas Jones's article (transcription corrected).

Composer's script:



Transcription:

bJLØOLƏØØN7 IH IJ7D1L  
 7Ø1IØ7Ø7JØLØƏ1ØbØ7Ø7J7ØØ1I12  
 (?) (?) (?)

Meaning:

barterstown Im Ianuar  
 neunzehnhundertsiebenundsechzig

EXAMPLE 1A: *WORLDDES BLIS*—MS SHEET OF MATERIAL HELD BY KARL RENNER, PHOTOCOPY IN POSSESSION OF PETER OWENS

7. n̄ ēL̄. əØL̄ 7̄ Ñ̄ PD7.L̄ 7̄ 7̄ L̄Γ̄ Ó̄ 7̄ ØX̄ 7̄ DL̄  
 n̄ c̄ w̄ - ō r̄ c̄ h̄ ē s̄ t̄ r̄ ā l̄ - w̄ ō r̄ k̄ B̄ ū n̄ ē r̄ t̄ ō ō n̄ - ā p̄ r̄ ī l̄ - c̄ ī ḡ h̄ t̄ ȳ - f̄ ō ū r̄  
 7̄ Ø̄ 7̄. ə̄ Ø̄ 7̄ X̄  
 s̄ k̄ ē t̄ c̄ h̄ ē s̄ - ō n̄ l̄ ȳ

The superscript em-rule<sup>—</sup> is editorial and represents the acute accent used by Davies to separate words.

EXAMPLE 1B: COMPOSER'S SCRIPT FROM SYMPHONY NO. 3  
 (ADD MS 71343 F5R (BL NUMBERING))<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that the script formulation in *Worldes Blis* is clearly experimental since other pages contain various speculative script fonts based on the title of the work. It is not clear why Davies uses the “normal” form of letter *b* here as his usual practice is to exchange *b* and *p*.

With most of the script translated it was possible to begin to make sense of the occurrences of the script in the sketches. Surprisingly, it became apparent that the words were exclusively in English or German, and so far there is no sign of the Greek “grammar” element except perhaps in the diacritic forms of the letter *b* as mentioned earlier.

In general the annotations fall within four categories and none of these is exclusively found in the sketches in the alphabet code—in other words

each may be found in normal script (albeit sometimes in German). Each work is different—there is no absolute norm. The annotations are as follows: general comments or labels, usually, but not always, relating to the work; structural comments; details of orchestration; set labels (for example, “O.T./N.T.” or “Mars”).

### GENERAL COMMENTS

General comments are by far the least common in the sketch material although if a “compositional diary” exists then no doubt the more general statements will be found there. The most straightforward comment is descriptive or locative and thus the Sixth Symphony is labelled as shown in Example 2.

НОВА ОРКЕСТРАЛЬНА РАБОТА  
n e w - o r c h e s t r a l - w o r k n i n e t y s i x

EXAMPLE 2: LABEL ON MANUSCRIPT WRAPAROUND FOR  
SIXTH SYMPHONY F1V (HELD BY COMPOSER)

Interestingly the label is not “symphony,” which perhaps suggests that the original idea was not specifically symphonic. The same label will be seen attached to the Third Symphony in Example 1b, although there the date is included (and see also the head of the third movement of the First Symphony).

Another example of a general label, this time from the second movement of the Third Symphony, gives indication of some initial compositional thinking for the movement (Example 3).

ВТОРОЙ ЭПИЛОГ ШЕРЗО  
z w e i t e r - s a t z - s c h e r z o - o d e r  
second movement *scherzo* or [*sic*]

EXAMPLE 3: THIRD SYMPHONY, SECOND MOVEMENT “LABEL”  
(ADD MS 71344 F1V ON SECOND MOVEMENT FIRST SCORE  
MAY/JUNE 1984—COMPOSER’S NUMBERING)





L. b. L. 3.  
reprise  
— —

## EXAMPLE 5 B

Sometimes “reprise” is written in Roman letters but “middle eight” never is. “Reprise” can be found on its own but is often found labelling the next section after “middle eight,” giving very clear evidence of Davies’s ternary structuring of some of the internal subsections of a movement. In *Strathclyde* Concerto No. 6 the section at score letter *B* in the third movement is labelled as in Example 6.

P' 7 H 1 3 ) 0 9 H 1 7  
big mid-section main  
— — — —


EXAMPLE 6: *STRATHCLYDE* CONCERTO NO. 6 SCORE LETTER *B* THIRD MOVEMENT – LABEL (NOTE NO REHEARSAL LETTERS ON DRAFT SCORE, NO BL NUMBERING, COMPOSER NUMBER F36V ADD MS 71369)

In the first movement of the same work the section at *D* in the first movement is similarly labelled “middle eight” following on from the section at *C* which is labelled as in Example 7.

Just before what became letter *E* in this first movement the sketch score has two close-spaced green lines embracing the complete system. At *E* Davies labels in Roman letters “link back” and after four bars “reprise.” This leads to *F* where, in the script, he writes what appears in Example 8, though “development” is not a word which Davies uses often, in its traditional definition, to describe his compositional processes. This section lasts six bars and at *G* “reprise” appears in the script.

3010HZ  
statement  
— —


EXAMPLE 7: *STRATHCLYDE* CONCERTO NO. 6 SCORE LETTER *C* FIRST MOVEMENT (ADD MS 71369 NO BL NUMBERING; F5V COMPOSER NUMBERING)


  
 kleine Entwicklungsgruppe [sic], ("Entwicklungsgruppe"=development group)

EXAMPLE 8: *STRATHCLYDE* CONCERTO NO. 6, FULL SCORE F, MOVEMENT ONE (ADD MS 71369, NO BL NUMBERING—COMPOSER'S NUMBERING F8V)

It is important to note that in the score there are other nonscript annotations on the first sketch which further clarify the compositional processes taking place but, as these are not directly relevant to this discussion, they have been omitted.

Generally, not a great level of detail is found in any of the works of the 1980s. The second movement of *Sinfonia Accademica* contains only five annotations, beginning with three statements at the opening of the movement (see Example 9).

- a.
 
- b.
 
- c.
 

EXAMPLE 9: SCRIPT NOTATIONS IN *SINFONIA ACCADEMICA* [ADD MS 71339 COMPOSER NUMBERING F6V—NOTE THAT F6R IS IN FACT F23 OF THE DRAFT FOR *INTO THE LABYRINTH*]

The first movement of the *Strathclyde* Concerto No. 5 at letter *B* has a direct reference to one of the source works for the piece (see Example 10). This appears just before *D* (first movement) in the published score and at the beginning of the second movement.

The structural labelling for *Strathclyde* Concerto No. 1 first movement, is usefully clear (Example 11).



EXAMPLE 10: *STRATHCLYDE* CONCERTO NO. 5 AT LETTER B  
 (ADD MS 71365 BL F10V (COMPOSER F1V) AND ALSO BL F49V  
 (COMPOSER F40V))

	BL folio	PMD folio	
Score letter <i>C</i> +10	7	3	first—subject Allegro moderato
Score letter <i>D</i>	9	5	middle—eight
Score Letter <i>E</i>	9	5	reprise
Score letter <i>F</i> + 1	10	6	theme? [script interlocked]
Score letter <i>G</i>	11	7	second—subject
Score letter <i>I</i>	13	9	‘Durchführung’ <sup>10</sup>
Bar before <i>K</i>	14	10	dom—pedal
Bar before <i>L</i>	15	11	end—of—development

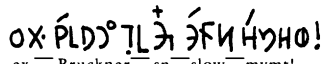
EXAMPLE 11: *STRATHCLYDE* CONCERTO NO. 1—STRUCTURAL LABELLING (ADD MS 71351)

The movement’s relationship to the elements of a sonata-form variant is clearly revealed by Davies’s annotations here. However this level of detail is rarely encountered and is certainly not a norm in structural terms.

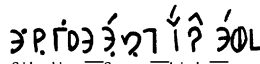
As with the “General Comments” the “Structural Comments” in Davies’s draft scores are hardly extensive or even consistent, but those examples which do exist, whether in Davies’s script or otherwise, do give us some idea of how the composer conceives structural subdivision in his works. From his earliest scores Davies has used double bar lines to separate sections of a work, and often it is at this point that one finds score annotations, thus helping to give some indication of the compositional methodology. For some musical examples, see the discussion at the end of this article. As well as those structural terms mentioned it will be clear from the above examples that he also uses a number of German words, specifically, *anfangen*, *Übergang*, *Einschub*, *Durchführung*, and so forth, to designate sectional subdivisions or to articulate aspects of the formal structure.

## ORCHESTRATION

There are few references in the scores to other works, but two particular examples are worth noting as they explain the orchestral textures at the relevant points in each work. In the fourth movement of the Second Symphony at Figure *D* Davies writes, as shown in Example 12, and in the Third Symphony just before figure *P* in the last movement, as in Example 13.


  
 ex — Bruckner — sn — slow — mvmt!
   
 (probably Bruckner's seventh)

EXAMPLE 12: SECOND SYMPHONY LETTER *D* (ADD MS 71334—NO BL OR COMPOSER NUMBER: LABELLED ON L.H. SIDE OF PAGE WITH CIRCLED 1 AND SYSTEM LINES NUMBERED 5 TO 8 IN RED ON L.H. SIDE)


  
 Sibelius — Seven — high — str

EXAMPLE 13: THIRD SYMPHONY, APPROACH TO FIGURE *P*  
(ADD MS 71344 FOURTH MOVEMENT F20V)

The sketches of the earlier symphonies have, in general, rather more in the way of extended comments relating to the orchestration. Of particular note are:

Add Ms 71328 (Symphony No. 1) (f30v—also green labelled f25v by composer) (full score, letter 21, first movement):

“a light upward inflection of pitch[m] with a crescendo diminuendo on fl picc ie a wailing like the wind here hearken his voice”

Add Ms 71334 (Symphony No. 2) (no folio number: torn r.h. corner, left hand systems labelled in green 18 to 21) (full score, Fig *M*, fourth movement):

“strings in unison with poss upper division at pi[ka] [*sic*] of phrases leading to first tpt entry in finale high with cillo [*sic*] figure from opening of mvmt then to a development of sorts”

Add Ms 71327 (Symphony No. 1) (no BL or Davies numbering: on wider ms paper with date on r.h. side "April 16th Festo Scti Magni 76") (full score, fig 119, last movement):  
 "harp murmuring underneath counterpoint  
 high sounds with sforzati  
 folls in [?] extreme [*sic*] register and  
 ob tune"

Long statements such as those given above are not often encountered in later works. Typically on the first short score there is only occasional reference to the actual orchestration, and where instruments are stated it is usually for a specific purpose. Thus the trombone solo which marks the opening of the second movement of the Sixth Symphony is labelled at the head of the score, and there is some indication that it was written in before any notes were added. The absence of regular detailing of orchestration suggests one of two approaches: either Davies retains the orchestration in his head or he usually does not consider detail of orchestration until the first-draft full-score stage. In support of the former view one might cite script references to "add vlms," for example, which is found from time to time in the first-draft, suggesting that he is adding to an already existing orchestration plan. However, it is more likely that, in general, orchestration follows on from the laying out of the main thematic lines in the first score and is not normally a principal consideration unless a specific effect is sought. Much earlier in his career Davies himself made a statement which would tend to support this latter interpretation when he said "there is no 'orchestration' as such" of the instrumental parts in his First Symphony.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, if there has been a consistent criticism of his approach over the years it has been that his orchestration was not always entirely satisfactory. Although this is an aspect of his technique which has developed, particularly in relation to the sound effect of the orchestral color, it seems likely that this is still a secondary consideration, even in the lighter, or less serious, works of his recent output. Until his script could be deciphered it was not possible to be quite so categorical since it was likely that more orchestral directions were hidden in his script on the scores, although this is in fact not the case.

#### SET AND THEMATIC LABELLING

From an analytical point of view, perhaps the most informative of the Davies annotations is that of thematic labelling, simply because, relatively speaking, it is the most consistent within those works in which it is

found. In the British Library collection it is clear that some works which should have precompositional working with annotations do not, suggesting, in the case of the larger works, that these have not been deposited for some reason (in certain cases this is because, no doubt, they are in private hands), rather than that they do not exist.

Some indication of the usefulness of set annotations can be gleaned from the material associated with the Fourth Symphony, first movement. Example 14 is a summary of the script annotations for the whole movement—where there are no further details they are missing from the

Fig 3	9 3H 1 →	= 9 (magic)squ(are) 1 → (cor ang.)
Fig 6	9 3H 1° →	= 9 squ 1° → (vla, vc.)
	3H ↓	= squ ↓ (vln ½)
Fig 9	♀' ) 0 Γ ♀. 5 Γ 3 →	= articulate - vlas
	Φ Η 3 H 5 Γ D 3	= T <sup>-</sup> M Squ - Venus (vla)
	Φ L J 7 9 9 → 7 7 0 ①	= trans 9 → 7 NT ① (vc.)
Fig 9 + 1	Φ Η 3 H ①	= T <sup>-</sup> M - Squ ① (vln 2)
Fig 9 + 10	7 0 ②	= NT ② (fl.)
Fig 9 + 12	0 7 7 3 0 ♀	= end - start
Fig 10	7 0 ③	= NT ③ (vc.)
	Φ L J 7 3 7 0 ②	= trans NT ② (vla)
Fig 10 + 1	9 3H ①	= 9 squ ① (trp.)
Fig 10 + 6	Φ L J 7 9 9 → 7 7 0 3	= Trans 9 → 7 NT 3 (vln ½)
	7 0 ④	= NT ④ (fl.)
Fig 10 + 11	7 0 5	= NT 5 (vc.)
Fig 11	Φ Η 3 H	= TM - squ (cl.)
	Φ Η 3 0 ②	= TM s(e)t ② (vc.)
	η Γ Φ L 5 5 2 ? Γ Η	= Walter - v - d vogeilw? <sup>12</sup>
Fig 12	Φ L J 7 9 9 → 7 7 0 ↑ 5	= trans 9 → 7 NT ↑ ½ T5 (bas.)
	PL J 3 5 Γ D 3 5 7	= brass - plus - loud
Fig 12 + 4	3 H ⑥ L 3 H	= same other - squ (cl./bass cl.)
	Φ L J 7 9 9 → 7 (4)	= trans 9 → 7 (4) (vc.)
	Φ Η 3 0 ③	= TM set ③ (bas./contrabas.)
Fig 13	3 H 7	= squ 7 (trp. 2)
	Φ Η 3 H (Min 3 ↓) RET	= TM squ (Min 3 ↓) RET (hn)
Fig 13 + 8	Φ Η 5 3 H	= TM - [?] - squ (vln 2) = vo (gailw)
Fig 15 + 8	η L 0 4 5 η	= writ(e) in 5/4 (with)
	Γ X ⑧ H 7 H J D Γ ♀	rhythmic modulation

Note: Roman Script labelling has been omitted

EXAMPLE 14: FOURTH SYMPHONY—SET-USE LABELLING,  
FIRST MOVEMENT ( REFERENCES ARE TO PRINTED FULL SCORE )

sketch (but again this is not to imply that the missing detail does not/did not exist).

It will be observed that the script labels are used at places, for the most part, where a structural event takes place—often these become rehearsal letters in the full score. Very little elaboration is to be found—just the occasional comment. The script labels seem to act as a sort of mnemonic and it is interesting therefore that there are stretches of sketch material which have no annotation at all. Some of the precompositional chart materials are labelled, and these are as shown in Example 15.<sup>13</sup>

*Perspectives*

on PMD Sketches page no.

1. [11] seven-note set square and derived Venus magic square  
( $\exists\Theta = s(e)t$ ;  $\Theta\dot{H}\dot{I}\dot{O}\dot{E} = T^{\text{---}}M^{\text{---}}\text{Venus}$ )
2. [12] a version of the Venus square at  $T_9$   
( $\Theta\dot{H}\dot{I}\dot{O}\dot{E} \downarrow \text{min } 3 = TM^{\text{---}}Ve^{\text{---}}\text{sq} (\downarrow \text{min } 3)$ )
3. [17] the original Venus square flipped round its diagonal ( $\Theta\dot{H}\dot{I}\dot{O}\dot{E} \dot{A}\dot{M} = TM^{\text{---}}\text{Venus Squ}$ ) ( $\dot{A}\dot{M}\dot{I}\dot{O}\dot{E} = \text{centre}^{\text{---}}\text{of}^{\text{---}}\text{work}$ )  
( $\dot{A}\dot{M}\dot{I}\dot{O}\dot{E} \dot{A}\dot{M} = \text{ret}^{\text{---}}\text{in}^{\text{---}}\text{pairs}^{\text{---}}\text{overlapped, i.e., dyad formations from the Square}$ )
4. [15] a nine-note set square—this set is clearly derived from a first only sieve of a chromatically altered version of the chant *Adorna thalamum tuum* ( $\dot{A}\dot{M} = \text{set}$ ;  $\dot{A}\dot{M} = NT$ )
5. [20] a 9-note Moon Square
6. [8] the same Moon square flipped about its diagonal as in 3. above ( $\dot{A}\dot{M} = \text{Squ}$ )
7. [13] two versions of a transformation set converting the nine-note to the seven-note ( $\dot{A}\dot{M}\dot{I}\dot{O}\dot{E} \dot{A}\dot{M} = \text{trans } 9 \rightarrow 7$ ;  $\dot{A}\dot{M} = OT$ ;  $\dot{A}\dot{M} = NT$ )
8. [9,10] (transformation set (twenty notes), twenty statements ( $\dot{A}\dot{M}\dot{I}\dot{O}\dot{E} \dot{A}\dot{M}$ ? = poss8 $\uparrow$ ?))
9. [18] an interim working of a twelve-note set which is first-only sieved within itself to indicate a seven-note set contained inside the twelve ( $\dot{A}\dot{M}\dot{I}\dot{O}\dot{E} \dot{A}\dot{M} \dot{A}\dot{M} = \text{interim}^{\text{---}}\text{working}$ ;  $\dot{A}\dot{M}\dot{I}\dot{O}\dot{E} = \text{set}^{\text{---}}\text{new}^{\text{---}}\text{one}$ )
10. [14] a ten-note set and associated Uranus magic square ( $\dot{A}\dot{M}\dot{I}\dot{O}\dot{E} \dot{A}\dot{M} = \text{ten}^{\text{---}}\text{sq}$ )

EXAMPLE 15: FOURTH SYMPHONY—SIGNIFICANT  
PRECOMPOSITIONAL WORKINGS

The Fourth Symphony was written between 1988 and 1989 and for further comparison it is useful to examine the labelling process in operation within two works of differing size and significance. The processes underpinning the Third Symphony of 1984 and the *Strathclyde* Concerto No. 5 of 1991 are quite different in a number of ways. The Third Symphony, like the Fourth, is a product of the typically extended preparation phase which normally accompanies Davies's symphonic working (except interestingly the Fifth Symphony which appears to have been written at speed). The early sketches for this work are apparently quite complete (unlike those for the First Symphony which are clearly lacking a considerable amount of the preparatory workings). The charts for the Third Symphony show evidence of ample use, whereas those for the Fifth *Strathclyde* are hardly extensive at all, and, it seems, only used in that one piece.

It is perhaps not surprising that the amount of precompositional working for the Fifth *Strathclyde* should be rather less than for the Third Symphony although this was not always the case with respect to "lesser" works, as witness some of the seventies chamber works. One can see clearly from Nicholas Jones's analysis of the precompositional material (to which I have added some discussion in "Max the Symphonist")<sup>14</sup> that there is present a clear rationale and order in the creation of precompositional charts and drafts. However, Jones's summary of the precompositional workings for the symphony (*Tempo* 204, Table 1) is incomplete in that it does not indicate which of the pages have annotations in the composer's script. It therefore seems particularly useful in the context of this article to elaborate on his summary. In the chart which follows (Example 16) only those pages with annotations are detailed. Aside from the structural and "biographical" comments such as the labelling of the 6x6 square as the "squ Metin Sol," these labels are fairly ordinary and unambiguous and do not suggest the level of complexity with which Roberts and Owens have interpreted the works of the sixties and seventies.

By comparison there is rather less material and commentary in the precompositional chart workings for *Strathclyde* Concerto No. 5 (Example 17). Without having analyzed the score in depth it is interesting to observe here the lack of magic-square working. It is possible that some chart material has been removed for use elsewhere, but in terms of his output at the time it is not entirely obvious which work or works might be related to the Fifth *Strathclyde*, if any.

Given the particular nature of the annotations it is clear that short musical extracts do not really give other than a partial picture of how the annotations are used. As a result it seemed better to leave the examples to the end of the article when the general principles behind the "alphabet"



Identification sheet verso	Davies numbering (as laid out in <i>Tempo 204</i> : Jones Table 1)	Davies script	Transliteration
5r	(None)		(see Example 1b)
10r	2		NU: sk(etch)—Sol last (of 6x6 squ) NT
11r	c		squ Metin Sol inv[ersion] of—squ transpose—to—make—eight squares
13r	d1 sketch ①		St—Michael row
14r	d2 sketch ②		trans—one α row→inv β ret—inv set O-I I-O
17r	d2 sketch ③ Part One		set O-I I-O
18r	(None)		squ fourth down as dominant NU: first movement last OT
18v	1		NU: first movement last OT
19r	XX		Metin—venus—set—plus—squ
20r	7		end—ex()and
22r	15		tailpiece—reaching—forward squ
23v	c ①		squ squ

Parentheses are editorial.

EXAMPLE 16: EXPANSION OF SUMMARY CHART IN *TEMPO 204*  
TO INCLUDE DAVIES ALPHABET REFERENCES (ADD MS 71343)

were clearer, so as to illustrate the usage in context following on from the earlier discussion. The examples are taken from the sketches of the Fourth and Sixth Symphonies, which as stated earlier remain in the composer’s hands at this date. Taken out of context, the examples are less significant than when taken as a whole and so the commentaries are intended to give some indication of what each context is and to demonstrate the interpretation of the symbols.

The first four examples are taken from the Fourth Symphony, and are arranged in order of appearance. In the printed full score the passage quoted in Example 18 is scored for wind and brass only and is the second

Page (as numbered) letter reference	Davies	Script (transliterated)	Description	Notes
1			four-part version of Jan Albert Ban	
2			MIDDLE EIGHT	
3	A	URSET MODES	Transposition Set [C, Eb, Db, Gb, Ab, Bb, B, F, G] Transposition Set rewritten as ascending scale using each line starting note as first	Uses three colors for set reading
4	B	DIAGS	17 diagonal lines of URSET written out in order	
5	C	DIAGS	Same as B, starting from top corner instead of left	
6	D	UR UR	five lines of 1, 9, 17, 25, 33 notes respectively, color coded URSET read alternating notes/lines C Eb Db Gb Ab Bb B F G Eb Gb E A B C# D Ab Bb	
7	E from B	DIAGS "ARDS" ( <i>sic</i> )	Diagonals from pages B and C in note values	Bottom of page has linear version 17 bars of pg B continuous
8	F	"ARDS"	Transposed up a perfect fourth	

Note URSET is clearly used here as a variant of Davies’s more usual OT.

EXAMPLE 17: SET LABELLING FOR STRATHCLYDE CONCERTO NO. 5 (ADD MS 71365)

reference to the Transformation Set converting the nine-note set to the seven-note set using the precompositional chart numbered 7 in Example 15. As shown by the transliterated script this is a transposed version—the original having been heard at figure 10 plus six.

The final printed version of this passage (Example 19) is scored for flute with occasional octave doubling by piccolo (with glissandi) (second system—the first staff belongs to the previous system of music). The third staff is given to horns as marked, although it is possible that the original idea was to use trumpets (or it is possible there was a script label here because of the dot under the oblique line). The fourth staff was assigned, not surprisingly, to cellos and basses but doubled an octave

c.f. Example 14

Handwritten musical score for Example 18. The score consists of several staves. The top staff has a circled '20' and contains notes with various markings. A circled '5' is on the second staff. Performance instructions include 'BRASS PLUS LOUD' and 'TRANS 9->7 NT ↑ 1/2 T5'. Other markings include 'same other squ' and 'TM SET © TRANS 9->7(4)'. The notation is dense with notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

EXAMPLE 18: FOURTH SYMPHONY SKETCH AT FIG. 12  
MOVEMENT 1 (SKETCH F16V)

c.f. Example 14

Handwritten musical score for Example 19. The score features three staves. Annotations include 'writ(e) in 5/4' with an arrow pointing to the first staff, and 'with rhythmic modulation' with arrows pointing to the first two staves. Performance markings include 'temp. aff. ff', 'sl. w.', and 'sh. w.'. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

EXAMPLE 19: FOURTH SYMPHONY SKETCH AT FIG. 15 + 8,  
FIRST MOVEMENT (SKETCH F19V)

higher *tremolando* by the violas, not indicated here. The upward-pointing arrows on the second staff seem to refer to the string doubling, but in the final score this does not always commence where indicated. The “rhythmic modulation” appears to refer to the timpani part (lowest line), which in the full score is written with --- 4 --- for its duration. The same Transformation Set as in the first movement at figure 12 (Example 18), but the OT version (statements 1–4, 4R and 3) is given to flute and played in duet with the original set (statements 1–7, Reprise, 1, 2 1R)<sup>15</sup> on alto flute (Example 20). The D minor chord labelled VCS is not on cello in the printed score but follows the script annotation “add db deep,” suggesting this was a later addition.

EXAMPLE 20: FOURTH SYMPHONY SKETCH AT FIGURE 20,  
SECOND MOVEMENT (SKETCH F26V)

The texture in Example 21 is quite complex, hence the orchestration references, but as indicated elsewhere such detail is actually quite sparse and this is in fact the most dense collection of annotations anywhere in the movement. The violins are added to the texture in the half bar before the example begins. *O* and *I* usually refer to the prime and inverted forms. The violin part is a simplified version of the cello part (the “collo” in the script seems to be an error for “cello”) which is written on the sketch in treble clef (second staff). The red circles referred to do not transfer clearly into black and white but may be just discerned round the D and E $\flat$  in the second bar. The viola also elaborates the cello line which is derived from the original square in a manner that has been commonly found in Davies’s writing from the earliest published scores.

It is worth noting that the draft score of the Sixth Symphony is one of the very few places where score letters are actually used at such an early

ON RED CIRCLES

FL + PICC

FLOURISHES

OCTAVES

ADD VLNS.

ATT dis SQUARE ATT

TM SQUARE

PIZZ TO COLLO (? cello)

5=6

7=8

© ATT = thematic origin

EXAMPLE 21: FOURTH SYMPHONY SKETCH AT BAR BEFORE 40,  
THIRD MOVEMENT (SKETCH F51v)

stage in the composition. The string texture of the final score—an oscillating figure—is not seen in the sketch (Example 22) and the notes are only generally indicated in the lowest system deriving from the plainchant as indicated by the script annotation (“Immol set squ straight”) probably added later. The octave theme in the third system is the Transformation Set which changes the plainchant-derived (*Immolabit*) set statement to that derived from Davies’s early piano work *Parade* (1949).<sup>16</sup> The strong diatonic chords are a feature of the section, but the orchestration of alto flute and oboe is not indicated here. Example 23 shows a similar example from the second movement.

Example 23 demonstrates Davies’s use of “middle eight” for a sectional designation. The thematic material is from the prime and inverted versions of the *Immolabit* plainchant square, but it is rare in the sketches to find exact page references to the precompositional chart page numbers, as seen in all three of these examples from the Sixth Symphony.

The set identified in Example 22 and Example 23 is used also in the next example (Example 24) and scored for strings alone (though not indicated in the sketch). The reference in the script annotation to “straight” presumably indicates that the thematic statement should be undecorated, as witness the final score.

EXAMPLE 22: SIXTH SYMPHONY SKETCH AT FIGURE S,  
FIRST MOVEMENT (SKETCH F24V)

EXAMPLE 23: SIXTH SYMPHONY SKETCH AT FIGURE J,  
SECOND MOVEMENT (SKETCH F56V)

The value of sketch material for any work lies in the insights which it can give into the compositional processes of the composer, and beyond this into the very processes of musical creation themselves. The translation of Davies's script is clearly important for the additional

IMMOL SQU  
STRAIGHT

SAME INVE  
(SR) 14

EXAMPLE 24: SIXTH SYMPHONY SKETCH AT FIGURE G,  
THIRD MOVEMENT (SKETCH F70V)

understanding it affords of his working method, but, not unexpectedly, it does not finally reveal all the answers, and in some cases raises more questions than answers.<sup>17</sup>

The turning point for Davies might well turn out to have been the period between the First and Second Symphonies, as I proposed at the outset of this article. The speed at which parts of *Salome* had to be written point to the fact that this would be a good place to start a further study, as does the message in the composer's script, Example 25.

"I must write the first thing that comes into my head there is no time for further reflection sometimes no bad thing to get rid of inhibition and find out what [your] musical imagination is really made [of]"

EXAMPLE 25: ADD MS 71294 DAVIES FOLIO NUMBER—  
ACT 1 19R *SALOME*

## NOTES

1. Richard McGregor, "The Maxwell Davies Sketch material in the British Library," *Tempo* 196 (April 1996): 9–19 and 197 (July 1996): 20–22.
2. As discussed in Peter Owens, "Revelation and Fallacy: Observations on Compositional Technique in the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies," *Music Analysis* 13 nos. 2 and 3, (October 1994): 161–202.
3. McGregor, op. cit.; and Nicholas Jones, "'Preliminary Workings': the precompositional process in Maxwell Davies's Third Symphony," *Tempo* 204 (April 1998): 14–22.
4. Peter Owens has observed in a letter to the author that "the very characteristic script that Max uses when writing more extensive comments in German and sometimes English (e.g. in the *Worldes Bliss* sketches) is called Sütterlinschrift. . . . it is quite different from the Gothic and Fraktur forms which he also uses. . . ."
5. Jones, "Preliminary Workings."
6. Richard McGregor, ed., *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2000) and specifically the editor's article "Max the Symphonist."
7. David Roberts, "Techniques of Composition in the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies" (Ph.D. diss., Birmingham University, 1985). Roberts did not have access to sketches, therefore his tables were technically theoretical reconstructions.
8. *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies*.
9. Some of the manuscripts in the Maxwell Davies collection have been numbered by the British Library, others have composer's numbers but usually only movement by movement—so a packet might contain several movements at present all numbered separately. I have given as much information as possible in order for these to be identified—though there are some cases where there is no obvious numbering I have resorted to descriptions of features of the manuscript in order to aid identification.
10. "Durchführung": the German word seems to have a number of different spellings in the composer's script, suggesting that he did not develop a consistent way of rendering the umlaut.



11. Peter Maxwell Davies, "Symphony," *Tempo* 124 (March 1978): 4.
12. This is not the only occurrence in the sketches of this particular reference. At the moment its significance is obscure.
13. The table is an abbreviated but expanded version of Example 7.1 in *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies* ("Max the Symphonist") with the script detail here translated to further clarify the processes.
14. *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies*.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. I have been very grateful to Peter Owens for the discussions which we have had, and in particular for his advice on aspects of linguistics.

APPENDIX

The Maxwell Davies Alphabet		Contractions or Common Letter Groups	
a	J	ab	ⱦ or ⱦ
b	ⱦ or ⱦ	air	ⱦ
c	ⱦ	and	ⱦ
d	ⱦ	al	ⱦ
		ar	ⱦ
		arti	ⱦ
		at	ⱦ
		ate	ⱦ
		ch	ⱦ
		cho	ⱦ
		ck	ⱦ or ⱦ
		co	ⱦ
e	ⱦ or dot below letter (r.h. side)	ee	ⱦ
f	ⱦ	ent	ⱦ
g	ⱦ	he	ⱦ
h	ⱦ [first in word] ^ [not first]	in	ⱦ
i	ⱦ or dot above letter (l.h. side)	ing	ⱦ
j	ⱦ	it	ⱦ
k	ⱦ or ⱦ	ll	ⱦ
l	ⱦ	ly	ⱦ
m	ⱦ	of	ⱦ
n	ⱦ or ⱦ	on	ⱦ
o	ⱦ or \ across letter	oo	ⱦ
p	ⱦ (b)	phony	ⱦ
q		qu	ⱦ
r	ⱦ	sch	ⱦ
s	ⱦ	so	ⱦ
		ss	ⱦ
t	ⱦ	tar	ⱦ
u	ⱦ	th	ⱦ
v	ⱦ	the	ⱦ or ⱦ
		tion	ⱦ
		to	ⱦ
		tr	ⱦ
		ü	ⱦ ?
w	ⱦ	with	ⱦ (?)
x	ⱦ	work	ⱦ
y	ⱦ	you	ⱦ
z	ⱦ		