

- [24 October Music rehearsals]
- [27 October Music rehearsals]
- 28 October Theatrical rehearsals
- 29 October Theatrical rehearsals
- 30 October Dress rehearsal and first performance in Bristol
- 1 Nov Performance 2 at Apex Theatre, Bury St Edmunds
- 2 Nov Performance 3 at Wathen Hall, St Paul's School, Barnes
- 3 Nov Performance 4 at Turner Sims, Southampton
- 4 Nov Performance 5 at LSO St Luke's, London

Script 2  
 Review 11

## CUS—AUTOMATIC WRITING !!!

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aware of the word which they are actually writing, and perhaps of two or three words on either side, though there is rarely any clear perception of the meaning of the whole. Automatic writing may take place when the agent is in a state of trance, spontaneous or induced, in hystero-epilepsy or other morbid states; or in a condition not distinguishable from normal wakefulness. Automatic writing has played an important part in the history of modern spiritualism. The phenomenon first appeared on a large scale in the early days (c. 1850-1860) of the movement in America. Numerous writings are reported at that period, many of considerable length, which purported for the most part to have been produced under spirit guidance. Some of these were written in "unknown tongues." Of those which were published the most notable are Andrew J. Davis's *Great Harmonia*, Charles Linton's *The Healing of the Nations*, and J. Murray Spear's *Messages from the Spirit Life*.

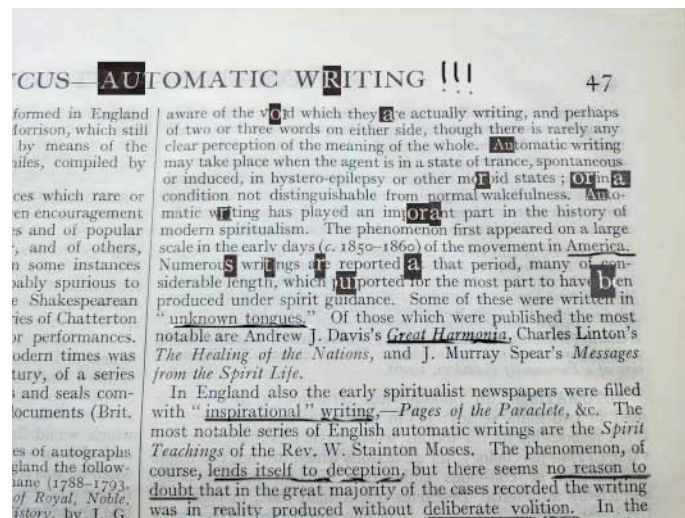
In England also the early spiritualist newspapers were filled with "inspirational" writing,—*Pages of the Paraclete*, &c. The most notable series of English automatic writings are the *Spirit Teachings* of the Rev. W. Stainton Moses. The phenomenon, of course, lends itself to deception, but there seems no reason to doubt that in the great majority of the cases recorded the writing was in reality produced without deliberate volition. In the

## Automatic Writing

## Rehearsal 1.3

Tim Hopkins – event scenario/visuals

Peter Straub – creative dialogue, messages



### Characters, devices and props

- an orchestra and their instruments, played by the Aurora Orchestra
- a conductor, played by Nicholas Collon
- a writer, played by Peter Straub
- a singer
- a pianola with an expert player, bearded
- Hymn-books under audience / orchestra chairs.
- Sealed envelopes for each audience and orchestra member, containing page of dialogue to be read in final scene. Mysterious instructions on cover.
- A hymn-board with changeable numbers.
- 2 large rolls of artist's white cartridge paper, like sheets from a typewriter but 1.5 m wide. 1<sup>st</sup> half a blank one. 2<sup>nd</sup> half one with writing on.
- A fax-machine.
- An answerphone, with prepared tapes/files
- A stick mic on a stand and an amp (visible) which relays sound
- 2 small video projectors in acoustic boxes: focussed on wall and a.n.other surface.
- a knife
- 2 blindfolds
- typewriters

In combination these things are a kind of phantasmagoria...  
the fax, player piano and big artists' paper roll visually relate.

All **transitions** have sounds of one kind or another, (e.g., phone messages) but sometimes also a constant background that sounds like a cine – projector.

### SEQUENCE (cumulative timings below each item)

**1 Adeste Fidelis – Ives** Organ [haunting introduction – we’re not clear what kind of musical event this is – the spectral prelude doesn’t quite meet the well - known theme when it arrives but remains hovering round it. (Naxos recording not a good example – refer to the LP Yankee Organ Music performance.) An unresolved spirit seeking release...]

The organist begins. Once established, a second person (from orchestra) enters with a hymnbook, indicates that the audience should look in their books and gestures to a hymn-board, altering a sequence to achieve no **342**. No words are spoken, but tone is courteous, respectful.

Hymn **342** is a doctored page revealing a latent text.

It’s a message...

**Awake, Awake: fling off the night!**

Audience also notice instructions stamped on envelopes:

“Yet not as **do not open yet**  
**WAIT WAIT WAIT**  
 Until 3762”

NB The doctored hymnbooks feature as a ‘psychic medium’ at different points during the evening.

One or two players are in the audience. As the tune of the well - known hymn arrives, they stand and sing *Adeste Fidelis* in Latin. Can be schoolboy-quality singing in this context. Or could be beautiful – the singer does it?

4.00

## **1 a Transition**

The players their way to positions – some conventionally located some remote. Nick is with them. Simultaneously the phone rings. One player takes a microphone and holds it to the speaker of the ansaphone, amplifying it through the amp. The answerphone answers in John’s voice “You have reached Aurora. Please leave a message.” A voice (**Peter’s**) – leaves a procedural message.

Phone Message 1

“Hi, John, this is Peter. I’m really looking forward to getting back to London. And if I can put in a request, please don’t put me in one of those so-called boutique hotels. Their rooms are too small! Anywhere in the West End or Covent Garden works for me. So I’ll see you in a couple of days! Pretty cool.”

6.00

**2 Ricercare - Webern** Players may be separate at start then move to find each other. A sense of trying to find each other. The title, and translation

(‘searching’) is projected onto a wall.

13.00

## 2a Transition

At the end of the piece, the Pianola is wheeled on, but not explained. A text on a piano roll says:

YET DO NOT OPEN YET

Phone Message 2 is heard, with microphone procedure as before:

“Look, John, I’m sorry, something’s come up, and we have to put everything back a few days. It’s that other matter I mentioned. I did mention it, didn’t I?... Hold on a sec, will you?... Christ, he’s pounding on my door. POUNDING ON DOOR (**Pounding on door.**) I’ll have to call you back, this is that damn **Aldo\*** now he’s trying my phone CELL PHONE RINGS, ODD TONE (**Cell phone ring, odd tone**)...

“What’s it like in London? A real storm just hit, came up out of nowhere! STORM NOISES, THUNDER, HARD CRASH OF RAINFALL (**Storm noises, lightning, thunder, hard crash of rainfall**) Man, everything’s going crazy over here, wow, a car alarm just sort of detonated. CAR ALARM GOES OFF (**sound of car alarm going off**) call you back soon...”  
(**Dial Tone.**)

14.00

## 3 Duetti: ALDO, LELE – Berio *[moving miniature musical portraits of Berio’s friends or people he liked – each have a quality of remembrance - absent friends]*

19.00

## 3a Transition

While space is reformed, if needs be, to a semicircle of players, **Peter** ‘s recorded voice now continues (without preceding ansaphone response)

Phone Message 3

“So Peter says, ‘Look, Aldo, I’m sorry, but you stopped making sense a long time ago.’

Aldo says, ‘Point is, the lady isn’t very happy, out there in the storm.’ More storm noises here. (**Storm noises again.**) ‘Ask yourself, how happy would you be?’

Peter pushes back his chair, stands up. Chair squeaks on the floor. (**Chair squeaks on floor.**) ‘Get out of here,’ he says.

When we pan back, we see paintings on the wall behind him. One is picture of a man with a beard, a ridiculously long beard,\* smiling at us...

'I said, get out of here,' Peter says. 'Go away. Leave me alone..'  
'It isn't that easy, pal' Aldo says. 'You know, you're in this business from a long time back. You did what you did. ... out in that damn river! From now on, you have to hold up your end of the bargain.'

'There is no bargain,' Peter says. 'It's ancient history. It's *pre*-history.'  
'That's exactly what I mean,' Aldo says."

20.00

**4 Septet in Eb Op. 65: Saint-Saens Allegro Moderato** Nick does not conduct this..

29.00

#### 4a Transition

Nick stands he stares at the hymn board and compulsively rearranges the 3 numbers to a new sequence, no **241**

The players and audience turn to another doctored page. It's another message

**SAYS THIS AFTERWARDS NEXT TEXT** Lift up...the level...of subterfuge...till...the teeming brain...rings

The singer takes the stage\*\* (with bag containing gun) She studies a hymn book. mouths the words that we hear, as if 'channeling' the tape of Peter's (obviously male) voice, which we hear simultaneously. Singer could start reading this on hymnal page, then lose herself in the channelling (thus we wont have to put all the text on a page.)

Audio message:

"Okay, look. Next scene.  
(**sound of page turning**) 'This is where we are. Aldo is driving through the rain, and we can hear the sound of his windshield wipers. (**slap slap of wipers, plus storm sounds**) He lights up a Gauloise. No, a cheap Italian cigarette. Sound of the cigarette lighter, a Zippo. (**rasp and snap of a lighter**), and says, 'You always went for women like that. Over and over, bing bing bing. And what happens to these dames? You tell me.'  
'Anytime you get close to sense, I'll let you know,' Peter says. 'Only thing I like about you is the smoke.'  
Aldo surprises him by bursting out in laughter. **HARSH MALE LAUGHTER**

(**Orchestra do harsh male laughter**)

'That's perfect. Really. Perfect!'  
'You should know this,' Peter says. 'Since this is where you've been going all along, you should know that I saw her yesterday. I'm admitting this to you. I

saw her, okay? She came out of the Hudson river, dripping, down where the old piers used to be. Okay? Could have been forty years ago.”  
 ‘Now I know you’re lying,’ says Aldo.  
 ‘Her dress was transparent. Her body shone through, white, like marble.’  
 ‘You’re going to be really sorry,’ Aldo says.  
 ‘Her eyes were *empty*. Her eyes *glowed*, they were *dead*, they were unbearably *warm*, as cold as the Hudson. The water clung to her like a frozen, unmoving, curtain.”

Singer collapses. Nick offers her a glass of water.

31.00

## 5 Octandre - Varese

During this, a TV screen sized film on a paper roll. On the film, an image of a seated figure wearing a cardboard box mask. (Pic 1) His hands reach to a letterbox size mouth, and pull out a tongue – a roll of paper (fax roll width) - It has facsimile of **Peter’s long-hand writing** on it. It says, legibly,

“Yet not as **do not open yet**  
**WAIT WAIT WAIT**  
 Until 3762”

A spare musician compulsively comes to the image and touches it, then pulls a ‘real’ paper tongue with text through a slit in the paper film screen – this artifact is shown to a TV Camera, relaying the text to the wall projection. Projected image flickers, and dies.

38.00

Tongue-like roll of paper ALSO says:

**WAIT WAIT WAIT**  
 Until 3762”

One musician looks at his/her envelope. Another gently takes envelope away, as if to say, Not Yet....

Some players move/leave. Others remain.

They musically improvise, until they find the beginning of ....

## 6 Les Moulins de mon Coeur - Legrand. Singer + orchestra and/or piano

As if she cannot help herself – channeling someone else...  
 This song not in its normal cultural context – disembodied.

42.00

**7 Sorcerers Apprentice - Dukas** [*familiar work, but in this context perhaps given an extra resonance - the Goethe idea from which the original image sprang, about summoning up forces you cannot control ...*]

The singer is the apprentice, as it were. She unrolls a large scroll of blank paper along the front of the stage. She rearranges the hymn numbers to **37**:

**Fear not...a...troubled mind**

51.00

**End of Part 1**

**Interval** 15 mins (call it 20?) During which:

- the blank roll of paper is removed and replaced with one that apparently has **Peter's** hand-writing all over it. Text:

*She came from the river, intent, unstoppable.*

- The hymn board numbers are changed
- The Pianola device is attached to the grand piano
- Orchestra is set for the Katz-Chernin

**Part 2**

1.10.00

The orchestra go as a group to collect Nick and the singer, who are blindfold. They carry them on shoulder high. Placing them at either end of the paper, standing on it, 10m apart, facing each other. Its like a giant score / love letter / first draft / piano roll...The singer has a knife. Or a gun.

The orchestra get their hymnbooks. The hymn-board numbers direct audience to a new text:

hymn-dialogue (invented, not found):

**Are we?  
No.  
Will we?  
Never.**

Peter's voice as Nick and Singer face each other:

'You have to be careful about revenge, honey.'  
'That's hardly for you to say.'

‘Revenge is like guilt, like shame, it poisons you.’  
 ‘Name your poison.’  
 He visibly tenses up.  
 She moves a step toward him,  
 ‘Doesn’t he already know everything about guilt and shame? I walked out of the river at Hannibal, Missouri. Think about that. Well, I’m not Becky Thatcher, and I’m damn sure he isn’t Tom Sawyer.’

‘Sweetheart, you’re not carrying a drink. No matter how they feel, his women are always carrying drinks.’  
 ‘No, I’m carrying a gun. Haven’t you noticed? He keeps wanting me to be dead, but I’m not going to spend eternity in the Mississippi just for his sake. Have you ever been to the Mississippi, Aldo? I don’t think he has, do you? I came out of that freezing, muddy river, and my eyes were glowing and my eyes were cold and completely dead. He saw me, Aldo.’  
 After all this time, he’s actually losing control. I warned him, I said, “Kiddo, you’re going to be really sorry. Hey, right?”  
 ‘Only I’m going to kill him, that selfish stupid blind heartless....’ **VS. no 8**

## **8 Nancarrow Study no 7** for Player Piano alone.

1.17.00

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**9** Singer gestures to change hymn numbers to **235** . She is handed the mic, and speaks the revealed text into it.

**Let me feel...tempting sounds...let me hear...storms of passion...murmurs...control...me.**

Mic is removed. Nick, blindfolded, is led to his conducting position – like a willing slave. The orchestra take places for next number.

Singer performs, blindfold...

**Gretchen am spinnrade**

1.19.00

## **10 Katz – Chernin: Cadences, Deviations, Scarlatti**

As it starts the singer takes her blindfold off and sits on the paper. Waiting, confident. She has a KNIFE

The Fax machine spews page after page, each with a single visible letter...spelling

**Never lost Never**

1.32.00



## 11 Mozart Clarinet quintet (part)

1.42:00

### 11a Transition

The real-time scenario with Peter and Aldo\* continues...Another answerphone message, building now, urgent as not before...Telephone message:

“We’re getting into trouble here,’ Peter says.

‘Sorry,’ Aldo says. ‘You’re getting into trouble, not us. Not me, and not her either.’

They are in the back of a black taxi, roaming through London.

‘I didn’t think we’d wind up in this part of town,’ says Peter. ‘I’m lost here.’

‘Now, there’s a surprise,’ Aldo says. ‘You’re always lost. It’s all darkness with you now, all pistols and pissed-off women.’

‘But I’m not....’ Peter says. ‘I didn’t come here to be...’

Aldo smacks his knee. ‘You wound her up, you know, you can’t blame her for wanting to get rid of you’

‘This is impossible,’ Peter says.

Aldo raps his knee again, harder. ‘You should have seen what was coming when I started banging on the door of your hotel room. And now here we are, crawling out of rivers and waving guns.’

1.45.00

## 12 Nancarrow Study no 7

During which - wall projection of Skype –video type activity, **with Peter** on screen, as if at a laptop typing, unaware the camera is on.

1.52:00

### 12a Transition

A climactic **Hymn book instruction, @@ in HUGE FONT, that takes a whole page to say PLEASE...HOLD HANDS...PLEASE. HE WILL COME. HE IS FAITHFUL. HE WILL COME. HOLD HANDS**

The audience will hold hands – a couple of friendly stooges may help. (At St Lukes, with the audience on horseshoe sides, if we do that format, could have special

instructions in their books eg PLEASE KNEEL, that create an unexpected image for the front-facing audience...)

HOLD HANDS. PLEASE. YET WILL. HOLD, PLEASE.

### **13 Valse Triste** [*a gentle waltz with death – ecstatic surrender – a weirdly slowed-down Carmen-ish quality – a sense of weight and age made fluent*]

**PETER enters.** We don't know its Peter yet. He wears a cardboard box mask, like the one we saw in the Varese in part 1. He *waltzes* slowly with an imaginary partner across the front of the space. (Maybe he has hymn numbers @@ on his back, like a flagging competitor in a dance marathon.) The box is covered with facsimiles of his handwriting.

He reaches the SINGER. She removes the box. They Waltz together.

Silence. PETER says, low key, natural:

### **3762**

The orchestra, Peter, and the female singer all have envelopes and lead the audience in opening theirs.

Message inside envelope:

I see you only when I close my eyes

SINGER has KNIFE

Peter says:

'You're looking for revenge, and you want freedom, and, okay, I get the point about revenge. But your idea of freedom is a grotesque parody.' +  
MORE FROM PETER...Singer stabs PETER in the back.

**Blackout.** .

Last phone message:

'John, this is Peter. I'm ready to start working with you. I'm going to need three things: I need some cheap Italian cigarettes and I need a soprano who can dance better than I do, and I need a gun.'

**Video of Peter typing, typing, typing. A figure appears to his right. He looks up. Screen and audio to white noise.**

**THE  TIMES**

## Aurora Orchestra/Collon at LSO St Luke's, EC1, and London Sinfonietta at the Queen Elizabeth Hall

**Hilary Finch**

1 minute ago

Aurora Orchestra/Collon ★★★★★

London Sinfonietta ★★★☆☆

You'll need one of these," said the steward, pressing a copy of *Hymns Ancient & Modern* into my hand. Inside it was an envelope marked: "Yet not as do not open yet wait wait wait until 3762." In a city suffocating with musical activity, Nicholas Collon's Aurora Orchestra lets in more fresh air than most. The aim is to make an audience hear anew, not by sugaring any pills, not by didactic explanation, not by light-shows, but by context.

This concert was called *Thriller: Automatic Writing*. Peter Straub, America's king of fantasy and horror, was on hand with the "creative dialogue" (an oblique tale of shifting narrator and a murder in a river. Perhaps.) The instrumental players walked about slowly, deadpan, to positions assigned them by the director Tim Hopkins. Hymn numbers were displayed, leading us to words gouged out and (mis)appropriated into spectral messages. Catherine Hopper sang Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade* beautifully, knife in hand, and ended up waltzing with Straub to Sibelius's dark *Valse triste*.

This will doubtless sound both absurd and pretentious in the telling; but I assure you it was neither. I was gripped from start to finish. And the music, ranging from Ives's morose *Adeste fideles* to the Bach/Webern *Ricercar a 6*, and from Nancarrow's seventh Study for Player Piano (on the real thing), to the slow movement of Mozart's Clarinet Quintet, was performed to exquisite perfection.

After all this, the London Sinfonietta's concert looked almost old-fashioned. A mere five premieres, each prefaced by a homespun video apologia, formed a long *New Music Show* in which, despite Martyn Brabbins's enthusiastic direction, only two pieces really stood out. Francisco Coll's *Piedras* was a sophisticated and daring soundscape of extreme and polarised sonorities, coalescing and sliding between stability and instability. And Dai Fujikura's Double Bass Concerto, performed by Enno Senft, was a virtuoso investigation into the instrument's unique attributes, as compelling for the eye as for the ear.

**Aurora's concert was supported by the Jerwood Charitable Foundation**

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