

**George Lloyd:
Shaman or Showman?**



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“Art and magic are closely allied. The power to make something out of nothing, to create worlds from the elusive stuff of the imagination, is an act which – even to those who regularly engage upon it partakes of a numinous element. [...] The mystery of creative power is increased by the taint of theft, for the artist’s ability to make something out of nothing transforms him into a god, thus encroaching upon the jealously guarded preserve of heaven.”

Liz Greene, *The Astrological Neptune and the Quest for Redemption*ⁱ

1. Making Art and Music

An artist’s creative process mostly defies rational analysis. The human psyche is full of mysteries, and to produce a new work of art requires a level of patience, intuitive understanding and acquired technique beyond the capacity of most people. Add to that the likely struggles entailed in making a living from creative work, and there are plenty of reasons for even talented individuals to feel deterred from trying to live a life of creative endeavour. Those that follow such a path often feel cursed by the responsibility of the task and by the many rejections they are likely to endure. Many artists come to believe they never had a real choice, for art has chosen them. Should they decline the challenge, they will likely suffer unpleasant withdrawal symptoms, as if the creative energies latent in the unconscious mind may not be blocked without consequence.

The raw material of new art often only emerges after a lengthy gestation; an alchemical fusion of real experience and creative fantasy which takes place beyond the realm of personal ego. When and how this fusion happens cannot be controlled. In that sense, art flows like a river through the artist, who is little more than a witness to a birth process. The labour pains of creation are never more acute than in the work of a composer. Even once his/her thematic material has been fixed, he/she is faced with very considerable technical difficulties. He/she needs aural imagination and mastery of notation, as well as competence in harmony, counterpoint and orchestration. In addition, he/she must possess the ability to create large forms, to express complex narratives and psychological states, relying upon an intuitive understanding of human nature, using perceptive abilities which cannot be learned by rote. A great work of music, in the experience of musicians (and more so among non-musicians), is miraculous in origin, process and performance.

2. George Lloyd in dialogue with the unconscious

The transcendent aspects of music have preoccupied philosophers and musicians since ancient times and, during the romantic period, the composer’s priestly persona encouraged the view that music comes from and reveals the inner world of the soul. Figures as varied as Brahms, Wagner, Bruckner and Mahler all spoke of the way in which music appeared to them unbidden from the unconscious or through dreamlike states. The emphasis during the 19C, as suggested by Schopenhauerⁱⁱ, was that great music bypassed the phenomenal world and directly expressed the numinous, idealistic realm of the divine Will. The German playwright and philosopher Friederich Schillerⁱⁱⁱ suggested that the poet therefore must either be in a state of innocence or longing in relation to Nature, either feeling at one

with Creation or intensely wishing to be so. For the romantics, inspiration was found through dreamlike immersion in Nature and from the prompts of unconscious mind where the Will remained in its purest form.

While he lived outside the romantic period as it is normally defined, the Cornish composer, George Lloyd (1913-98), was much in sympathy with this outlook. An infant prodigy, he demonstrated that he was a master technician at an early age. He studied composition at Trinity College of Music, but even as a child he already possessed the musical and dramatic skills to write short operatic scenes. Aside his acquired technical ability, Lloyd was clearly born with remarkable natural gifts granting him a seemingly inexhaustible well of ideas and inspiration. How could one so young access such rich and fertile ground, even before he has acquired formal musical training and experience? We know from Lloyd's own account that his creative impulses often occurred during trance-like states. He was also open to occult signs and intuitions as a means to summon the contents of his deep unconscious.

Yet Lloyd's creative well was not accessed by some abstract exercise in depth psychology, which he could turn on and off like tap. While he could rely upon his Celtic heritage as a helpful guide, it exhausted him to probe into the dark and irrational parts of his psyche. Lloyd, who had Welsh and Irish ancestry, was born and brought up in Cornwall, so that the bardic tradition was written into his DNA. The Celtic bard was a poet, musician and storyteller, and his role in Celtic society was like that of the shaman. Close to Nature, with a capacity for lyrical and spontaneous expression, he could articulate the collective wisdom of the ancestors. His was the authentic voice of the tribe; an advisor to and spokesman for its leaders; a figure imparting insight to see his comrades through thick and thin. The bard, like the shaman, was usually an outsider because of his unique creative powers and second sight. Yet his tales of fairies, mythical figures and shape-shifting animals were part of a common Celtic culture which had its own priestly class, the druids, who were known for casting spells and healing the sick. For the Celt, the numinous world of gods, fairies and mythical creatures was not remote from daily experience but was often colliding with it disruptively.

George Lloyd was steeped in the remnants of this ancient and often suppressed culture which dominated his physical surroundings. The Celts had left their mark on the Cornish landscape which was scattered with standing stones and the ruins of ancient settlements, many associated with lingering myths of magical occurrences. Lloyd could hardly miss the mysterious atmosphere of wild seas and misty headlands which were a backdrop to tales of King Arthur and Tristan and Isolde. Besides, George Lloyd's parents, Will and Prim, had been enthusiastic founders of the West Cornwall Archaeological Field Club, setting up also the Wayside Museum in Zennor where many ancient artefacts were put on display. Lloyd's maternal grandmother had been Irish; a spur to his mother to accumulate a large collection of books about Celtic folklore. She even corresponded with Douglas Hyde who founded *The Celtic League* in 1893 to champion the Irish language, before becoming the first President of Ireland (1938-45). Whether he liked it or not, George Lloyd embodied the Celtic soul, giving him a passionate and defiant disposition. It led him to oppose the dominant social norms of scientific materialism and to adopt the counter-cultural positions that would cause him so much trouble in the post-war period.

George Lloyd's mystical outlook was not least due to his parents. They were at the heart of a free-thinking circle of bohemian artists, musicians and other eccentrics who frequently visited the family home in St. Ives. Lloyd's paternal grandmother, Frances (Fanny) Powell, was an American with Welsh Ancestry who had trained as an opera singer. She had been an early member of the St. Ives school of painting, many of whom were Europeans who brought with them ideas about Symbolist art derived from Wagner and French poets such as Baudelaire. Frances was also a Theosophist, and many of the theories and spiritual ideas of Theosophy influenced three generations of the Lloyd clan.

The leading figure of the Theosophical Society, founded in New York in 1875, was the medium and free-thinking philosopher, Madame Helena Blavatsky. The society had just three simple objectives:

- To form a nucleus of universal Brotherhood without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
- To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.
- To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

This simple credo was underpinned by the rule that no member of the society could impose their beliefs on any other. Thus, politically, the Theosophists were against any kind of domination or imperialism. Madame Blavatsky specifically opposed the intellectual domination of dogmatic forms of Christian thought and the arrogant assumptions of superiority and entitlement that lay behind the British Empire. Theosophy caught the attention of many creative figures at the turn of the 19 & 20C, including the composers Scriabin, Gustav Holst and Cyril Scott. The Irish poet W. B. Yeats was also a frequent attendee at the London meetings during the late 1880s, until he was expelled for carrying out forbidden occult experiments. Yet the Theosophists advocacy for indigenous and myth-based cultures proved a spur to Irish nationalism, and it is possible to trace many connections between the Celtic revival and Theosophy.

In addition to embracing many of these unorthodox ideas, both Lloyd's parents were good amateur musicians who hosted concerts in a large studio at their home. Lloyd's immersion in this hothouse of creativity was particularly intense not least because, due to bouts of ill-health, he had to be home-schooled for long periods. In old age, Lloyd claimed that he did not attend any kind of school until he was twelve years old. Probably this protected him from some of the conventional rigidities of a formal education, and we can conclude that his youthful environment was ideal for stimulating his unique imaginative and creative abilities.

Romantic art and music during the 19C had largely stood against the rise of science but, after the First World War, even the arts succumbed to the scepticism and pseudo-science of the positivist creed. George Lloyd's provincial background shielded him from the more extreme influence of such modernist thinking. His cultural sympathies were more attuned to the gentle romanticism of the English pastoralists, who loved landscape, poetry and traditional folklore. But, if composers like Vaughan Williams and Finzi were inspired by these sources, for Lloyd the identification went much deeper. His beliefs and imaginative processes were fundamentally mystical, while Vaughan Williams and Finzi were agnostics for whom music was a consolation expressing 'what might be'. By contrast, Lloyd spoke of composing in hypnotic trances and, like an ancient Celtic bard, his creative vision emerged from alternative states of consciousness in which landscape and myth, music and poetry were united by their shared symbolic meaning.

4. Iernin - a Celtic fairy opera

The Cornish landscape and its Celtic background undoubtedly inspired Lloyd's first complete work for the theatre, a fairy opera called *Iernin* (1934). The idea of a Celtic opera came from Lloyd's father who wrote the work's libretto. Much of the musical material came to George Lloyd while he was out walking on the moors near an ancient Cornish site known as the Nine Maidens: a group of standing stones in the form of a loose circle.

...and well then, we went down to Cornwall to Zennor. And I wandered about the moors and looked at the stones, and I saw everything, and everything was very, very vivid to me and I used to have a funny sort of feeling about all those stones. In somewhere near the beginning of the opera the hero Gerent says to the baritone, 'Almost these stones seem to have life for me you know' and I really felt the same sort of way. There was something very mysterious up there on those moors, so I wandered around and I collected my tunes...'

The conflict between the imaginative freedom associated with these ancient places and the controlling structures of an organised society sets the context for the story of *Iernin*, who is a fairy who bewitches a local nobleman called Gerent. Since Gerent is already betrothed when he meets *Iernin*, his infatuation with her scandalises the local community, even threatening the future of Cornwall in its struggle to retain independence from Saxon overlords.

There are certainly echoes here of W.B. Yeats's visionary conflation of myth and revolutionary politics, which successfully motivated many leading Irish cultural figures to embrace the nationalist cause. George Lloyd however distanced himself from the Celtic Twilight movement epitomised by Yeats, and he was also at pains to repudiate any association with the cultish fairy opera *The Immortal Hour* by Rutland Boughton, first performed at Boughton's Glastonbury Festival in 1914. While *Iernin* is more grandly operatic than *The Immortal Hour*, there are still similarities of plot since both works are concerned with the necessary separation of fairy and human culture. *Iernin* was thus a relatively late example of the Celtic revival, whatever Lloyd may have wanted people to believe.

By July 1939, still aged just 26, Lloyd was contemplating whether to sign up with the Royal Marines to fight Hitler's tyranny, yet he was only just beginning to understand how his intuitive responses to the Cornish landscape had led him to produce *Iernin* five years previously. He wrote to his father in Cornwall:

"...I have found a book of yours about the fairy-faith, and Nancy has been doing nothing but reading Irish fairy tales. And yesterday all its whatever-it-is came over me again. The West – blast it. It's damp, and I'll never live there because I'll be miserable if I don't sing until I can trill and runabout. But we did put something in Iernin that seems true. "

The book was *The Faery Faith in Celtic Countries* by W.Y. Evans-Wentz, although the key phrase used by Lloyd is 'its whatever-it-is came over me again' in reference to the trance-like state in which the music of his opera *Iernin* was originally conceived high on the Cornish Moors. Lloyd also hints at a degree of distaste for 'The West'. His enthusiasm for the fairy culture was equivocal. He needed cosmopolitan freedom and sophistication just as much as he needed the Celtic imagination. He was split between his ethnic origins and his wish for the individuality and freedom of thought that comes with modern city life. In later life, he declined to take up a formal position as a member of the *Gorsedd Kernow* (the name of the Cornish bardic order), as he had no interest in dressing up in archaic robes and participating in supposedly ancient ceremonies that had in fact only existed since 1928.

This suggests another reason for Lloyd distancing himself from the Celtic revival of Yeats and Bax; a wish to appear to be an innovator rather than a follower of fashion. In truth, Lloyd was primarily interested in the mystical spirituality and psychological meaning of the *Iernin* story, not identifying with any social or political movement. This is true of his music more generally. Lloyd's creative projects and spiritual experiments were aimed at finding ultimate truth and transcendence, never attempts at political activism or to define a tribal identity.

The essential message of *Iernin* is that chasing after idealised fantasies is alien to the human condition. If love exists, it binds us more deeply to an imperfect reality, not less. Tempting as such fantasies of perfect love may be for a young man, he must face maturity and accept the tribulations of ordinary human existence with its call to duty, suffering and loss of innocence. There was perhaps also a warning to Lloyd himself that mystical beliefs and the irrational eruptions of the unconscious mind can become a fatal fascination. Jung called this anima-possession; a condition which can only be overcome by a degree of healthy scepticism towards the irrational desires and fears which may otherwise dominate the psyche.

The message of the opera proved prophetic. Lloyd, who had the world at his feet with a major success to his name at the age of just 24, found himself five years later signing up to the Royal Marines and joining the Arctic convoys during the Second World War. Yet it was typical of Lloyd that, at the same time, he was reading about fairy culture and finding confirmation of much that he had already understood intuitively. Lloyd, with his Jungian perspective, was always seeking empirical evidence that his intuitive beliefs had some foundation in real experience, but he was often surprised to learn that his creativity was running well ahead of his conscious mind.

5. The wounded healer

If Lloyd was predisposed to a fascination with the occult because of his Celtic background, after his experience of shellshock during the Second World War, he and his wife Nancy became preoccupied with alternative healing methods. In 1942, Lloyd had been involved in a terrible accident on board the *HMS Trinidad* while patrolling with the Arctic convoys. He was left with serious mental and physical injuries including what is now called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The army doctors gave him little chance of a full recovery, but Lloyd's wife Nancy took his treatment into her own hands. She read as many books about psychiatry, psychology and less orthodox methods of healing as she could find. By chance, her American brother-in-law was a CIA medical advisor, George Estabrooks, who had developed programmes for dealing with PTSD for war casualties in the USA. Estabrooks' innovative use of hypnosis and other mind-manipulation techniques had proven effective, and he was thus able to offer helpful advice to the Lloyds.

Among the alternative techniques which the couple began to use was one developed by the American *Science of Mind* teacher, Frederick Bailes (1889-1970). Bailes was the author of *Your Mind Can Heal You* (1941) in which he presented a seven-step approach to mental treatment. The healing process, Bailes claimed, starts "with the fundamental truth that the person whom we are treating is a perfect idea in the Mind of God, and our whole procedure during a treatment is intended to remove from our own mind any idea or picture of imperfection or sickness." Bailes outlines the seven 'R's which lead to the cure:

Relaxation: Recognition: Relationship: Reasoning: Realization: Release: Rejoice:

At the heart of the Bailes method is meditation which is used to clear negative thoughts. There is also an overtly religious dimension to his therapy, because the positive thinking derives from restoring an innocent relationship with the divinity. Lloyd's reading of Bailes meant that, throughout his life, he wrote many short prayer-notes to himself, asking for help in achieving his goals and removing the obstacles, inner and outer, which blocked his path.

Strangely, Lloyd's own shamanic tendencies were considerably enhanced by his war injuries. The shaman is after all a wounded healer; a man who has faced his personal demons, thus mastering the dark realm of the unconscious. Yet Lloyd's journey towards healing was arduous. He continued to suffer uncontrollable shakes and nightmares for twenty years after his original war injuries. He remained hypersensitive to stress, sometimes retreating to howl like an animal. But the turnaround brought about by his intensive treatment under Nancy's supervision was indisputable. As early as 1945, Lloyd was composing again and later able to proclaim the summer of 1947 to have been the happiest of his life.

6. The influence of Jung

At the heart of Lloyd's belief-system was his reading of the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, whom he said was the most powerful influence on his life and work. He may have read the key texts in his youth, but told his nephew William in 1990 that, unlike Michael Tippet, he refused to 'blether on' about it. Like Lloyd, Jung took occult experiences very seriously and wrote about them at length. It is well-known that Jung was fascinated by the meaning of dreams. Less well-known is his work in abstruse areas such as alchemy, synchronicity, astrology and life-after-death.

Jung's ideas were derived from various esoteric sources such as medieval Alchemy and Taoism, although many of his ideas were consistent with the precepts of German Romanticism including Goethe, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The core of his belief system can be summarised as an attempt to keep irrational and instinctive feeling at the centre of human experience. This was counter to the positivist creeds that were developing at the beginning of the twentieth century. Significantly for many occult practitioners, Jung's concept of the *Unus Mundus* (One World) posits that, deep in the human psyche, time, space, spirit and matter converge into a single indivisible entity. In these recesses dwells the sum of all human experience and instinctive knowledge, otherwise known as the collective unconscious.

Jung also identified that every human being carries a spiritual blueprint which attempts to actualise in the realm of time and matter. This divine imprint is nothing less than the soul of Man, sometimes labelled the Self, which may bring renewal to the ego-identity of the individual through contact with the numinous contents of the collective unconscious. In Jung's worldview, only the flaws of ego-consciousness create the fault lines and separations which lead to mental illness, anxiety and loneliness.

Jung believed that our subjective experiences can be categorised and that they are as real as any scientific fact. Of course, many objected to his assertions, but for Jung, understanding myth and magic, gods and goddesses, symbols and dreams were essential to our ability to make sense of the world around and inside us. He believed that the human psyche, once connected to its deepest roots, was immensely powerful. The unconscious was the living source of all human impulses for survival and growth, all longing for new knowledge and creativity. For Jung, imagination was transformative, and its practice was as necessary as taking a stroll.

Jung saw many parallels between the individual process and the creative life of an artist. Life is about becoming inspired, forging something unique from the human personality and realising that

individuality in the world of matter, time and space. Our capacity to evolve spiritually beyond the merely animal requires that those deeply sourced creative impulses should be teased out, often only after much patient and humble reflection or even a willingness to enter trance-like states. For Jung, creativity and spiritual growth were about making symbols that fused the opposites. Humanity embodies those opposites: body and soul, good and evil, the conscious and unconscious mind. A Jungian artist, such as George Lloyd, had to be dedicated to resolving the tensions of human existence by revealing the deeper unity and wholeness to which life aspires and from which it originates.

Coincidentally, when George Lloyd was still a small child, Jung himself came to Cornwall in 1920 to lead a seminar at Sennen Cove. The twelve participants all stayed in the same Bed & Breakfast, and the main point of discussion was dream interpretation. Three years later, Jung returned, this time to Polzeath, where the discussion focused on human relationships in the individuation process. We do not know if any of the Lloyd family or their wider circle met Jung or were even aware of his presence, but Jung's visit to the county shows that Cornwall at that time was a magnet for radical and creative thinkers.

7. Alternative medicine and the blessing of seeds

After the war and the failure of his opera, *John Socman*, commissioned for the Festival of Britain in 1951, Lloyd and his wife Nancy settled in Ryewater, Dorset. They set about creating a market garden to sell carnations and, later, also mushrooms. At this point in his recovery, George Lloyd declined any contact with doctors and hospitals, while his wife Nancy developed a strict regime which the composer's nephew William states was 'almost ritualistic' in its intensity. The routine included healing mantras derived from the writings of Frederick Bailes, a controlled diet and homeopathic treatments such as Bach Flower remedies. Nancy also specialised in the esoteric technique of the Turenne Witnesses, using a pendulum to diagnose psychic imbalances and disease. Indeed, Nancy's use of the pendulum would become increasingly obsessive, making all kinds of intuitive judgements about which musicians and conductors were likely to be good collaborators. Much of this activity stemmed from the isolation and misunderstanding that befell the Lloyds during the post-war period. They were living outside of the social norms and felt that the customary avenues of advancement were not available to them.

Despite George Lloyd's serious physical and mental trauma, the market garden business soon became successful and quickly expanded. Lloyd was surprisingly practical and showed a good business sense, although he still felt resentful that he had been exiled to the margins of the musical world. In 1955, after a particularly volatile emotional eruption, Nancy advised him to start composing again. She knew that his creative work would be therapeutic, while if it were blocked, George would become grouchy and restless. Once he was in the composing mindset, Lloyd showed a ritualistic discipline, working from 4.30-7.30 in the morning, while still managing to fit in a full day's work for the business.

As the market garden developed, Lloyd looked for ways to improve the quality of his produce and to raise the prices he could charge. The flowers were sold at London's Covent Garden market, and Lloyd was curious to find out why some growers were more successful than him. One day, while chatting to one such man, he was told that the secret was not in some special feed but was because his seeds were ritually blessed by a couple who were psychic. This may seem fanciful, yet this had been common practice in the USA in rural communities even into the 20C, while it had been a feature of British rural life until the era of mechanisation. Lloyd was immediately willing to try the technique. The couple in question were a Mr. and Mrs. Munroe, who were paid not only to bless the seeds but to remove any they thought were sub-standard. At first, George and Nancy watched them closely until they were

convinced that the pair were not cranks. They monitored the impact on their prices and, sure enough, there was a significant improvement.

Eventually, because the Lloyds had some experience of this kind of occult practice, they decided to carry out the blessings for themselves. They first reduced and then terminated their arrangement with the Munroes. Mrs. Munroe did not take kindly to their dismissal, and she laid down a curse which would thereafter be blamed by the Lloyds for any misfortunes that came their way. The reality of this curse is open to question. Some will find the whole idea of blessing seeds and curses a lot of mumbo-jumbo. Lloyd himself was usually sceptical regarding such matters, first seeking proof that a technique was successful before adopting it. He remained open-minded about how such practices worked. Magic or biochemistry, the theories of people like Frederick Bailes and Louis Turenne used science to explain their techniques. On this basis, however, their methods were easily discredited, when in fact their strength lay in autosuggestion and placebo effects which made such evidence irrelevant.

The true danger regarding mystical practices lies in the egoism which can gather around their practitioners. Jung is once again instructive in these matters. He warns that, in the relationship with the unconscious, adopting a magical attitude can be dangerous. Using psychic energy to settle offenses, make curses or to gain worldly power leads to a negative reaction from the unconscious. The shaman's powers are reserved for healing and gaining spiritual wisdom, not for personal gain or destroying enemies. It was this aspect of mysticism (and Theosophy in particular) which aroused Jung's mistrust:

'If one studies the occult with the wrong attitude one can get infected, for this whole field is full of metaphysical traps through which one can fall, disappear as into an oubliette, and become the astrologer, the theosophist or the black magician.' Carl Jung, Visions Seminar

Jung may have had other reasons to mistrust the wilder claims of Theosophy and other seers, because his own academic rigour was often derided by his fellow scientists as asserting fact, where there could only be speculation. Jung was also not so saintly as to be beyond some professional rivalry. Nevertheless, his was a fair point, and one which the Lloyds did not always heed. While evidence that the Lloyds suffered significantly from the Munroes' curse is slim, the incident warned them that great care was required when dealing with the unconscious mind to avoid unforeseen consequences or falling into serious delusion.

8. Lloyd's Seventh Symphony and Vigil of Venus

Lloyd's Seventh Symphony (1959), written when he was still living in semi-exile in Dorset, contains some of his darkest and most intense music. The score references *The Garden of Prosperine* a text by the 19C writer Walter Swinburne. In the poem, Swinburne finds spiritual comfort in the cycles of Nature but has grave doubts regarding the veracity of conventional religious belief, specifically in a personal loving God and the promise of an afterlife. The poem expresses a state of existential collapse. Prosperine symbolises woman as the bringer of life and death, held captive during winter by Pluto, God of the Underworld. She represents woman's dual nature as eternal Mother of Creation and as the transient fragile beauty of mortal existence. Lloyd's dramatic music reflects this struggle. In the first movement, life dances before him with wild exuberance and passionate longing. In the slow movement, the feminine aspect turns into the melancholy associated with mortality. Above the work's third and final movement, Lloyd added a further quotation from Swinburne's poem:

*'And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things;
Dead dreams that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.'*

The music depicts a profound inward battle with doubt and despair; an attempt to rescue something beautiful and spiritual from the dark experiences of Lloyd's life. Jung called this kind of confrontation with the negative aspects of the psyche the *Nekyia*. The ghosts lurking in the shadowy recesses of the personal unconscious may provide prophetic insight, but the personal ego risks being swept away by powerful and destructive forces.

Lloyd's endurance eventually yielded Prosperine's promise of future joy and renewal in his large-scale symphonic cantata, the *Vigil of Venus (Pervigilium Veneris, 1980)*. The work depicts a rite of Spring, celebrating erotic love as the source of all vitality, fertility and creativity. For the most part, the music is exuberant, dancing and playful. The darkness of the Seventh Symphony has been overcome, and we are exhorted to 'Love and love again' if we are to heal life's wounds. The author of the text steps out at the end of the poem to join in the Dionysian festivities, abandoning ego, which is separated from the collective unconscious, becoming once more part of the dance of life. The work's Latin text is far removed from any modern sensibility we might associate with scientific materialism or Christian orthodoxy. It is extravagantly pagan, and there is in the music a feeling of intoxication and abandon to carnal pleasure. Yet in praising Venus and Diana, the sacredness of sensual delight becomes the basis of higher spiritual feelings which manifest in later works by Lloyd that would turn to more conventionally Christian notions of redemption and renewal.

The rites associated with Dionysus have much in common with the shamanic mysteries found in African and Native American cultures. Music often plays a significant role in the theatre of these procedures, helping to induce the hypnotic, mind-altering environment required for the magic to have its effect. Loss of ego-consciousness, reverting to a more primitive and receptive state of mind, is exactly what is needed for a composer to tap into his creativity. The Celtic bard would, for example, lie still in a darkened place for days on end with a heavy stone placed on his torso, waiting for poetic ideas to emerge from his trance-like state. In a similar fashion, shamans in other cultures also endure long periods of solitariness and isolation because the collective life of the tribe would corrupt his connection with the spirits.

George Lloyd and his wife also delved into another mystical belief-system associated with Ancient China. Lloyd made several references to Taoism in his notes about various works, and the couple used its sacred book, the *I-Ching*, as an oracle for predicting the future. It was a technique also favoured by Jung. In Jungian philosophy, myths and traditions are interchangeable, representing archaic aspects of the collective unconscious which resonate archetypally across all cultures and all time. Thus, for Lloyd, Greek, Roman and Celtic symbols were entirely compatible. The Prosperine story, for instance, has echoes of the *Iernin* libretto, since they concern seductively beautiful women caught between two worlds. Both bring joy, love and renewal, but only temporarily. Lloyd understood that myth grants us a symbolic picture of mysterious natural processes that occur deep in the human psyche. The artist is thus a shaman drawing up the hidden potential that lurks among the shadows of the unconscious, often held back by fear and a reluctance to face our deeper selves. Lloyd's experiments in the irrational

were methods of drawing up his creative intuitions, and the specific technique was less important than the result which it yielded.

9. Colin Wilson's *The Outsider*

In the 1980s, Lloyd began a dialogue with the maverick writer and philosopher Colin Wilson. Wilson had been a prodigy like Lloyd, having written a famous work of literary criticism, *The Outsider*^v. His appraisal of the writer as a social commentator facing the crisis of a mass-produced culture was warmly received by critics and academics. Later works exploring human sexuality and the criminal mind were treated less kindly. Wilson, who had been labelled one of the 'angry young men' of the 1950s, had moved to Cornwall to flee excessive media attention. He was a genuine fan of Lloyd's music, collecting all the CDs as they came out and writing to the composer in glowing terms. In common with several others, Wilson believed that Lloyd's music had healing powers because it could relate directly to the unconscious mind. Wilson spoke with some authority, since he was an expert in the field of romantic music, penning several entries for the Grove dictionary on figures such as Berlioz and Schumann. Lloyd welcomed such a perceptive and well-informed correspondent who was living in his beloved Cornwall with a worldview similar to his own.

Wilson, who had looked into Theosophy and other esoteric movements in some depth, was critical of the pessimism and self-indulgent moods of the romantics, preferring instead Nietzsche's defiant optimism. He developed his own brand of 'positive existentialism' based on a new consciousness that rose above the tension between idealism and reality. He theorised that the two hemispheres of the brain were innately in conflict, as the rational, manipulative left-brain had come to dominate the holistic, feeling-led right-brain which was the source of human creativity. He thought that a conscious intervention could prevent the right-brain's demoralisation, thus avoiding the sense of crisis which dogged the artists of the 19C and early 20C. Lloyd and Wilson were fellow travellers, although Lloyd's correspondence with the philosopher appears to have ended abruptly after he raised with Lloyd the case of the 'Moors Murderer', Ian Brady, whom Wilson had adopted as a controversial pen-pal.

10. An identification with the feminine

George Lloyd's relationships with women and the feminine aspect of the psyche were vital to his creativity. The feminine symbolised the unconscious, the source of life, the creative potential of the dark and irrational forces of Nature. She meant life and death, beauty and destruction. Woman was thus a recurring symbol in George Lloyd's music, whether as the myth of Prosperine in the Seventh Symphony or as the unnamed female protagonist of the Ninth. His defining exploration of womanhood was his extended solo piano work, *The Transformation of that Naked Ape* (1972), dedicated to his wife, Nancy. The piece's title repudiated the fashionable reductionist theories based on Darwinism, promoted by figures like Desmond Morris, who saw only animal instincts at work in the human psyche.

Nancy was not a conventional muse figure, but she felt it was her calling to provide the right physical and mental conditions for George to produce his work. She had insisted on the rigorous discipline, the alternative therapies and treatments that brought him back to health after his wartime injuries. As a character, she was devoted and loyal. In later years, her dogged sense of spiritual commitment bore fruit. Through her extensive reading and study of alternative medicine, Nancy became a faith-healer in her own right, adopting clients from all over the world who asked for her diagnoses and prayers. She had talent in this direction, but also an unfortunate tendency to become overly reliant on esoteric

practices for every significant decision the couple had to make. Such practices, if overused or used in the wrong way, can produce confusing and contradictory results. Jung himself, who used the I-Ching or Book of Changes a great deal, eventually stopped relying upon it, claiming that he could predict what the ancient text would say without the need to throw the coins or yarrow sticks which permit the divination to take place.

In the 1980s, George Lloyd also became acquainted with the renowned Hollywood astrologer and psychic counsellor, Carmen Bietenharder. Carmen had assisted Nancy's nephew, Patrick, who had made a successful career as a pop star in the United States, and she subsequently became a close family friend of the Lloyds, frequently staying with them in their London apartment. She helped to finance the composition of Lloyd's *Symphonic Mass*, and she is the work's dedicatee. Bietenharder read Tarot cards and interpreted them with enough accuracy to win the trust of a range of wealthy and successful clients, including, among others, Elizabeth Taylor and the influential Egyptian political family of Boutros Gali. While we do not know precisely how Bietenharder influenced Lloyd, her involvement with him coincided with the most successful period of his life. George and Nancy took her esoteric worldview and her readings seriously, even if George always retained a level of caution and scepticism. Like W.B. Yeats, whether George Lloyd believed the guidance of mediums, healers and psychics was not as important as the necessity of these irrational experiences to stimulate his creativity. For Nancy, there was never any doubt. She was in her element, and she transformed herself into a renowned practitioner of radiesthesia and the mysterious Turenne Witnesses, a means of disease diagnosis based on tests for bad vibrations using water, a pendulum and a series of complex charts.

Feminine symbols are often associated with the fluidity and life-giving potential of water. Amniotic fluid is the source of nourishment for the foetus and unborn child. We should not be surprised therefore to discover that water in Jung's symbology is an agent of healing and nurture. Water is also central to the practice of homeopathy. In Jung's writings and many other mythic sources, the anima is the watercarrier who brings life and renewal, inspiration and creative energy. To relate effectively to the feminine archetype and the water she carries is to be in harmony with the personal unconscious, bringing good health, spiritual blessing and the possibility of faith. It is also no coincidence that Taoism, which intrigued Jung and George Lloyd, speaks not only of 'the way' as the path to enlightenment, but also suggests that we are led to our fate by the river of life. Lloyd's interest in dowsing when running his market garden was evidence of how seriously he took the spiritual aspect of water. For him, a harmonious relationship with the watery depths of his unconscious ensured creative fluency and inner serenity; the kind captured in Lloyd's lyrical piano piece, *The Lily Leaf and the Grasshopper* (1972). It evokes the peace of a riverbank on a warm summer's day. By contrast, the primal waters could be cold and forbidding, as Lloyd depicted in his Fourth Symphony (1946) which evokes the remoteness and danger of the icy seas endured by the Arctic convoys.

11. Religious orthodoxy

Lloyd's old age brought him unexpected success as a composer, conductor and musical entrepreneur. In 1984, he became the Music Director of the Albany Symphony Orchestra which commissioned two final symphonies from him, the Eleventh and Twelfth. The orchestra also created the Albany label to record Lloyd's music. Other commissions followed in the UK, and suddenly the world was at his feet, as if all the inner work of the previous four decades had finally born fruit in an unprecedented flourishing of his talent and reputation. Much of that success was self-generated too, as if his years of

good business judgement as a market gardener were now transferred to promoting and performing his own music.

Lloyd seemed to have removed the bitterness and rage, the deep psychological wounds and traumatic memories which had beset him through middle age. If PTSD had held him back for many years, the wheel of fortune had finally brought him success and serenity. It is often described as an Indian Summer, but in truth it was springtime for his soul, as Prosperine emerged from Hades and the dark influences of jealousy and diabolical manipulation which had trapped her there. This can be heard in the music of the period which finds new confidence and exuberance. The *Vigil of Venus* (1980) was an outburst of collective joy which gradually draws its poet out of his isolation and melancholy. Lloyd's *Symphonic Mass* (1992) was written as an act of gratitude for a good life. Lloyd confessed that he was an optimistic believer at the work's time of writing and, while there are some dark shadows of doubt, the overriding impression is of spontaneous joy and lyrical freedom.

George Lloyd was not a practising Christian in any conventional sense, and his occult practices and beliefs would surely have offended any mainstream Church as evidence of paganism and gnostic heresy. It was also one of Jung's criticisms of esoteric beliefs that they undermined the Christian identity of Western Man. He felt that the imprint of Christian values and rituals was so great that to deny them was to betray an important foundation of the Western psyche. Jung was not entirely consistent on this point, because he too was interested in the myths and beliefs of many different cultures. Yet it remains true that for those who have grown up in the Western traditions of Christianity and Science, to deny their influence risks succumbing to wild fantasy and even madness.

In Jung's symbology, Christ represents the archetype of the Self, the soul's blueprint of our human potential. Its instinctive wisdom guides us towards the divine light. Lloyd could thus view the Mass as a celebration of the Anthropos; of God made Man, of spirit become flesh, as the essential template of our human existence. Lloyd's final choral works, *A Litany* (1994) and a *Requiem Mass* (1998), which was written to commemorate Princess Diana, confirmed his deepening if unconventional faith. *A Litany* sets texts by John Donne, the metaphysical poet, and explores the relationship between the egoism and vanity of the artist and the humility of the religious devotee. Lloyd's desire to transcend his ego led him to celebrate music as the language of prayer, as the means by which the divine may speak to humanity directly. Music is the harmony of the Universe resonating in the soul of Man. Lloyd's final work, a touching Requiem completed on his deathbed, perceives the soul drawn ecstatically towards the divine light, the *Lux Aeterna*, symbolised by the Sun as the Great Father; the source of all life and consciousness.

12. Shaman or showman?

The life and work of George Lloyd raise significant questions about the true nature of occult experiences. It is clear that many who claim such esoteric knowledge are gullible and naïve, while some cynically manipulate those who want or need to believe. George Lloyd did not belong to either camp. He was an empiricist willing to accept the unorthodox, if it worked. When dowsing found him fresh water for his market garden, he would not question its validity. If hypnosis cured his PTSD, he would gladly accept it. Regarding his own powers to heal, he was always modest, but if others ascribed healing powers to his music, then he was not going to insist otherwise.

Since the Enlightenment, scientific materialism has come to dominate Western thinking as the principal means to understand the world around us. This 'progress' has been at the expense of conventional religious belief and other irrational means of interpreting experience. If these subjective

approaches were to survive in the modern world, then they would have to adapt to the new science to justify themselves. This has been particularly true in the realm of healing and medicine, where science had made spectacular gains in human health and longevity. Faith healers have consequently been compelled to explain their techniques in terms that mimicked the evidence-based approach of modern science, even if these rationalisations were later easily exposed by empirical investigation.

The Lloyd family, over several generations, demonstrated a prodigious capacity for free and adventurous thought. Steeped in Theosophy, Celtic culture and bohemianism, they embraced many counter-cultural beliefs and practices, many of which contradicted the extravagant claims of modern science. While this fell short of a coherent belief-system, it is possible to define some common elements which underpin this 'alternative' worldview. Most importantly, George Lloyd believed that the Universe is a projection of Universal Mind; a transcendent consciousness that precedes and permeates all matter. In Lloyd's creative work, Universal Mind revealed itself through the interaction of archetypal energies which gradually emerge in time and space to create symbols, which can also be manifested as music. While archetypal energies and symbols belong to Nature, they provide the basis of all meaningful art, religion and myth. According to Theosophy, matter and spirit are united by shared patterns of vibration which interact to create harmony or disharmony between separate bodies or energy sources.^v These can be sensed as emotions, sounds and auras. Vibration is thus the common origin of music and the visual arts. Indeed, Theosophists believed that vibration creates the world around us and is the basis of human personality. Something new emerges when two different energies come into a harmonious relationship through sympathetic vibration, as witnessed in the creativity of intimate human relationships and in the reproductive goal of sexuality.

The essential tenets of this belief system, if it can be so-called, are compatible with Jung's account of the human psyche. However, Jung was sceptical about the claims of Theosophy, because they lacked a true grounding in science. He thought that Theosophy's more fanciful imaginings were a distraction from, not a path towards, self-knowledge. That said, it is impossible to dismiss Theosophy, especially as it has influenced art and music so profoundly. It was undoubtedly also a reaction against the growing rational bias in Western Culture, drawing upon its lost esoteric traditions. In Theosophy, music is given a crucial role in reaching a spiritual understanding of the Universe. Music provides a metaphor for Universal Mind; an idea which has its roots in Pythagoras' theory of *Musica Universalis* or the 'harmony of the spheres'.

Madame Blavatsky writes in her seminal text *The Secret Doctrine* that, "Sound may be produced of such a nature that the pyramid of Cheops would be raised in the air". The *Instructions* for the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society also contain tables and diagrams showing the correspondence between the musical scale and the septenary principles of Theosophy, which are a hierarchy of spiritual energies comparable to the chakras of the Hindu religion. They range from human passions to the astral or etheric body which connects us to Universal Mind. Theosophists argued that, when a composer writes music, his emotions appear as luminous projections in his aura. We thus experience a close correspondence between colour and music, emotion and presence. Vibrations emitted in all directions leave an imprint on their surroundings so that a composer may influence people without having to meet them. Music is therefore a means of spiritual communication which transcends time and space, and which has a direct healing influence upon the psyche of its listeners.

William Dunn summarised the importance of music for Theosophy in an article, *Music and Life*^{vi}:

Music represents an incorruptible and direct medium between the higher and lower natures of man. ...All our thoughts and feelings move in it as their medium, and the process of self-conquest is nothing more than to live in this our universal home and harmonize dissociated thoughts and feelings into

musical symphonies...Let us picture a great music hall in which an orchestra is performing. No matter what sounds proceed from the many instruments, their united tones vibrate through every particle of air in the building simultaneously. Sound waves may be many, but every atom of air is participant in all these at one and the same instant. The atom therefore is the synthetic point of universal unity...

This was very much George Lloyd's approach to musical composition, placing himself in the role of medium to the Universal Mind. The common source of all vibrational energy, located deep in his psyche, provided Lloyd's creative impulses. Here were numinous healing energies which could be channelled as musical sounds and harmonies to his fellow man.

While most reports of psychic activity are hoaxes, fantasies or just too vague to verify, a small number of them do challenge the assumptions of science and beg deeper investigation. Often the individual reporting such a convincing occurrence is sceptical about what they have witnessed, be it a bizarre coincidence, a prophetic dream or a ghostly apparition. Most people can attest to some such experience in their lives which cannot be easily explained. George Lloyd was no exception. Under the influence of his wife Nancy, he could occasionally be accused of wishful thinking or a degree of spiritual paranoia. It is fair to say that Nancy was sometimes obsessive in her use of the pendulum, and her concern for George Lloyd's well-being risked making her husband dependent on her. Their shared mystical worldview could, as Jung had warned, cover up more mundane psychological tensions in their relationship which might have been better solved with a degree of emotional detachment.

For all that, Lloyd was more shaman than showman, even if he occasionally showed the romantic artist's diabolical desire for power over the unconscious. His was after all a Promethean impulse with a Promethean price, sometimes causing him bad luck and bad experiences. Yet Lloyd's late works tell us that he did find a level of spiritual peace in old age. The boisterous optimism of the *Symphonic Mass*, the celebration of the joy of music in *A Litany* and the serenity of the Twelfth Symphony suggest a man at ease with himself, no longer dogged by nightmares about war or battles with his personal demons.

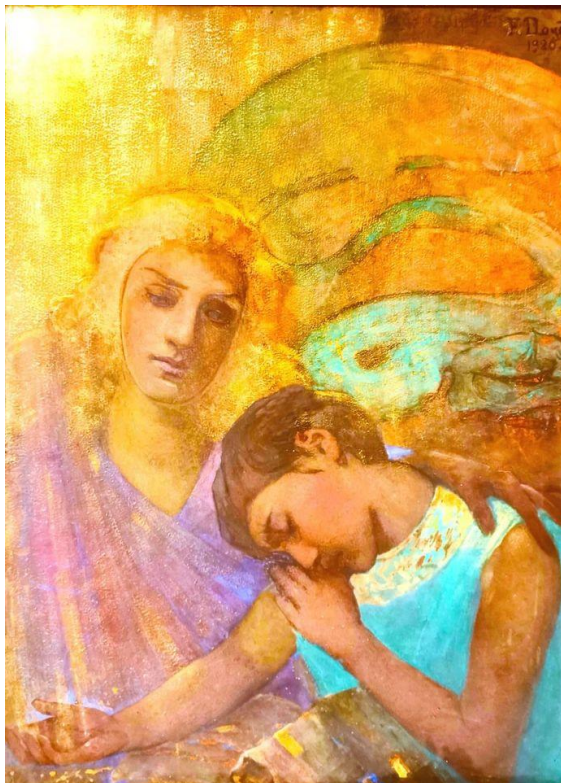
In the best Jungian tradition, George Lloyd was a spiritual experimenter, curious about and open to strangeness and marginal experience. He delved into his own psyche to heal himself and ultimately found there the compassion which might heal others. Perhaps on occasions he was gullible and naïve, but to dismiss all the mysteries of the human mind as mere hocus-pocus would be far too narrow-minded. Lloyd was more nuanced in his perception and understanding than that, finding the middle-way between *lernin*-type fantasies and the scepticism of the modern mind. In Lloyd's time, the scientist in the whitecoat carrying out strictly monitored experiments in his laboratory became a cliché of a particular vision of human progress. The predominance of the scientific method even infected art and music, so that the modern composer came to act more like a lab technician calculating numbers and carrying out bold experiments. Pierre Boulez's IRCAM in Paris remains full of researchers trying to break new ground by using mathematics and technology. George Lloyd stood against all of that, but not as a conservative resisting the future, but by believing that inner experience is the only true subject of music. In that sense, he was a radical, an explorer discovering uncharted territory in himself and open to a far wider range of experience than any scientist.

His stance made him (and many others like him) an easy target for scapegoating by those who perceived a threat to the prevailing rational culture. Lloyd was, like many Celts, sensitive to his victim status and he did well to sustain his musical ambitions and also, ultimately, managed to succeed against the odds. He was by his own admission an optimistic believer, the result no doubt of the many unorthodox healing and positive thinking techniques he had adopted over the years. He had overcome much adversity in his life, and his stance against the underlying cynicism which infected much of British

cultural life post-1945 is a lesson in the durability of the human psyche, if it clings to its instinctive sense of reality.

The Jungian astrologer Liz Greene, in her book on Neptune, reminds us that peering into the dark waters of the unconscious can provide a mirror of our most immature and deluded fantasies, or it may lead us to unfathomable depths of wisdom, meaning and redemption. The romantic artist will always find both and must learn to discriminate between them. Lloyd's lifetime of effort in this direction brought him to understand that symphonic music is a perfect metaphor for the harmony of Universal Mind and, as such, it is a mode of prayer that connects the human and the divine. In symphonic music, the play of opposites is resolved; balance is restored; the evolutionary path opens up before us, showing the way to higher consciousness. Lloyd's aesthetics affirm that our human existence is potentially beautiful and meaningful, despite the strife and suffering which is our common lot. His music bears witness to both his spiritual curiosity and his genuine vision of transcendence which, like Jung, was by the end of his life no longer a leap of faith, but a truth born from his personal experience.

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Frances Lloyd, (née Powell), George Lloyd's paternal grandmother, was a member of the New York Theosophical Society, and travelled there from Cornwall to lecture from time to time. Several of her paintings reflected Theosophical principles.

'*Spirit of Theosophy*' (left) shows the Divine Light (enlightenment or consciousness) being passed through the mother to the child, with the Serpent, (Kundalini) representing Wisdom and Eternity, behind. The spherical object to the rear is the Orpheus or Mundane Egg, representing Creativity, Earth and the origin of the Universe.

The archetypal symbolism derives from several ancient cultures including Ancient Greece, Egypt, Vedic, Gnostic, Buddhist, and Irish Celtic.

More information [Here](#)

Notes

ⁱ Liz Greene, *The Astrological Neptune and the Quest for Redemption*, Weiser Books, York Beach, 2000

ⁱⁱ Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) *The World as Will and Representation* (1818)

ⁱⁱⁱ Friederich Schiller (1759-1805) *On naïve and sentimental poetry* (1796)

^{iv} *The Outsider* was published in 1956, when Colin Wilson was just 25 years old.

^v Lloyd often spoke of triggering his creative processes deep in his psyche by finding a clue which was sometimes a specific colour, but only after 'emptying the well'. This meant removing all the distracting thoughts and emotions in his mind to allow the creative impulses to emerge.

^{iv} *The Theosophical Path*, Quarterly magazine, July-December 1911

