

# **ENIGMA**

## **The Life and Death of Alan Turing**

### **Libretto and music by Barry Truax**

**For tenor (Alan Turing) and six digital soundtracks**

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Alan Turing (1912-1954) was the British mathematician who is widely recognized as the father of the modern computer, having demonstrated its theoretical possibility in what is known as the Turing machine. He also became famous after his death when his role during World War II in deciphering the German "Enigma" code that was key to the British war effort in the Atlantic finally became publicly known. In 1951 he had an affair with a 19-year old working class youth in Manchester that eventually led to his conviction of the charge of "gross indecency". To avoid a prison sentence, he agreed to the injection of female hormones. A year after his probation ended he was found dead, presumably from eating an apple laced with cyanide and his death was declared a suicide.

# ENIGMA

## PART TWO

- 0:00 Turing: My name is Alan Turing.
- I met my first love when I was 16, Christopher Morcom. He was a brilliant colour in a black and white world. He made everyone else seem ordinary. I worshipped the ground he walked on.
- Two years later Christopher died of tuberculosis.
- In 1951 I was arrested for “gross indecency”. It was because of an affair I had with Arnold - a young man I had met on the streets of Manchester.
- Three years later on June 7<sup>th</sup> 1954 I killed myself by eating an apple laced with cyanide.
- 0:50 My poor lost lamb from the slums, dear sweet Arnold. (mimes touching him)  
1:10 He has a nightmare dream where he is suspended in an empty space, like an airplane hangar. A loud noise begins and gets louder and louder, looming .... It’s like being trapped inside a brain, having to play against the machine, best two out of three.
- 1:35 But the machine moves quickly, I have to distract it with conversation, diversionary tactics, show anger, play stupid, make it feel smug. “Can you *think* what I *feel*? Can you *feel* what I *think*?” (he stops abruptly, and seems to return to the present).
- 2:00 But Arnold, whatever you think *is*. You must learn to communicate your ideas, your dreams. I’ve got to teach you, take you out of all this.
- 2:35 But Arnold wouldn’t accept any money, said he wasn’t a renter ... but did he steal it anyway? Or was it his mate that he bragged to?
- 2:45 (in the distance, bells begin to toll, marking the death of the King.)
- 3:10 Why are there bells?
- 3:17 Constable: King George is dead. A new Queen will take his place.
- AT: ... the fairest in the land ....
- 3:34 C: We know all about it. You have reported a robbery and identified a suspect. But who was your informant? Who was he?
- AT: Yes, he is twenty-five years of age, five foot ten inches, with black hair.

- 3:57 C: We have reason to believe your description is false. Why are you lying? Who was your informant? Who was he?
- 4:20 AT: I concealed his identity because I had an affair with him, an affair with him.  
I will confess all.
- 4:40 C: Seducing a youth – from the lower classes. Gross Indecency. Gross Indecency. Seducing a youth – gross indecency.  
AT: I will go to prison. I will go to prison ... unless ...
- 5:03 C: Hormone therapy, estrogen, chemical castration ... hormone therapy, estrogen, chemical castration.
- 5:24 These are messages from an unseen World, exciting the atoms of my brain like a wireless set resonating to a non-material spirit.  
The Universe is the interior of the Light Cone of the Creation, Science a Differential Equation, Religion a Boundary Condition.
- 6:05 Hyperboloids of wondrous light, rolling for ages through Space and Time, harbour those Waves which somehow might play out God's wondrous pantomime.
- 6:30 But I am growing breasts!  
Dip the apple in the brew, let the sleeping death seep through.
- 7:00 Hyperboloids of wondrous light ... messages from an unseen World ...
- 7:20 Christopher, I am yours!
- 7:40 (soundtrack ends)