

# **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 ONE

(spoken) My name is Alan Turing. I killed myself on [7th June 1954](#) because of discrimination.

Despite decoding German Ciphers during World War Two I was rejected and punished due to my sexuality.

In 2009 The Government finally made an apology. Gordon Brown said, "We're sorry, you deserved so much better".

0:00

Apple of my life  
Which now, apple you should end  
It's my only option: Less painful than reality

Apple of my life  
My gateway to heaven  
Existing is not an option  
I'm saying NO to oestrogen

Apple of my life  
What is the opposite of opposite?  
Not all two things alike are encoded to repel

Apple of my life  
What are they scared of?  
If cyanide is attracted to you, why should there be a punishment?

Apple of my Life  
Perhaps Two things alike may attract  
Perhaps emotions mean more to someone than the law  
Love was an emotion that I shadowed in because of my sexuality, therefore  
Everyday injections were to proceed, for me to become something I am not

Apple of my death  
Bitter sweet venom through my veins,  
I will be free

- Hallie Fletcher, a 15-year old Manchester student in 2010

2:25

(video begins) When I was 16 I met the brilliant Christopher Morcom and I worshipped the ground that he walked on! He made everyone else seem so ordinary.

We did important work. We calculated pi to 36 places, we made a crystal wireless receiver to detect signals from distant places. Christopher even made a telescope. We have seen the belts of Jupiter, satellites coming out of eclipse, the nebulas of Orion and Andromeda, Sirius, Pollux and Betelgeux, the comet in its assigned

position, nearly 7<sup>th</sup> magnitude. Christopher was a brilliant colour bursting on a black and white world.

3:54 He even gave me his star map.

5:55 Christopher? Christopher? The moon is setting behind Ross' house, only the stars remain.

6:14 It is a sign that I must say goodbye to Morcom. He is gone.

6:27 My dear friend, far off, my lost desire,  
So far, so near in woe and weal;  
O loved the most, when most I feel  
There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown; human, divine;  
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;  
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,  
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;  
Loved deeper, darker understood;  
Behold, I dream a dream of good,  
And mingle all the world with thee.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam* 129.

7:46 Christopher is gone. It was tuberculosis, but I feel that I shall meet him again somewhere and that there will be some work for us to do together.

8:26 Spirit is eternally connected with matter. And the atoms of the brain can be excited by a non-material spirit, like a wireless set resonating to a signal from the unseen world.

But why do we have bodies at all? Why can we not live free as spirits and communicate as such. We probably could do so but there would be nothing whatever to do. The body provides something for our spirit to look after and use.

9:55 (soundtrack ends)

As an interlude between the two parts, the piano piece with 6-channel soundtracks, *From The Unseen World*, is performed. It is based on the piano arpeggios associated with Christopher and represents Christopher's enduring influence on Turing's life. The title is a phrase of Turing's to indicate the spirit world, and by extension, Christopher. It ends with bell-like chords that go directly into Part Two.

## PART TWO

0:00

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 (pre-recorded): 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)