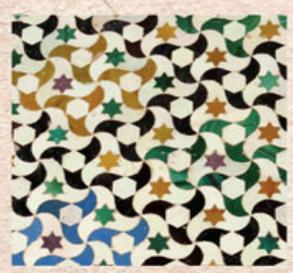
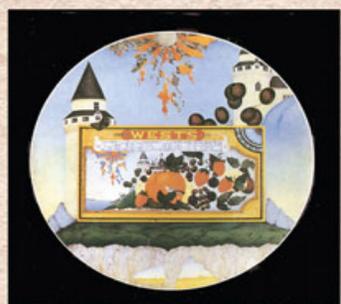
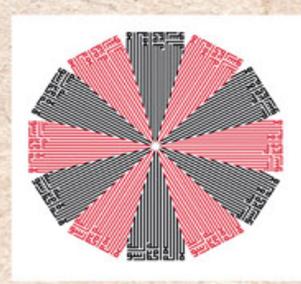


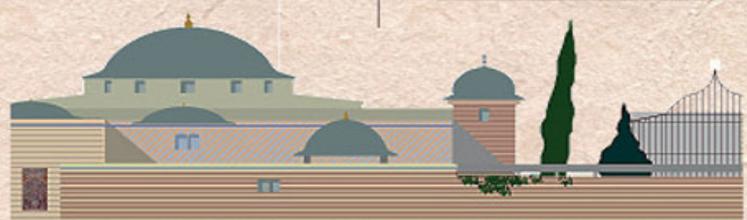
# Average

W H I T E M A N

EDITORIAL  
QASBA



تَمْرٌ فِي رَوْحِهِ رَسُولُ خَيْرٍ  
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ  
حِينَئِذٍ يَا خَيْرَ مَنْزِلٍ  
يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ رِزْقٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ



*Adventures with Quakers, Architects, Rock Stars and Sufi Sages*

Ian Abdal Latif Whiteman

A MEMOIR

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PICTURE SECTION

# Origin of the Specie

I WAS THE youngest of a large family and never knew my grandparents very well - just shadows that drifted in and out of my early life. My maternal grandfather, Rowland Walker, had been an author of novels for schoolboys in the 1920s and 1930s, published by Herbert Jenkins, P.G. Wodehouse's publisher. In fact he used to play cricket with Plum, as Wodehouse was known, in Barnet, then a village just north of London, where they both lived, but Plum went on to greater, humorous things whereas my grandfather kept on with his same old books for schoolboys or girls. Books with titles like *Airships Over the South Atlantic*, *Daphne Takes a Farm* and *Death Flies High* about feats of derring-do against the evil Hun and Baron Von Richtofen, the Red Baron, by intrepid young British pilots dropping bombs by hand on the armies of the Somme and Ypres.

He had been in the Royal Flying Corps, the forerunner of the RAF and his early experiences had been of early Avro biplane bombers at an aerodrome in Lincolnshire, where he came from, where the planes would regularly collapse on take-off and landing, much to the puzzlement of the pilot. It made a lasting impression on him. I still have a wooden joystick from one of those planes. And so Rowland Walker, after a life of cold morning baths and long walks, died aged sixty and vanished into obscurity. I did know my grandmother, but only when she came to live with us after her husband had died. She lived in a kind of preserved Victorian bubble with old black marble clocks and puffer perfume bottles and lace on every surface. I didn't really know her at all. Sadly I only remember her as an invalid who had a special cough so that when people approached the unlocked bathroom door they would know she was inside. She also listened to her "talking books for the blind" which

she would receive by post and listen to very loudly. Many a summer afternoon you could hear wafting across the lawn from her room, "... *Story of an African Farm*, chapter 55..." She did become a burden on my mother, who succumbed in the end, hospitalised with a slipped disc. That's when Gruddis (as she was affectionately known) went into a home. And that was that. After her husband had died, she, like many from her generation who had lost loved ones, especially in the Great War, consulted a medium to contact her husband Rowland Walker, on the "other side". She visited a Mrs. Gladys Osborne Leonard whom Arthur Conan Doyle had also visited many times seeking to communicate with his son lost in the war. In her book *My Life in Two Worlds* Mrs. Leonard certainly sounded like the real thing but many thought her a fraud (see Wikipedia). The early 1900s was a time of great interest in spiritualism (partly because of the huge loss of life in the war). Mrs Leonard had an Indian spirit guide called Feda and conducted seances with ouija boards but there was no mention of ectoplasms.

Now my grandfather on my father's side, who I never met, was another story altogether and one which I wasn't told really till after my father's death in 1973. And this is why. Carl Whiteman, as he was christened, had in fact changed his name in the years just before World War 1 when he upped and left his family (that of my father) from their privileged home in Gunnersbury, London, changed his name to Sydney Carroll and began another family... and then another! Let me explain.

Sydney (Carl's) mother, Alice Whiteman née Cornwell had come back from Australia in the late 1800s - very, very rich. (see illustrations) She was known as Princess Midas in Australia for having a knack of finding new seams of gold in abandoned mines and having amassed a fortune as a result. After divorcing her husband who was in the Melbourne parliament but thirty years her senior, she sold up and

returned to the mother country and established herself in Victorian London, opening a salon and buying the Sunday Times newspaper with her extensive wealth. It is known that she lost the paper in a libel suit but was still left with what remained of a small empire of magazines and businesses. Records show that at one point she invested many millions in a vast coal mining project in Adelaide. But her father had been a humble railway guard in Stratford, East London in the UK before emigrating to first New Zealand and then Australia.

Apart from the media interests, Carl/Sydney had become a noted Times columnist and theatrical impresario and credited with discovering Noel Coward, Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier amongst others. He was also well-known for starting the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre in 1932 with Robert Atkins which still functions even to this day, in the summer months. It is said he had to frequently consult the weather forecast and needed constant loans to keep it afloat! He was evidently quite a wild thespian character with an enormous appetite for life, the theatre and actresses too, by all accounts. But the split in the family when he left my father's mother was seismic. It naturally affected my father for the rest of his life and, by extension, all of us too. The sins of the fathers, by omission or commission, certainly have a knock-on effect down the generations. As do, we hope, their brighter sides.

So Sydney's new family, the Carrolls, continued parallel to our branch of the family and in the 1980s after his death we had two quite remarkable reunions in London, where I met Sydney's son and grandson and all their families for the first time. It was a phenomenal turn out with almost every race and creed present including my father's two elderly brothers, William and Michael and their sister Winifred. Sydney also generated another family, a technically illegitimate one, who were also present and welcomed along

with everyone else. My uncle Michael, who was present, a very sweet and erudite man, was to outlive all his siblings and die in 2006 aged one hundred in Cape Town, South Africa. A musician, scholar, mystic and mathematician he published books on the mystical life and his own out-of-the-body experiences – of which he had many – under the name Prof. JHM Whiteman. He drove an open top sports car till almost the day he died.

Carl/Sydney helped the children of his first family by giving them the editorship of magazines that were part of Link House, which he still owned, but the relationship must have been pretty frosty. His daughter Winifred never forgave him his lifestyle and as a result remained a spinster all her life and retreated into spiritualism and theosophy and edited an Anglo-Indian magazine called the *Aryan Path* till her death. I still picture her with her braided white hair and the distinct gap between the front teeth characteristic of other Whitemans including my father. She used to send us a box of brightly coloured glacé fruits every Christmas, which no-one liked. Her father was known to have said “Why are my children all so good?” The divorce was something which I don’t think was ever resolved or forgiven.

At the time of the Great Depression, to be given an editorship was clearly of great help. My father was given *The Bazaar Exchange and Mart* to edit when it was more of a collectors’ rag then with articles, but he soon changed jobs to edit the more up-market *Antique Collector*, which he edited for forty years, seemingly in his spare time as I remember articles, photos and layouts lying around the house for most of my youth and accounts of his frequent visits to country houses to cover them for his magazine were legion. He would tell us of his lunches with Earls, Dukes and American billionaires like Paul Getty the Elder in their country mansions. Although with Getty he had to take his own sandwiches!

My mother was my father's secretary and they must have married in the early 1930s after what was probably a Fleet Street romance. They lived in Barnet for a time (then a small village then north of London) where my mother had been raised and which then was still idyllic countryside with white chalk roads and horses and carts. Her upbringing, as well as my father's, spanned the first World War, and I recall stories I was told about that halcyon period. My father, who was at Highgate School above Hampstead Heath with a panoramic view of London, told me that on a day in May, 1915, he and his class were taken on to the school roof for a grandstand view of the bombing of London by a German Zeppelin! My mother also spoke of being aggrieved that she wasn't allowed to stay up on her eighth birthday, and getting up secretly to watch the famous Zeppelin on fire over Barnet from her bedroom window. Many years later, our neighbour Walter told us he had seen the same firework display all the way from Bartlow, near Cambridge, where we were to live in the 1990s. A curious event linking unlikely people across time.

I'm all too aware now of the affect that my parents' experiences of war had on them, and how that and the hypocrisy of high society (in my grandfather's case) and the injustices and grinding poverty which abounded in the England of the 1920s drove them to become Quakers, pacifists who embraced idealistic left-wing socialist ideas like nationalisation and the welfare state...at least a kind of middle-class version of these ideals. It must have been an alarming time with the depression and the rise of fascism. My father was a quiet but humorous man but I think he harboured a real hurt throughout his life for his father's desertion and multiple affairs, and all that went with it. It must have coloured his view of everything.

# We Go to Suburbia

SO THIS FIRST chapter of my life was in this blissful family environment. Apart from the event described earlier with the pinched pinkie finger at three months, my first coming to consciousness was in the late 1940s in 37, Fullers Road, Woodford £18, a leafy but drab lower middle-class neighbourhood near Epping Forest in East London. Why had we left Saffron Walden where I was born? It was a little complicated. My father had built a house there on the first plot for sale in the garden of a large house sold off for development in the late 1930s in the town centre which had belonged to the Fry family, local Quaker philanthropists and connected to the chocolate dynasty. A thousand pounds bought a very nice detached three bedroom house then – maybe a year’s salary, if you were lucky. During the war my father had become a billeting officer in charge of allocating lodgings for evacuee families from London into private houses. The wealthy managed to avoid this duty somehow and it was down to ordinary folk to put up wild east-end evacuee families in their homes. Once the war had finished they also had visits from German prisoners of war, who would be trusted into peoples’ homes.

We became friends with several German pows who made us a wooden model of a Lancaster bomber, and also railway locomotives out of little scraps lying around our shed. Unfortunately this bucolic haven was shattered by our neighbour, a builder named Rook, who built a bungalow which encroached several feet on our land and obscured the light from our front windows. Being a law-abiding citizen my father went through the correct channels for redress but came up against a wall of bureaucracy and legal subterfuge. He refused to pay his local tax bill and was distrained on to the extent of a standing lamp by the local council, making

the front page of the Daily Mirror in the process. The German prisoners of war offered to help (being demolition experts) but my father declined. After eighteen years of going through the courts and three decisions in his favour by successive Ministers of Housing and huge legal expenses, I think he rued the day he declined their help. It must have exhausted his finances paying barristers and it left him not a little bitter. Their dream home nestling in this historic and beautiful surroundings had suddenly become unbearable.

So in 1947, obviously distressed by all this, as well as a terrible winter making travel to London impossible, my family let the house to a Miss Dalby, upped and left for London, which is why we ended up in Woodford, London £18. I have an intense memory of this time. I can still smell the lilies of the valley at this house in Fullers Road and I can still see the big purple irises, and the green laurel bushes, the strong smell of creosote on the wooden fence, all very much at my eye level in my little green metal pedal car and being stung by a bumble bee. I have a photographic recall of many things at Fullers Road...the air raid shelter, now a garden shed; the deaf lady Mrs Hippops, at the bottom of the garden with her ear trumpet; the giant cherry tree and hunting for Easter eggs in the garden. And the 'horrible children' down the road - whoever they were.

This was a world before television, but radio was beginning to have an effect and wind-up gramophones were still quite abundant. Very vivid still is the Saturday mornings spent in the Majestic cinema in Woodford watching scary B movies and drinking strange green fizzy pop at a penny a shot. From those early cinematic experiences I had recurring nightmares of cars flying off precipices and one film in particular where a gun poking out of a wall followed a man round a room ... and the lady who had a bird cage in her hairdo. But despite the initial glimmerings of Hollywood,

things remained very austere in the UK, with ration books, cod-liver oil and rosehip syrup, all gratis, or very cheap. And dried egg powder that looked like yellow powder paint.

Everything was still pretty utilitarian and dull - all cars were black - but we had the luxury as everyone did then of all supplies - groceries, bread, fresh meat and vegetables etc., - delivered to the door. In fact everything came to the door, often by horse and covered cart. Clothes washing was a major chore in a great gas heated tub called a boiler and then rung out in a hand-turned mangle. Fridges didn't exist so most things were fresh or rotten, not frozen. There was a mesh-fronted cupboard called a 'safe' where meat, fish and butter were stored in a cool room. Cheese was always kept under a china cheese cover on the blue painted kitchen dresser. The house furniture seemed to be very brown and simple, with a parchment standing lamp in its corner next to the old piano. Most people in the post-war period lived with what they had kept from the 1930s, as the late 1940s were still a time of austerity and penny-pinching.

Susan and Kaye, my eldest siblings, had been at the Quaker school in Saffron Walden, which is why my parents had moved there in the first place from Barnet. But Kaye had been sent to a Quaker boarding school for boys in York called Bootham for his A-levels. I think my parents had high expectations of him and he did manage to get a scholarship to Oxford (where my father had been) so I guess they did the right thing for him. But I think he would have preferred to have stayed in Saffron Walden. Boys don't like to leave their mothers so early.

So my father, whilst evincing some understandable rebellion against his own father, still needed that little bit of respectability in his own life and the pride of a university education for his children was one of these things. Despite his antipathy to his own father's own high society shenanigans, he was quite happy, even proud to be

covering country houses (palaces really) for his magazine, like Woburn Abbey, for example, with the personal attention of, and lunch with, the Duke of Bedford, and to attend society events like the Royal Academy Summer Show along with his family. He still only voted Labour and loathed commercialism in all its forms. But he loved to hobnob with the aristocracy and famous people if he met them, torn between the feudal impulse and the egalitarianism of the new world. Only if you could time-travel back to then would you realize how much the society of today has been carefully moulded, re-shaped and manipulated to serve quite different goals from those of the British Empire. The consumer society now predominates world-wide, as it was carefully envisioned in the board-rooms of Madison Avenue with its market research and persuasive advertising. Buying and selling has now become the sacrament of the new religion. But it didn't exist then in the UK. What was happening after the war was the great invasion of Europe to spread the American dream, soon to dominate everyone's lives. And we seemed to welcome it with open arms. It is a fact of history that Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin had wanted to end the British Empire somehow and its hold on resources and markets, a fact that recently came to light when in 2006 the UK paid off a huge long standing debt of \$21 billion with the USA from the War.

The bulk of today's lifestyle doesn't appear to spring any more from tradition, royalty, universities, history, church, or family as it did then. It's a strange society now in which peoples' identities are defined by what they buy and own - and we all do it, whether it be a car or clothes or even sunglasses and trainers. I think the society of today would be quite shocking to my own parents, but maybe they would have been seduced by it too if they had lived long enough.

Woodford, Essex £18 was where I first went to school. Churchfields. I have a clear picture of my first meeting with

Mr. Woolford, the frightening headmaster, and crying pitifully at my mother's departure, but at the same time being fascinated by a beautiful, hand-drawn picture of a fish on a wall and wanting to be able to do the same myself. Drawing became one of my passions and right through my teens I covered probably acres of paper with pencil drawings of cars, trains, bicycles, buildings. Mostly inanimate things. Only girls drew horses. I also admired my father's skill with water colours, very much his chief occupation on every holiday we ever went on.

Ethel M. Free was my piano teacher down the road in Fuller's Avenue, until one day I went for a lesson to find her piano half submerged in a flood of water. End of piano classes. So I just started to play my own music. A world of my own musical imagination began then, unconstrained by having to learn trite little childrens' melodies. I was pretty entrepreneurial too at that time. I must have been no more than five when I decided to sell things from our house down the road, taken from my parents' bureau. So I filled a wheelbarrow with whatever I could find, postcards, pictures etc., and took pennies from kind neighbours. Of course it all had to be refunded. The same with the day I brought home from my school a fountain pen which didn't belong to me. My mother marched me all the way back and made me give it to a teacher. I suppose that's the way you learn.

Epping Forest began at the top of Fullers Road and it was for me the first big frontier of the unknown as if it went on for ever and ever. A beautiful forest full of ancient oaks and beeches and gorse bushes, pock-marked by the occasional pond made from a stray German bomb from World War 2 and turned into a beautiful natural home for fish, frogs and birds...and small boys.

There was a great scare back then of polio. Images of enormous iron lungs haunted us all, and when someone in our road caught it there was a sense of real fear. All

swimming pools were closed down. These were the days of red trolley buses which ran from the top of our road into London. To get to my father's office we would change on to the Tube at Manor House and somehow end up at Warren Street station, from which point London unfolded for me.

*The Antique Collector* was actually my father's second job, his first being for the Quakers, based in Friends House in Euston Rd. This is a large building which seems, if you visit it now, somehow stuck in time. For me, it symbolised the odd marriage of the Quakers and the modern world. All well-intended, but institutionalized nonetheless, with a kind of heavy old energy about it, enveloped with strange odours, yet it is a place popular still with the unorthodox. It is where Gandhi spoke when he came to London, where the Mevlevi Whirling Dervishes first performed and where I had sung in many a choral concert. My father's job was organizing various things like schools in distant lands - actually two principal Quaker schools, in Kenya, and the Lebanon where Arab princes would be sent for their western education.

The visitors we would meet from these places were almost always radiant, sunny people, but one visitor named Ahmadu from Kenya revealed for me some things about Ma and Pa which I found puzzling. My mother would speak to him in that typically English slow-mouthing, patronizing talk that many a colonial must have talked to a native in. Ahmadu just grinned. I fumed. It was then that I realized that parents are not all perfect, and that the colonial spirit post-empire still lived on subliminally in the very people who, in their hearts, hated the mistreatment of people, war and exploitation and what empires exist for.

David Fromkin's excellent book *A Peace to End All Peace* clearly records how my parents' generation were targeted with propaganda before and throughout the First World War. Lloyd George, prime minister before and throughout this

war, had brought John Buchan from South Africa to be the government's Director of Information. Lloyd George, a passionate evangelical Christian who was certainly one of the original neocons and an arch-Zionist in favour of re-Hellenising Turkey, wanted Buchan to incite fear of the Ottoman Empire (the Turks). They were seen as the great ally of Germany even though it was officially government policy to support the Ottoman Empire as a buffer against Russia to protect India, the jewel in Britain's crown and its most valuable colonial asset. Buchan's novels, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and *Greenmantle* also both successfully seeped a fear of a ruthless secret enemy into the minds of the British public, my parents amongst them. Buchan and Kipling glorified the idea of Empire which Lloyd George and his cronies also championed to the end.

But despite the slowly fading magic of the British Empire, the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953 was a memorable occasion, though for me it was the magic of little models of gold horse drawn carriages and special postage stamps, flags and collapsible red white and blue cardboard periscopes that I really marvelled at. What the people of Great Britain were all having to awaken to - with difficulty - was that really the Americans and the Russians had won the war, defeating not the Germans or the Japanese but eviscerating the British Empire. And that they were now OVER HERE. It was the end of Britain as we had known it. We had become a colony of the USA! Woodford, where we lived, also celebrated the Coronation with the unveiling of a huge bronze statue of Winston Churchill, the local MP accompanied by the strains of Land of Hope and Glory and a firework display. These things make an impression on a lad. In fact I was to see Mr. Churchill some years later on a school visit to the Houses of Parliament where he sat unmoving on the front row of the government benches.

\*

The big black pantehnicon had arrived in Fullers Road with the large white letters HERE COMES REED printed on the front. Smiling friendly removal men in light brown coats. Men who for years afterwards would greet you in the street or in their second-hand shop in Church Street, Saffron Walden. We were moving again. This time I was fully conscious of events and I rode in the back looking out on to the road and our life in London disappearing behind us for what was then a long road journey up the old A11 to Newport, Essex, a small village, three miles from Saffron Walden. What lay ahead? No dreams heralded this chapter, but a new chapter it was.

# We Leave Suburbia

THE 'LINKS', NEWPORT, was a converted yellow brick prison making up four terrace houses around a courtyard with our house set at the back with a large garden looking straight on to the main London Newmarket railway line. Four miles away to the east, Debden RAF aerodrome was still functioning, as it had ever since the end of the war, and our house was directly under the take-off flight path so that old black Lancaster and Lincoln bombers would almost scrape the large chestnut trees that stood between us and the small river to the north as they trundled into the sky like a rumbling echo of the war. The main London Newmarket road was out front, which was a dream come true for small boys growing up in the 1950s, if not for adults. Yes, and we collected car numbers, train numbers, any numbers! I shall never know why. Maybe a subliminal rationalising of the outside world as it started to encroach on our little universe.

The house had been modernised, but there were still carvings written by prisoners in the floor boards and on the brickwork. This was to be an adventure wonderland, where tunnels were to be dug under the large lawn and underground houses built in the banks of the small river that ran through the land, with real metal chimneys sprouting out of the earth, Hobbit-like. It was a place where adolescence marched in full throttle, where music was played all the time whether it was my big brother playing his endless pile of sheet music on the piano or myself thumping out some twelve bar blues. All kinds of music could be heard. From wartime hits to Gilbert and Sullivan, Mozart, Bach and even Beethoven. Both my parents played the piano sometimes and my next brother up, Richard, often strained away at his cello. It's what people did then and had done for generations. We entertained ourselves. And we

weren't the only musicians in the street. The doctor's family up the road, the Salomon children, were in national orchestras and it was either Julia on the cello or her brother practising the french horn when they were at home that you heard wafting over the air on a summer night. Good musicians had to practice, and practice they did. My cousin Sybil from South Africa came to stay for a month; she was a concert pianist and had to practise for eight hours a day, namely Liszt and Chopin on our clanky old upright piano, which groaned and nearly broke under her commanding arpeggios and pedal pressing.

Despite all the distractions of trains, cars and planes, music took up most of our time. Kaye, my eldest brother had a small hifi and he was playing the music of Gerry Mulligan, The Modern Jazz Quartet, Count Basie's *The Atomic Mr. Basie* and Frank Sinatra's *Song for Swinging Lovers*, which all influenced me. From the radio came American pop music, and this also was the music we danced to at school dances, held in the school gym once I reached teen-hood. That was where I first heard Buddy Holly in all his raw originality. By the time I got to the Friends' School at the age of eleven we were listening to Chuck Berry. Listening to *School Day* on a wind-up 78 rpm gramophone in the middle of the school cricket pitch in the lunch break is lodged in my memory. American culture had certainly arrived in quaint old England!

I spent a few years after we first returned to Essex going to a small local school in Saffron Walden called Boys British, which was generally for local boys up to the age of eleven. For me this was strange, as they all had Essex accents and I had, if anything, a London accent, so I stood out. My father used to try and wean me off cockney which I had picked up at school. Also because of the difference in educational standards I found the work very easy. These were still the happy days of dip pens, blotting paper and distraught

mothers dealing with little boys coming home covered in ink stains. A wooden ruler can propel a small inky blotting paper bullet with deadly accuracy in the right hands. They were also the days of outside toilets and boys who came to school smelling to high heaven. Hygiene was not a big thing back then - and that goes for oral hygiene as well. The brutal local ex-army dentist would give his younger patients small boiled sweets after an appointment to ensure their return.

I formed a close friendship with a boy in my class called John Archer Crump and we were inseparable. His mother had left him in Walden with her sister who was the headmistress of the Secondary Modern School and had returned to London where she lived. Crump had been a handful, I imagine, but we had a great common love of old cars and whatever it is that makes small boys play for hour after hour with seemingly no props. However, when the time came to go to the grammar school (i.e. the Friends' School), Crumpy failed the 11-plus exam. But his aunt, the headmistress of the secondary modern school, got him into the Friends' anyway by pulling various strings. He wasn't happy and was expelled before the year was out for setting fire to a desk in room X. He just couldn't make it. Overnight he turned against me and used to wait at night on my evening walk home in shop doorways to pounce, shouting "Snob!" I was pretty unhappy about this but could do nothing. The last I heard of him was that he had died of a drug overdose in Australia.

In those early times in the 1950s, maybe about 1956, groups of boys from our school would be taken to the Robert Mayer Concerts in London's Festival Hall on Saturday mornings. For me these were magical, awe-inspiring events and we must have attended many of them, as I recall numerous performances by the best orchestras, soloists and conductors of the day. This was all given free for small children, who filled the auditorium to overflowing - a

genuinely philanthropic act. We were taken through all the instruments of the orchestra and we heard Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Elgar, Britten and Dvorak from conductors like Malcolm Sargent, John Barbarolli and Thomas Beecham. Not only was the music magical, but the newness of the Festival Hall gripped me as well. After the Festival of Britain in 1953, there was a kind of optimism about and it was quite infectious to a young mind like mine. I wanted it all. On our many visits to the Royal Academy Exhibition Press Views in Piccadilly with my parents I looked at the art, the sculpture, the architecture and thought even at that tender age that I could do it too. I also liked the champagne and the canapés and I don't know how they got me home sometimes. I must have been legless. And in a practically teetotal Quaker family, too.

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