

## Michael Roberts – Selhurst Grammar School and Beyond

If my somewhat hazy memories serve me well, my time at Selhurst (1956-63) was always enjoyable if, in terms of achievement, for the most part unremarkable. However, I was a bit of a rebel (still am) and caused occasional grief for prefects and teachers (teacher: “Get your hair cut Roberts!”; Me: ”My dad thinks it's fine!”; End result: probably detention or lines). I think I smartened up a bit in the 6<sup>th</sup> form as, with the help of some stellar teaching, I managed to earn a place at the Victoria University of Manchester (where Anna Ford was a classmate ... and eventually Chancellor ... to my knowledge I have zero other “claims to fame”).

After getting my degree there were several years of teaching, followed by the start of a career in the world of banking. During this time I ended up back in Manchester ... in some ways I am still a confirmed (confused?) Mancunian: City is my team, second only to my beloved Crystal Palace! In 1974 I moved to Montreal, Canada to work for a Canadian bank, mainly in the computer systems areas, until I ‘retired’ in 1999 to work full-time as a composer. I live now in the Niagara region of Ontario.

My *affaire d'amour* with music started just before I started at Selhurst. I started playing the Cornet, with lessons from a former Tottenham Hotspurs bandmaster, and then Trumpet, with lessons from a jazz musician whose name I cannot recall. At Selhurst I played in the school orchestra (Mr Spratt once opined to my father that “the trumpets were not very good”: I'm pretty sure he was referring to me), and in a jazz combo with some friends (“The National Soul Board” ... we played *once* at a school dance). I am not a performer ... my performance skills are second to most.

My interest in composition was piqued in the mid-1980's when I bought my first keyboard – an all- singing, all-dancing Technics electronic organ. This *wunderkind* had everything: first and foremost a realistic organ, but also customizable percussion that played itself, synthesized orchestral instruments, and – best of all – a floppy disk system, that could record what you play! It was on this that I composed my first symphony. Today the sounds would be considered hokey, really hokey; but back then ...! I still have it and my grandkids love playing it.

Today the ‘synthesized’ sounds available are very realistic, to the point where I can compose for a full symphony orchestra and choir (for example), and record a finished product, all from the computers in my studio. It does not replace the live experience, but it makes it easy to publish my work. Perhaps you'll join me at my website to hear more of the results ([www.mikerobertscomposer.com](http://www.mikerobertscomposer.com)).