

Burgess' music as impressive as his novels

A CLOCKWORK COUNTERPOINT: The Music and Literature of Anthony Burgess,

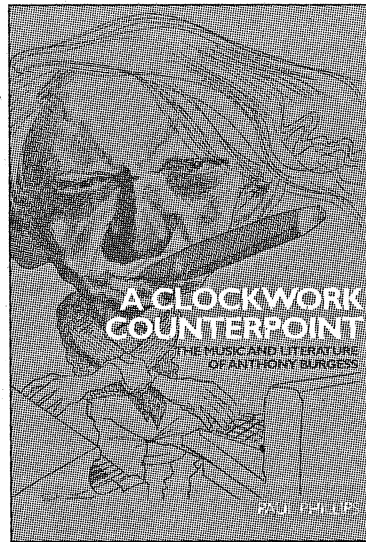
by Paul Phillips.
Manchester University Press.
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By **SAM COALE**
SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Anthony Burgess was best known as a prolific novelist, most notably for his iconic "A Clockwork Orange." But his output as a composer was equally impressive.

To try to squeeze this sumptuous, prodigiously researched, elegantly written tome on Burgess, the composer, into a short review is ludicrous if not impossible. Paul Phillips, orchestral director and senior lecturer in music at Brown, has conjured up a "new" Burgess that will forever alter his reputation.

Burgess composed an awesome number of fugues, preludes, string quartets, librettos, songs, symphonies, musicals (such as 1973's "Cyrano"), "Blooms of Dublin" (a musical interpretation of Joyce's "Ulysses"!), concertos and the like, much of which have been lost. "As any musician will tell



you," he wrote, "there is only one thing to do when you wake at 5, and that is to compose a fugue."

Only Burgess could have moved from an atonal work to the song, "Copulation Without Population."

Phillips has unearthed every available scrap, filling his book with snatches of scores, commenting astutely on all of them. Some of the musical criticism can be dense, but he ties it to Burgess' life

and keeps the whole of it seamlessly fascinating.

In his fiction — more than 30 novels — Burgess hoped "somehow to give symphonic shape to verbal narrative." He did it in "A Clockwork Orange," "Napoleon Symphony" and others. The prodigious Phillips marvels "at the sheer industry of the man, able to toss off a musical between novels and film scripts." He composed without using a keyboard.

When I interviewed Burgess in Monaco for a book on his fiction, he wrote, "Master Coale's Pieces," which was played a year after his death in 1994. Phillips has directed his Third Symphony and had the "Pieces" performed at Brown.

Phillips has written a necessary and splendid book on the master musician, recommending the "Third Symphony," "Mr. W.S." (Shakespeare), and the three guitar quartets as part of his legacy. He should also have named his own brilliant work.

Master Coale (samcoale@cox.net) teaches literature at Wheaton. His book "Anthony Burgess (Literature & Life)" was [published in 1981.