

a 35-minute piece based on it with Roy's permission, which was commissioned by the BBC and performed at The Proms in 1976. It's one of my favourite songs of all time, actually," Bedford adds.

Having studied at Royal Academy of Music, and in the early 60s in Venice, Bedford was by then already a serious composer in his own right, soaking up the heady avant-garde atmosphere that pervaded the contemporary classical music scene at the time. He was also briefly a member of maverick composer Cornelius Cardew's Scratch Orchestra (Brian Eno was another notable figure there), which used graphic scores instead of standard musical notation to create pieces open to free interpretation by performers.

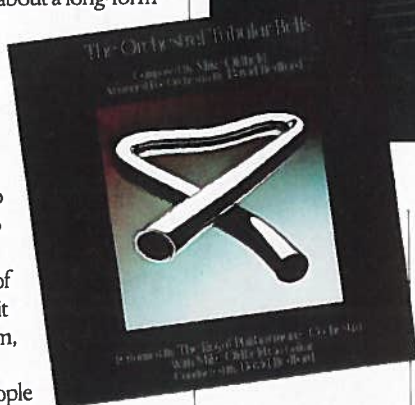
"It was a fairly exciting period in the 1960s," says Bedford. "We felt free to allow players to improvise a bit, to use notation which would give them freedom." A frequent attendee at all kinds of pan-cultural events and happenings, Bedford, though committed to his first calling as a composer of what the establishment would call serious music, also recognised the value of what was going on in pop music. An admirer of bands such as Pink Floyd and Soft Machine, when he was asked to provide musical arrangements for Kevin Ayers' debut album, *Joy Of A Toy* (1969) Bedford had no hesitation. His work on this masterpiece of psych-pop ensured him a place as keyboard player in Ayers' touring band, The Whole World. "One of my favourite memories of all time was a day in Hyde Park where the Kevin Ayers band were backing Pink Floyd's first performance of *Atom Heart Mother*. It was a wonderful sunny day. The Pink Floyd were fantastic!"

Nearly 40 years on Bedford retains a fondness for the band: "I think Kevin was another example of an English eccentric and frequently he subverted his songs so that what could've been a chart hit didn't end up that way, because there were weird bits in the middle. We did that a lot when we were playing onstage live." It was during the group's long journeys up and down the motorway that band bassist, Mike Oldfield, asked Bedford for advice about a long-form composition he'd been

quietly working on – specifically what composers the 17-year old should be listening to. "He was interested in English classical music so I suggested to listening to people like Delius, Elgar and Vaughan Williams, of which you hear quite a bit of in Mike's second album, *Hergest Ridge*. I also suggested he listen to people like Terry Riley and Philip Glass, which you hear coming through in the beginning of *Tubular Bells*. We just talked about music in general because he was very inexperienced, he hadn't listened to a lot of music. When at some point he took over lead guitar in the band, I heard little themes

"He hadn't listened to a lot of music. I recommended composers, and when he took over lead guitar I heard the themes that would become *Tubular Bells*."

David Bedford on working with Oldfield



Above: David and Mike plot 1973's *Tubular Bells*, which Bedford would orchestrate the following year.

in some of his soloing which I would later recognise in *Tubular Bells*." Bedford is quick to point out that he had absolutely no inkling that Oldfield's opus would be so popular when it was finally released in 1973.

In 1972 Bedford had himself released a compendium of his older compositions on John Peel's Dandelion label at the invitation of the DJ himself. *Nurses Song With Elephants* (recently reissued by Esoteric) provides a snapshot of some of Bedford's more unconventional scores. However, it was his orchestration of *Tubular Bells* – at the behest of Richard Branson – that would take Bedford to a much wider audience. "I felt the

orchestration of *Hergest Ridge* was more successful... We did it at the Royal Albert Hall and because the music was much more pastoral and serene, I think the orchestra did it much better than *Tubular Bells*."

The release of *Star's End* in 1974 marked the first of a series of solo recordings for the Virgin label. Complex, dense and tumultuous, *Star's End* (inspired a love of astronomy) featured Oldfield and Henry Cow drummer, Chris Cutler, as well as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. During preparations for the recording, Bedford encountered overt snobbery from some quarters of the classical music world. "It was