The Work of Robert Owen

As of from 2016, following a visit to New Lanark where Robert Owen took over from his father-in-law, David Dale the founder of the cotton mill, I am researching this project with a view to composing an orchestral piece with chorus and soloists.

Robert Owen, is recognised as one of the founders of the Cooperative movement and trade unions in the 19th century.

Amongst academics, there is a stunted flirtation with the establishment as Robert Owen is mostly shown to be contradictory and possibly his own worst enemy. He was not a dedicated Christian but was a wealthy industrialist having made a fortune out of the mill workers who he stated he represented. These contradictions were clearly explained by Frederick Engels in ‘*Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*’ when he wrote: “Robert Owen had adopted the teaching of the materialistic philosophers: that man’s character is the product, on the one hand of heredity; on the other, of the environment of the individual during his lifetime, and especially during the period of development. […] His [Robert Owen’s] advance in the direction of communism was the turning point in Owen’s life. As long as he was simply a philanthropist, he was rewarded with nothing but wealth, applause, honour, and glory. He was the most popular man in Europe. Not only men of his class, but statesmen and princes listened to him approvingly. But when he came out with his communist theories, that was quite another thing. […] Banished from official society, with a conspiracy of silence against him in the press, ruined by his unsuccessful communist experiments in America, in which he sacrificed all his fortune, he turned directly to the working class and continued working in their midst for thirty years…”

Robert Owen was a very interesting man and I intend to bring him to the attention of the world by portraying his story through music…