

# David Sawyer

Composer



*Byrnan Wood*, his first large-scale orchestral piece, was premiered at the 1992 BBC Proms and subsequently recorded on the NMC label by the BBC Symphony Orchestra with Andrew Davis. The *Trumpet Concerto* was premiered by the same orchestra in 1995, and in 1997 the BBC National Orchestra of Wales gave the world première performances of *the greatest happiness principle* in Cardiff and at the BBC Proms. *Tiroirs*, commissioned by the Michael Vyner Trust for the London Sinfonietta, has been performed throughout Europe, in the USA and at the 1998 ISCM World Music Days.

Drama, or a fascination with theatrical possibilities, is present in many works. His radio composition *Swansong*, a commentary in words and music on a short story by Berlioz, won a Sony Award in 1990. In *Byrnan Wood*, the image from Macbeth of Malcolm's disguised army advancing on Dunsinane provided an initial abstract idea – sound transforming itself as it moves through the orchestra. *Cat's-Eye* was choreographed by Richard Alston for Ballet Rambert, and *Hollywood Extra*, written for the Matrix Ensemble to accompany an expressionist silent film, was toured with Contemporary Music Network by the Asko Ensemble.

In the theatre, he has worked with playwrights Edward Bond, Nick Dear and Paul Godfrey, and has written two operas: the one-act *The Panic* for the Royal Opera's Garden Venture, and *From Morning to Midnight*, a full-length work commissioned by English National Opera, premiered at the London Coliseum in 2001, and for which he received an Olivier Award nomination for Outstanding Achievement in Opera.

Sawyer's operetta *Skin Deep* (2009) written to a libretto by comedian Armando Iannucci, was premiered by Opera North, with performances across the UK, Bregenz and Copenhagen. His ballet *Rumpelstiltskin* (2009) was premiered by BCMG. *Flesh and Blood*, written for the BBC Symphony Orchestra, followed in 2013 with a critically acclaimed new music-theatre piece for BCMG, *The Lighthouse Keepers*.

His newest opera, *The Skating Rink*, was premiered at Garsington Opera in July 2018. Described as "spectacularly eclectic" and "gripping", the first opera commission in the 30-year history of the company was an artistic triumph, rewarded with 4- and 5-star reviews from the press.

Other works include a *Piano Concerto* for Rolf Hind and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, which won the British Academy British Composer Award 2003 in the orchestra category, *Stramm Gedichte* for the New London Chamber Choir and James Wood, and *Rebus*, commissioned by musikFabrik.

A CD of four orchestral works recorded by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and BCMG conducted by Martyn Brabbins and Susanna Mälkki was released in 2007 on NMC. In 2019, NMC released a disc of his dance-related orchestral works, including *Cat's-Eye*, *April\March* and *Rumpelstiltskin Suite*, also performed by BCMG and Martyn Brabbins.

Recent compositions include *Caravanserai*, commissioned and performed by BCMG, and *Coachman Chronos*, performed by the Aurora Orchestra at the Science Museum. *April\March*, first performed by the London Sinfonietta at the 2016 BBC Proms, features at the Royal Ballet's inaugural performance in the new Linbury Theatre in February 2019, to choreography by Aletta Collins. He wrote a variation for *Pictured Within* for the BBC Proms in August 2019, performed by BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and broadcast on BBC Four and BBC Radio 3, and in February 2020 his new work *How Among the Frozen Words* for choir and bassoon received its world premiere with the BBC Singers with chief conductor Sofi Jeannin.

David Sawyer is published by Edition Peters and Universal Edition (prior to 2015).

David Sawyer studied music at the University of York and subsequently won a DAAD scholarship to study in Cologne with Mauricio Kagel. In 1992 he was awarded the Fulbright-Chester-Schirmer Fellowship in Composition; a Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award followed in 1993 and, in 1995, the Arts Foundation's Composer Fellowship. In 1996 he was composer-in-association with the Bournemouth Orchestras; in 2006 he was awarded a Civitella Ranieri Fellowship.

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[info@rayfieldallied.com](mailto:info@rayfieldallied.com)