

CHARLES WUORINEN

David C F Wright DMus

Charles Wuorinen is an American composer born in New York on 9 June 1938. His father, John H Wuorinen, was in the history department of Columbia University specialising in Scandinavian affairs particularly those of Finland, his native country. Charles mother, Affhid Kalijarv, achieved a BA in biology.

Charles began to compose at the age of five and had piano lessons from the age of six. He had other hobbies and, for example, always had an interest in astrophysics. He became the youngest composer to win the Pulitzer prize for his orchestral work *Time's Encomium* and has received many awards and honours since. He was active as a singer and pianist



His opera *Sea of Stories* is based on the writings of Salman Rushdie and was premiered by the New York Opera Company in 2004 and received much praise. Indeed, his vocal and choral works were highly regarded including the large scale setting of *A Winter's Tale* to texts by Dylan Thomas which appeared in 1991.

By 1959 he had written his *Symphony no 3*.

In the 1960s his works included a *Cello Concerto* and a *Flute Concerto*.

In the 1970s, there appeared the *Piano Concerto no 2* for amplified piano and the *Concerto* for amplified violin and orchestra and the *Percussion Concerto*.

There are several works for ballet and modern dance including *Five* (*Concerto* for amplified cello and orchestra), *Delight of the Muses*, *The Reliquary* for Igor Stravinsky, *Commedia* and *The Mission of Virgil*, *The Great Procession* and *The River of Light* three works based on Dante.

Percussion plays an important part in his life and this includes the *Percussion Concerto* for 24 players.

He is homosexual and married to his lifetime partner and friend, Howard Stokar.

He is strange in other ways. Why write for amplified soloists?

He has taught at the New England Conservatory (1968-71), Princeton (1969-71) University of Iowa (1970) and the University of South Florida (1971). From 1971 to 1979 he taught at the Manhattan School of Music.

In the 1980s, he composed the massive Biblical oratorio, *The Celestial Sphere*, the *Piano Concerto no 3* for Garrick Olsen and the *Rhapsody* for violin and orchestra, not amplified.

From 1985-89 he was composer in residence of the San Francisco Symphony orchestra. In the 1990s, he composed the symphonies number 7 and 8, number 8 was written for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the *Concerto* for saxophone quartet and orchestra, the aforementioned

three ballets after Dante, the Sonata for guitar and piano, the Cello Variations III and the String Quartet no 2.

At the turn of the century came the Piano Concerto no 4 and the String Quartet no 4.

In 2012, Wuorinen wrote his third opera, Brokeback Mountain, a story about two men in a passionate and emotional gay affair which does not and will not appeal to everybody. In fact, much of his music seems disjointed and tough yet he has had a good measure of success.

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