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Robert SAXTON

(b. 1953)



Photo by Katie Vandyck

Robert Saxton was born in London in 1953. He began composing aged 6 and, after early advice from Benjamin Britten, he studied with Elisabeth Lutyens (1970-74), at Cambridge (1972-75) where he received composition tuition from Robin Holloway and as a postgraduate at Oxford with Robert Sherlaw Johnson (1975-76), where he had composition lessons with Luciano Berio. In 1975, he was awarded 1st Prize at the Gaudeamus International Composition Competition in Holland. He was the recipient of the Fulbright Arts Award 1985-86 to the USA, where he was a visiting fellow at Princeton and assistant to Oliver Knussen at Tanglewood Summer Music School, during which time he

also taught alongside Leonard Bernstein. He was assistant to Sir Peter Maxwell Davies at Dartington Summer School (1983-84) and on Hoxton in the 1990s. During the 1980s and 1990s, Saxton also undertook outreach education work both with Glyndebourne Opera and Opera North in the UK, and in Norway and Japan with the London Sinfonietta. Following a post as a lecturer at Bristol University, Saxton was Head of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (1991-98), Head of Composition and Contemporary Music at the Royal Academy of Music (1998-99) and, since 1999, has been at Oxford University, where he is Professor of Composition and Tutorial Fellow in Music at Worcester College. Having been a member of the Arts Council Music Panel, he was from 1997-2007 a Board member of London's Southbank Centre. From 1992-98 Saxton was Artistic Director of Opera Lab and from 2011-12 was Composition Mentor for Sounds New, a joint Anglo-French/EU project. Robert is Composer-in-Association at the Purcell School.

Selected commissions include works for the BBC (TV, Radio 3 and the Proms), ECO, LPO, LSO, London Sinfonietta, Nash Ensemble, Northern Sinfonia, St Paul Chamber Orchestra USA, Christ Church Cathedral Oxford, Chilingirian String Quartet, The Clerks, Aldeburgh, Cheltenham, City of London, Huddersfield and Lichfield festivals, and for Richard Rodney Bennett and Susan Bradshaw, Teresa Cahill, Simon Desbruslais, Leon Fleisher, Clare Hammond, Steven Isserlis, Mstislav Rostropovich, John Wallace and Raphael Wallfisch. His music is published by Chester/Music Sales, Ricordi and UYMP and

For more information on UYMP and our composers, and for general inquiries, please contact

Tel: 01904 332434

e-mail: info@uymp.co.uk

For sales, hire and administration, please contact Administrator: Claire Irwin

Tel: 01904 332434

e-mail: claire@uymp.co.uk

recorded on the EMI, Sony Classical, Hyperion, NMC and Signum labels.

Saxton's *String Quartet No. 3* was commissioned by the Southbank Centre, London and premiered by the Arditti Quartet. His radio opera, *The Wandering Jew*, was recorded and broadcast on BBC Radio 3's Performance on 3 by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and BBC Singers and released on NMC in 2011. A major study of his 1991 opera *Caritas* by Wyndham Thomas was published by Ashgate Press in 2012. Recent commissions include *Time and the Seasons*, a song cycle for Roderick Williams and Andrew West at the Oxford Lieder Festival 2013; *Shakespeare Scenes*, a Trumpet Concerto for Simon Desbruslais and the Orchestra of the Swan, released on Signum in 2014; *Hortus Musicae*, a piano cycle for Clare Hammond at the City of London Festival; and new works for the City of Cambridge Brass Band, Merton College, Oxford, and the Presteigne Festival. He was a Frontline Composer for the Park Lane Group Young Artists New Year Series 2015 and will be composer-in-residence at the Presteigne Festival in 2016.

He is married to the soprano, Teresa Cahill.

Robert Saxton is published by Chester Music, UYMP and Ricordi.

PRESS QUOTES

“Drawing on a wide range of influences from his Jewish roots to the relationship between mathematical and music principles... his considerable technique and imagination make for writing of compelling melody (though not always in the conventional sense) and of richly organic background texture.’

The Observer

‘Saxton’s glistening, subtle *Hortus Musicae* (2013), inspired by the notion of a metaphysical garden.’

Fiona Maddocks, 11 January 2015, *The Observer*

‘The Maxwell Quartet... played Saxton’s String Quartet No. 3 (2011), capturing the contrasting character of each of the five movements with titles which as Winter Light and Dance. Ideas reveal and hide themselves in constant, delicate oscillation. In one (Sea Ground), he uses a passacaglia, mirroring the repeated yet changing action of the sea. This music, in this performance, had a mystery, delicacy and depth which made you want to hear it again immediately. What an exhilarating start to 2015.’

Fiona Maddocks, 11 January 2015, *The Observer*

LIST OF WORKS

ORCHESTRA

Shakespeare Scenes (2013) 15'

for solo trumpet and string orchestra
first performance: Simon Desbruslais and The Orchestra of the Swan, conducted by David Curtis Stratford Civic Hall, 24th May 2013.

ISMN M 57036 435 0 **conducting score: £31.95**
ISMN M 57036 442 8 **study score: £26.95**
ISMN M 57036 446 6 **solo trumpet part: £2.95**
performance materials for hire

The Resurrection of the Soldiers (2016) 12'

for string orchestra
commissioned by Presteigne Festival
first performance: Presteigne Festival Orchestra, cond. George Vass, Presteigne Festival 30th August 2016

ISMN M 57036 721 4 **conducting score: £10.95**
ISMN M 57036 722 1 **performance materials for hire**

BRASS BAND

Sonata for Brass Band on a Prelude of Orlando Gibbons (2014) 9'

for brass band
Commissioned by Peter Bassano for the City of Cambridge Brass Band, with funds provided by the Golland Trust and the RVW Trust.
first performance: City of Cambridge Brass Band cond. Peter Bassano, Girton College, Cambridge, 15th November 2014.

ISMN M 57036 538 8 **score: £15.95**
ISMN M 57036 546 3 **parts: £41.95**

SMALL ENSEMBLE (4-7 PLAYERS)

Praeludium on the name George Frideric Handel (2015) 3'

for string quartet
ISMN M 57036 649 1 **score: £8.95**

Little Prelude for John McCabe (2016) 2'

for treble recorder, clarinet in Bb, viola and piano
ISMN M 57036 717 7 **score: £6.95**

SOLOS, DUOS AND TRIOS

'...from a distant shore...' (2001) 5'

for solo oboe
commissioned by Melinda Maxwell
first performance: Dartington Summer School, August 2001

ISMN M 57020 190 7 **score: £7**

Little Suite for Organ (2012) 8'

for solo organ
commissioned by sound and the University of Aberdeen
first performance: Roger Williams, King's College Chapel, University of Aberdeen, 6 November 2012

ISMN M 57036 369 8 **score: £7.95**

Miniature Dance for a Marionette Rabbi (1999) 2'

for solo guitar
first performance: David Starobin, Wigmore Hall, December 1999

ISMN M 57020 187 7 **score: £7**

Music for St. Catharine (1998) 10'

for solo organ
commissioned by Lester Hillman
first performance: Max Pappenheim, St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, 25 September 1998

ISMN M 57020 186 0 **score: £21**

PASSACAGLIA (2015) 6'

for solo organ
commissioned by George Vass for a concert in celebration of the life and work of John McCabe CBE.

ISMN M 57020 642 2 **score: £7.95**

Sonata for Solo Cello on a Theme of Sir William Walton (1999) 10'

for solo cello
commissioned by Steven Isserlis with funds from the John S Cohen Foundation
first performance: Steven Isserlis, Aldeburgh Festival, 10 June 2000

ISMN M 57020 188 4 **score: £13**

Song Without Words (2004) 2'

for clarinet and piano
commissioned by Ian Mitchell for inclusion in the Associated Board's Spectrum Volume for Clarinet

ISMN M 57020 771 8 **score and part: £10**

The Legend of King Herla (2015) 14'

tone poem for flute and harp
ISMN M 57036 636 1 **score and part: £29.95**

There and Back (2006)

for three variable instruments
part of 'On Track', UYMP's Grade 4-level Education Volume

ISMN M 57020 908 8 **score and parts: £19.95**

VOICE AND 1-3 INSTRUMENTS

The beach in winter: Scratby [for Tess] (2007) 2'30"

for baritone voice and piano
written for the 20th anniversary of NMC
poem by Robert Saxton, 1998
ISMN M 57036 018 5 score: £7

Time and the Seasons (2013)

song cycle in seven parts for baritone voice and piano
commissioned by the Oxford Lieder Festival 2013.
first performance: Roderick Williams (bar.) and Andres West (pno.), Holywell Music Room, Oxford, Wednesday 16 October, 2013.
ISMN M 57036 410 7 set of two performing scores: £24.95

CHORAL, ACCOMPANIED

A BABE IS BORN (2011) 3'40"

for unison voices and organ
A revision of a carol written in 1970 by Robert Saxton, to the words of a 'traditional' 15th century carol.
Re-written and dedicated to Dr Ian Taylor and the choir of Downe House School.
ISMN M 57036 327 8 choral score: £3.99

Locus Iste (2004) 3'

for choir (SSATB) and organ
commissioned by St Catharine's College Cambridge for the 300th anniversary of the consecration of the chapel
first performance: Dr Edward Wickham, Max Pappenheim (organ scholar) and the St Catharine's chapel choir, 25 November 2004
ISMN M 57020 770 1 conducting and organ score: £10
choral score: £3

O Living Love (2006) 5'

for choir (SATB) and organ
words by WH Auden
commissioned by Dr Stephen Darlington, Christ Church Oxford
first performed as part of a service celebrating the centenary (2007) of WH Auden
ISMN M 57036 003 1 conducting and organ score: £17
choral score: £6

CHORAL, UNACCOMPANIED

Cantate Domino and Deus Misereatur (2002) 8'

for unaccompanied SSATB choir
texts Psalm 98 and Psalm 67 — alternative canticles
commissioned by Christ Church Cathedral Choir
first performance: November 2002
ISMN M 57020 703 9 conducting score: £17
choral score: £5

The Dialogue of Zion and God (2000) 5'

for 8 solo voices
texts in Hebrew by Eleazar ben Kallir
commissioned by The Clerks' Group with funds from the Jerwood Foundation
first performance: The Clerks' Group, Wigmore Hall, 31 May 2000
ISMN M 57020 189 1 conducting score: £17
choral score: £5

Five Motets (2003) 15'

for unaccompanied SSAATTBBB choir
texts: Bible (Latin) and Saxton (English)
commissioned by the BBC
first performance: The Clerks' Group, BBC Henry Wood Prom, Royal Albert Hall, 5 September 2003
ISMN M 57020 724 4 conducting score: £32
choral score: £10

WAS IT WINTER? (2011) 2'30"

for unaccompanied SATB choir
text by Robert Saxton
first performance: the choir of Worcester College, Oxford, cond. Thomas Allery.
ISMN M 57036 326 1 choral score: £1.99

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis (2010) 7'

for 2 trebles, alto, tenor and bass choir
commissioned by Dr Stephen Darlington with funds provided by the Friends of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford
ISMN M 57036 269 1 choral score: £3

Vexilla Regis (2014) 5'

for SSAATTBB choir
A setting of Venantius Fortunatus (530-609 CE)
dedicated to Benjamin Nicholas and the choir of Merton College, Oxford, on the occasion of the 750th anniversary of the foundation of the college.
ISMN M 57036 507 4 choral score: £3.50

MUSIC FOR CHILDREN AND AMATEURS

Song Without Words Solos, Duos and Trios
There and Back Solos, Duos and Trios

SELECTED RECORDINGS



Psalm: Contemporary British Trumpet Concertos

Includes: Shakespeare Scenes

Performed by Simon Desbruslais (trumpet); Orchestra of the Swan; David Curtis (conductor)

Label: Signum Classics, SIGCD403



A Yardstick to the Stars

Includes: Processions and Dances; Chacony; Fantazia; Invocation, Dance and Meditation; Eloge; Arias; A Yardstick to the Stars

Performed by Teresa Cahill (soprano); John Constable, John McCabe and Ian Pace (piano), Paul Silverthorne (viola), Brunel Ensemble, Christopher Austin (conductor)

Label: NMC Recordings, NMC D065



Music to Celebrate the Resurrection

Includes: I Will Awake the Dawn; Violin Concerto; In the Beginning; Caritas

Performed by Tasmin Little (violin) and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Matthias Bamert. Soloists: English Northern Philharmonia, Diego Masson (conductor)

Label: NMC Recordings, NMC D102



The NMC Songbook

Includes: The Beach in Winter, Scratby (For Tess)

Performed by Stephen Loges, baritone, and Iain Burnside, piano.

Label: NMC Recordings, NMC D150