

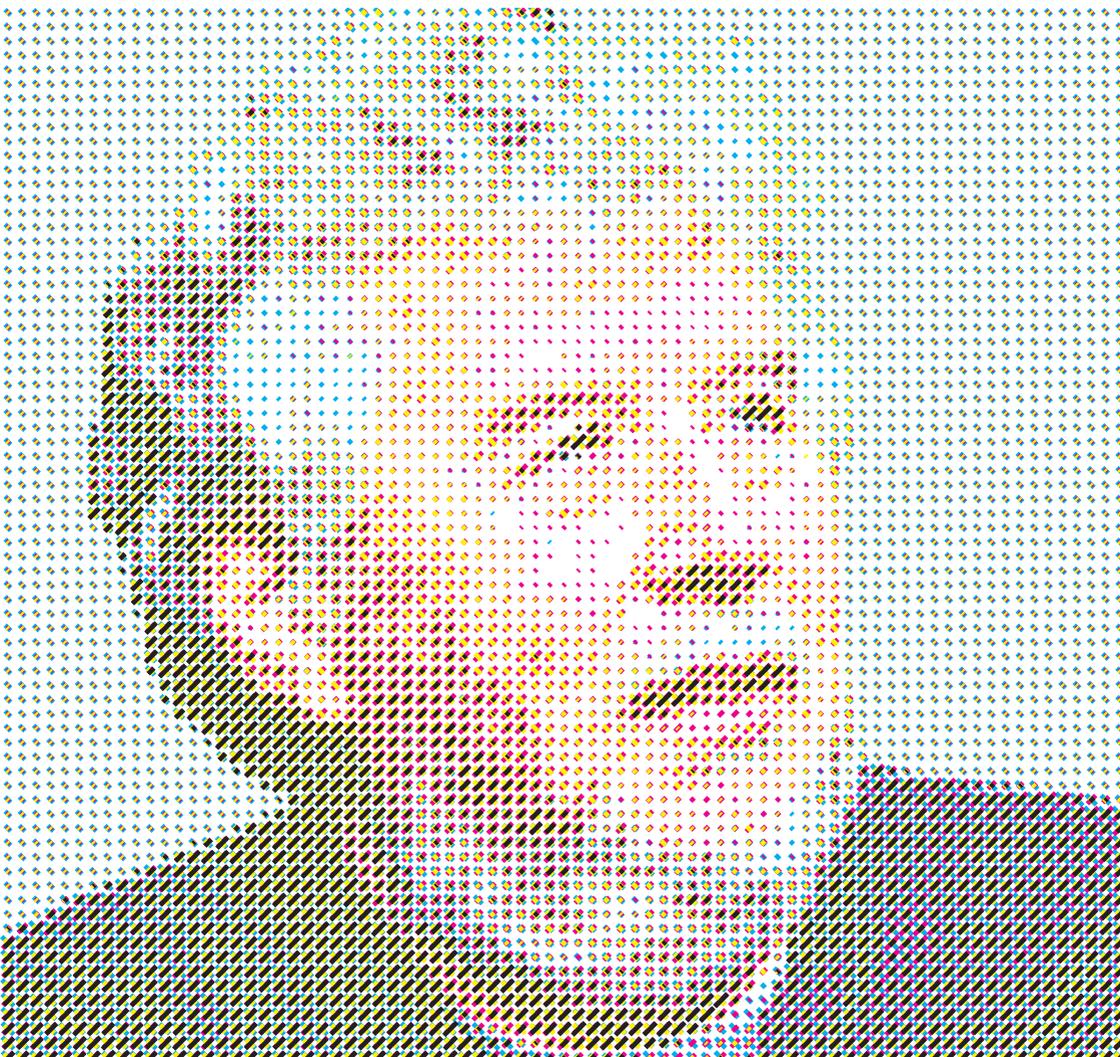
Birmingham  
Contemporary  
Music Group



**Saturday 10 May 2014**

**7.30pm**

[bcmg.org.uk](http://bcmg.org.uk)



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Tansy Davies' *Nature* in tonight's programme was made possible with the generous support of our Sound Investors.

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## Tonight's programme

Saturday 10 May 2014, 7.30pm  
CBSO Centre, Birmingham

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Conductor: **Oliver Knussen**

Soprano: **Katrien Baerts** \*

Piano: **Huw Watkins** ~

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### Harrison Birtwistle Tragœdia

### Tansy Davies Nature ~

(BCMG Sound Investment commission 2012)

*Interval*

### Harrison Birtwistle Cantata \* Fantasia on all the notes Four Poems by Jaan Kaplinski \* Silbury Air

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BBC  
RADIO



This evening's performance is being recorded  
by BBC Radio 3 for future broadcast.

# Celebrating Harrison Birtwistle

I can't say when I first heard Harrison Birtwistle's music; it feels as if it's always been there, like standing stones, with the same mysterious, unknowable power. I recall being mesmerised by *Secret Theatre*, sitting on the front row night after night at early BCMG touring performances conducted by Elgar Howarth. Birtwistle's music means so many different things to different people, but what got me then above all, and has done ever since, is its endless melody, always taking you somewhere new. With Oliver Knussen's inspiring programming at BCMG, it has been wonderful to discover more of the early pieces, alongside newer things; and it's a real thrill to celebrate this landmark Birtwistle year with Oly in charge. Birtwistle is a vitally important figure for many younger composers, not least Tansy Davies, so I am delighted we are giving a further performance of her piano concerto *Nature*, premiered with Huw Watkins and Oliver Knussen in the latter's 60th birthday concert in 2012.

Stephen Newbould,  
Artistic Director

# Tragœdia

(1965)

## Harrison Birtwistle (b. 1934)

Sounding now from almost half a century ago – it dates from 1965 – *Tragœdia* is a classic. Here, for the first time at full strength, Birtwistle displayed his own language of sound, form and instrumental drama. It is not difficult to hear what he had been listening to: just a few key recent pieces by Messiaen, Boulez and Stravinsky. Equally unmistakably, *Tragœdia* is its own thing.

It carried its composer directly into his first opera, *Punch and Judy*, but it is already a work of theatre, performed by soloists and groups of instruments – wind quintet, string quartet, harp – playing out a twenty-minute action of fearsome alarm calls and fight scenes, ominous rumblings and long laments. It is, specifically, a tragedy – mostly, but not entirely, in a formal sense. Birtwistle uses the classical term for a work whose several sections, as follows, refer to choral elements in a Greek play:

**Prologue** Initiated by super-high flute but largely for horn, cello and harp, this introduces two key elements: ostinato (repeating a small element) and fixation, the flute fixed on its outermost C, horn and cello vying for possession of a middle-bass D.

**Parodos** An eruption from the full ensemble contains a slower middle section where woodwinds and strings move separately; the harp ends the movement with a full stop.

**Episodion**  
*Strophe I* The horn sings, with harp and muted strings in alternation, while the woodwind players are held almost in silence.

*Anapaest I* The cello gradually takes over the song, in a context provided by the harp and a new sound.

*Antistrophe I* In a much shorter movement the cello's solo becomes more forceful, in combat with the woodwinds.

**Stasimon** The still centre features flute, muted violin and harp, the violin coming forward with high melody.

**Episodion**  
*Strophe II* Contrastingly forceful, the music sets forward different groupings, culminating in a fierce passage for wind quintet.

*Anapaest II* As the rhythm flares into triplets, the harp repeats its full stop, but to no avail.

*Antistrophe II* A moment of quiet is sustained by muted strings, plus strangers.

**Exodos** The 'Parodos' is replayed, with variation and an extension into ultimate intensity.

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# Nature

(2012)

**Tansy Davies (b. 1973)**

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Commissioned by Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and the Oslo Sinfonietta.

BCMG commission funds provided by Arts Council England, the Britten-Pears Foundation, and the following individuals through BCMG's Sound Investment Scheme: Kiaran Asthana; Paul and Jean Bacon; John Bamden; Samantha Bird; Paul Bond; Edwin Borman; Michael Boyd; Allan and Pat Brookfield; John Buckby; Avis and Peter Burton; Amanda Cadman and Peter T Marsh; Alan S Carr; Christopher Carrier; Simon Collings; Alan Cook; Ann Copsey; Karen Virginia Daw; Nigel and Katey Earle; Anne P Fletcher; Nigel Goulty; Jim Hawkins; Lord Hunt of King's Heath; In memory of Alan Johnson; Martyn and Suzanne Leighton; Peter Marsh; Rosalyn and Philip Phillips; Kim and Kay Prior; Mark Robinson and Sally Standart; Maureen and William Scott; Philip and Wendy Spink; Michael B Squires; Theresa and John Stewart; Anne and John Sweet; Martin Thomas; Nest Thomas; Janet Upward; William Wall; Dave West and Jenna Kumiega; Elizabeth and Barrie Withers; Alan Woodfield; Doreen and Harry Wright.

The title of Tansy Davies's piano concerto, which was given its first performance here two years ago by the same team as tonight, should perhaps be understood as having a lightly etched question mark after it. What, the work asks, is the nature of the piano: singer or dancer, percussion machine or voice? What is the nature, surely changing, of its relationship with its ten companions (four strings and four wind, harp and percussion)? What, after all, is nature, including nature in the sense of the natural world? And how can music shed light on that, as the composer proposes in imagining, at the climax of this continuous twenty-minute piece, a wild being

charging through a forest at night, unable to see but held from danger by her innate strength?

We begin, however, with something less daemonic: the piano's right hand rising through a modal scale against syncopated lines from the left hand and bass clarinet, the latter introducing the principal theme. This music proves the introduction to a dance, with snare drum and eventually the full ensemble. The piano remains an outsider, perhaps an observer, though one whose slowly rising wave again precipitates change, into a section marked 'boisterous', which it is for the piano, especially, while the harp loudly projects the theme. A repeat of this at greater speed brings forward 'floating' music, initially just for piano and strings, gaining substance on its way to a longer section, headed 'seductive' and making play with a variant of the theme. As so often under these circumstances, a lament follows, still with the theme, trailing off as almost a piano solo. Piano and harp then together – or apart – lead a longish quicker section, after which comes 'mystical' music with alto flute and piano in entwined incantation. A short burst of ecstasy, with cor anglais in co-principal role, yields to calm and then to a dream sequence, the piano super-high.

Crossplay between piano left hand and bass clarinet culminates in a reprise of the opening, without the right-hand rise, leading this time into a long span of 'conjuring' music that develops from slips and swoops towards an 'electric' section, also comparatively long, with tremolando accompaniment. Alarm calls from flute and oboe presage the climax, 'wild, maenadic', alluding to the untamed women followers of Dionysus. Here the piano tears towards darker music, 'earthy, potent', the repeat of which leads into a cadenza. After this the music largely floats towards its close, where the soloist's right hand rises again, this time to the work's destined high F.

© Paul Griffiths

# Cantata

(1969)

**Harrison Birtwistle (b. 1934)**

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Text compiled by the composer and tombstone inscriptions and free translations from Sappho and the Greek Anthology.

Let all the earth shed tears

I begin with words of air  
yet they are good to hear

In gold sandals  
dawn like a thief  
falls upon me

Like the hyacinth  
there is a light  
blinding my eyes

Now in my heart  
I see clearly a beautiful face  
shining etched by love

Night closed my eyes  
and then poured down  
black sleep upon my lids

No longer will my mouth utter  
sounds nor the clapping of hands  
follow

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From Birtwistle's involvement with the Pierrot Players, which for a short time he ran jointly with Maxwell Davies, only this piece from 1969 survives, together with a couple of arrangements, other scores having long been withdrawn. It makes an apt relic, being itself a gathering of fragments setting fragmentary texts: gravestone inscriptions and incomplete poems by Sappho and others from ancient Greece.

Verse-refrain form, which runs deep and long through Birtwistle's output, tends to be more overt in his earlier pieces, though still as part of an imbricated design, as here, or indeed in the piece to come next this evening. The eleven-minute *Cantata* is introduced and irregularly punctuated by a refrain that appears five times, always notated the same way, but allowing choices of tempo, of volume (very loud or quite soft) and even among different melodic paths for each instrument, so that its character can change drastically from one instance to the next. Its function, too, changes. Never is it straightforwardly what a refrain ought to be: an episode recurring after each verse. Instead it will interrupt a song, or, later, overlap with one. Repetition – in echoes of tolling or procession – is much more a feature of the songs, or drifts of song, the second of them starting unaccompanied on highish E, a note Birtwistle often favours, particularly as a soprano's starting point. Also, a wide-spanning instrumental motif – up a sixth, down an octave and a half (picking out, therefore, the notes of a diminished triad) – reappears as a punctuation mark several times, not least at the end.

© Paul Griffiths

# Fantasia on all the notes

(2011)

**Harrison Birtwistle (b. 1934)**

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Several composers in recent times – Maxwell Davies, Elliott Carter, this evening’s conductor – have exercised their fantasy on Purcell’s *Fantasia Upon One Note*, where one of the five parts keeps to middle C throughout. Birtwistle, in his ten-minute piece, takes a different approach; all the notes are there, in every part. However, the reference to Purcell is more than a witty aside, for this is also music about continuity (of voice, of rhythmic profile, of character) amid change, and music in which one part maintains a thread. The harp has long been a main actor in Birtwistle’s scores (cf. *Tragœdia*), perhaps understood as a grander instance of Orpheus’s lute. Here, he has said, ‘the harp is the centre of the piece; it’s the way the piece generates and regenerates itself’. He has also said he was conscious of having the harmony move so as to limit the frequency with which the harpist has to shift pedals, partly to avoid a seated dance on stage, but also to have the strings vibrating freely as much as possible.

However, though the scoring is that of Ravel’s concerto-like *Introduction and Allegro*, Birtwistle’s piece is a fantasia for all the instruments, the two woodwinds (flute and clarinet) and string quartet as much as the harp. They keep regrouping, and coming forward and receding as soloists, in a continuous development that moves broadly from music of rapid tempo changes to more settled spans of development, all with characteristic Birtwistlian gestures of signalling, woodwind keening, pulsation and weight.

This was another Nash Ensemble commission, composed in 2011. The death, while the work was in progress, of Tony Fell, former managing director of Boosey & Hawkes, ‘scattered something over the surface of the music and my attitude to writing it at one point’.

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# Four Poems by Jaan Kaplinski

(1991)

**Harrison Birtwistle (b. 1934)**

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The poems of Jaan Kaplinski, translated from Estonian into English by Sam Hamill.

ASHES  
of one world  
crumble  
upon the colors  
of another one

the sunflower  
lost  
its crown  
hoarfrost  
on the scythe  
grasshoppers  
silent

three sheep  
in the fog  
the rowan tree  
stripped  
of leaves  
and berries

to write  
write  
something  
something  
else

ANT-TRAIL  
on a  
poplar’s gnarled  
trunk

memory  
small light  
in the damp  
cloud  
then between  
two worlds  
you lose  
direction

what pulls  
you upward  
is it  
your weight

what pulls  
you down  
is it  
your wings  
not yet grown  
yet growing

HEART  
OF RAIN  
where nothing  
stirs

only the  
difference  
of black  
and white  
halving  
a random  
falling  
drop

Nymphalis Io  
Wings  
folded on  
the smithy  
window

poems  
and flames  
dying out  
in the great  
joy  
of waters  
that meet

in the little  
flowing  
world  
the tears  
lose  
meaning

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There are few songs in Birtwistle’s output after *Monody for Corpus Christi* until 1984, when he produced *Songs by Myself* to his own words. After that a new song set, brief like this one, became an almost annual event for several years, until he settled on one of his chosen poets, Paul Celan, for a longer work, *Pulse Shadows*. The Kaplinski group comes from early in 1991, before that commitment was made, and spotlights a writer who had entered anglophone consciousness four

THE WAY TURNS  
toward the heath  
dead windmills stand  
against darkness  
in the whole world  
there is nothing  
but the scent of red  
clover  
and nothing more

years before, with the publication of *The Wandering Border*. Born in 1941 and writing in Estonian, Kaplinski has been drawn by Taoist and Buddhist thinking, and his poems have something of a Chinese-Japanese (or, indeed, ancient Greek) spirit in how a moment of natural observation can reopen the world. Birtwistle’s music illustrates and extends that process.

From his favourite E his first song sets out on a lyric line that is lightly accompanied, until the move ‘to write something else’ brings in almost the full ensemble of thirteen players (no percussion). This epilogue overlaps with the beginning of the second song, where the voice seems to follow the ant trail before loosening towards an ending that is again ‘something else’. Continuity is again maintained at the end, this time just by the double bass, into ‘Heart of rain’, which is more vocally volatile, reaching up to a spectacular E flat. Birtwistle notes in the score that *Nymphalis Io* is the Peacock Butterfly (and one wonders if this sowed the seed for his opera *The Io Passion*.) The short postscript returns to that middle-high E and is accompanied just by piano, strings and harp.

© Paul Griffiths

# Silbury Air

(1977, rev. 2003)

## Harrison Birtwistle (b. 1934)

With this work from 1977 we return to the large mixed ensemble, now with complete families of woodwinds, brass, strings and percussive instruments (harp, piano, marimba doubling drums and temple blocks). Often these homogeneous formations are used as such – especially the brass, whose role is generally to instigate, challenge or celebrate. They break in quite early with a kind of cracked fanfare, which they bring back twice, and which lies behind much of their music elsewhere. However, other groupings, based on register rather than sound, are also drawn forward from time to time, as are soloists and duet pairs, all participating in a process of steady growth.

That this growth is mechanical does not stop it being organic. At the head of the score Birtwistle places a three-dimensional 'pulse labyrinth', an array of different rates of pulsation all related by simple ratios multiplied on top of one another. The various ensembles and soloists come and go at diverse points in this maze and make diverse moves, so that the effect is of a complex clockwork – but one that, instead of just ticking and chiming, measures time out in music that will range from rapid reiterations to slow-moving melodies, from solemn processions to the brass's fanfaring. At the start there is just a middle-register E (an octave below the point of initiation preferred in the *Cantata* and *Kaplinski* songs), with a double-bass harmonic pulsing slowly. The music expands from this point, contracts back to it, and then goes through a further, shorter and altogether different cycle, for a total duration of a little over fifteen minutes.

'*Silbury Air*', Birtwistle notes, 'is named after Silbury Hill, a prehistoric mound in Wiltshire, the biggest artificial mound in Europe, being 125 feet high and covering more than five acres. Its use and purpose, after centuries of speculation, still remain a mystery. The music of the *Air* is not in any

way meant to be a romantic reflection of the hill's enigmatic location – nor a parallel with any of its evident geometry'. Though one might add that strangeness and geometry may well be part of our experience, for Birtwistle the parallel is rather with the hill as a compelling part of the landscape, his music creating its own landscape of foreground and background, filled with objects that, through an 'invented logic via modes of juxtaposition, modes of repetition, modes of change', become forms.

That logic is manifest only in its results. We do not need to know all the conditions of geology, watercourses, weathering and human intervention responsible for the vista we admire, only to observe the play of volumes, distances and colours. So it is here.

© Paul Griffiths



**Sir Harrison Birtwistle** was born in Accrington in 1934 and studied clarinet and composition at the Royal Manchester College of Music, making contact with a highly talented group of contemporaries including Peter Maxwell Davies, Alexander Goehr, John Ogdon and Elgar Howarth. In 1965 he sold his clarinets to devote all his efforts to composition, and travelled to Princeton as a Harkness Fellow where he completed the opera *Punch and Judy*. This work, together with *Verses for Ensembles* and *The Triumph of Time*, firmly established Birtwistle as a leading voice in British music.

The decade from 1973 to 1984 was dominated by his monumental lyric tragedy *The Mask of Orpheus*, staged by English National Opera in 1986, and by the series of remarkable ensemble scores now performed by the world's leading new music groups: *Secret Theatre*, *Silbury Air* and *Carmen Arcadiae Mechanicae Perpetuum*. Large-scale works in the following decade included the operas *Gawain* and *The Second Mrs Kong*, the concertos *Endless Parade* for trumpet and *Antiphonies* for piano, and the orchestral score *Earth Dances*.

Birtwistle's works of recent decades include *Exody*, premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Daniel Barenboim, *Panic* which received a high profile premiere at the Last Night of the 1995 BBC Proms with an estimated worldwide audience of 100 million, and *The Shadow of Night* commissioned by the Cleveland Orchestra and Christoph von Dohnányi. *The Last Supper* received its first performances at the

Deutsche Staatsoper in Berlin and at Glyndebourne in 2000. *Pulse Shadows*, a meditation for soprano, string quartet and chamber ensemble on poetry by Paul Celan, was released on disc by Teldec and won the 2002 Gramophone Award for best contemporary recording. *Theseus Game*, co-commissioned by RUHRtriennale, Ensemble Modern and the London Sinfonietta, was premiered in 2003. The following year brought first performances of *The Io Passion* for Aldeburgh Almeida Opera and *Night's Black Bird* commissioned by Roche for the Lucerne Festival. His opera *The Minotaur* received its premiere at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in 2008 and has been released on DVD by Opus Arte. His music theatre work *The Corridor* opened the Aldeburgh Festival and toured to the Southbank Centre and the Bregenz Festival, with further performances in New York and Amsterdam. Birtwistle's violin concerto for Christian Tetzlaff was premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 2011, followed by performances at the BBC Proms, Tokyo Composium and Salzburg Festival.

The music of Birtwistle has attracted international conductors including Pierre Boulez, Daniel Barenboim, Elgar Howarth, Christoph von Dohnányi, Oliver Knussen, Sir Simon Rattle, Peter Eötvös and Franz Welser-Möst. He has received commissions from leading performing organisations and his music has been featured in major festivals and concert series.

Birtwistle has received many honours, including the Grawemeyer Award in 1968 and the Siemens Prize in 1995; he was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1986, awarded a British knighthood in 1988 and made a Companion of Honour in 2001. He was Henry Purcell Professor of Music at King's College, University of London (1995-2001) and is currently Director of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Recordings of Birtwistle's music are available on the Decca, Philips, Deutsche Grammophon, Teldec, Black Box, NMC, CPO and Soundcircus labels.

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Carols in King's College Cambridge.

2012 saw the premiere of her piano concerto, *Nature*, for Huw Watkins and BCMG, as well as a wind nonet, *Delphic Bee*, for the City of London Festival.

Two critically-acclaimed albums of Davies' music have been released on the Nonclassical and NMC labels respectively. She is currently working on an opera, a requiem for the dead of 9/11, to be premiered by English National Opera in April 2015.

**Tansy Davies** was born in Bristol in 1973 and studied at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and Royal Holloway College. In her recent work, Davies has found an accommodation between the worlds of the avant-garde and experimental rock, between - in the words of one critic - Xenakis and Prince.

She has been commissioned by numerous world class ensembles and orchestras, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Britten Sinfonia, BCMG, City of London Sinfonia, CBSO Youth Orchestra, Northern Sinfonia and the choir of King's College Cambridge. As well as performances across the UK and Europe, Davies' music has been heard as far afield as the USA, Canada, Israel, Japan, Chile and Australia.

Her pieces have been featured at major festivals. She wrote *Elephant and Castle*, a large-scale multi-media work, for the 2007 Aldeburgh Festival. In 2010, *Wild Card*, an orchestral work inspired by Tarot cards, was premiered at the BBC Proms by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Jiří Belohlávek. The BBC Proms also played host to the premiere of *Beginning of the World*, a variation on *Sellinger's Round*, which was performed by the English Chamber Orchestra in 2013.

In 2010, the critically acclaimed *As with Voices and with Tears*, a requiem for choir, string orchestra and electronics, was performed to commemorate Remembrance Sunday in Portsmouth Cathedral, with the London Mozart Players. In 2011, Davies collaborated with Norwegian choreographer Ingun Bjørnsgaard on *Omega and the Deer*, a dance project which toured to Oslo, Berlin, Potsdam, Hamburg and New York. Later that year her carol, *Christmas Eve*, was performed at the Festival of Nine Lessons and

## About tonight's performers



**Oliver Knussen** (born in Glasgow in 1952) is one of the pre-eminent composer-conductors in the world today and is presently Artist-in-Association with both the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. The recipient of many awards, including the Nemmers Prize in 2006, he has been Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival (1983-98), Head of Contemporary Music at the Tanglewood Music Center (1986-93) and Music Director of the London Sinfonietta (1998-2002). Together with Colin Matthews he founded the Composition and Performance Courses at the Britten-Pears School in 1992.

Among his best-known compositions are three symphonies, concertos for horn and violin, several song cycles, works for ensembles and for solo piano, and the operas *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* written in collaboration with the late Maurice Sendak.

His 60th birthday was celebrated with special events in Aldeburgh, Amsterdam, Birmingham, London and Tanglewood.



**Katrien Baerts**, a rising young Belgian soprano, started her musical career with a masters degree in both violin and voice at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels. After graduating with distinction, she joined the Dutch National Opera Academy, where she performed roles including Annio in *La clemenza di Tito* in a staging by Floris Visser and Miss Wordsworth in *Albert Herring* staged by Alexander Oliver. Further roles in opera include her acclaimed debut at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam in the title role of the world première of *Suster Bertken* by composer Rob Zuidam, recorded by Attacca. In 2013 she performed the title role of Amina in Bellini's *La Sonnambula*.

She has been working with conductors such as Jonathan Berman, Reinbert de Leeuw, Richard Egarr, Vladimir Jurowski, Oliver Knussen, Henrik Schaefer and Otto Tausk. At the Royal Conservatory Katrien received the 'Bourgeois', 'Ingeborg Köberle' and 'Vindelinck' prizes for her outstanding performances.

Being a versatile singer, Katrien performs in opera and oratoria, as well as in contemporary and chamber music. Her concert repertoire includes, amongst others, the *Weihnachtsoratorium* with the Amsterdams Bach Consort, *die Sieben frühe Lieder* by Alban Berg with Het Collectief at the Festival de Saintes, Kurtag's *Akhmatova Lieder* at the Concertgebouw, and the world première of Rob Zuidam's *Canciones del Alma*.

Upcoming engagements include Dvorak's *Te Deum* with the Dutch Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, *Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé* by Ravel with the Askō|Schönberg Ensemble, the world première of Rob Zuidam's *Requiem* and Katrien's debut at the Barbican Centre in London with BCMG. She will also sing in Alban Berg's *Lulu* at the Nederlandse Opera in 2015.



**Huw Watkins** was born in Wales in 1976. He studied piano with Peter Lawson at Chetham's School of Music and composition with Robin Holloway, Alexander Goehr and Julian Anderson at Cambridge and the Royal College of Music. In 2001 he was awarded the Constant and Kit Lambert Junior Fellowship at the Royal College of Music, where he now teaches composition.

As a pianist, Watkins is in great demand with orchestras and festivals. Huw has also developed a strong relationship with the Orchestra of the Swan where he is 'Composer in the House' and with whom he has performed regularly over the years. Strongly committed to the performance of new music, Huw has given premieres of works by Alexander Goehr, Peter Maxwell Davies, Michael Zev Gordon and Mark-Anthony Turnage.

Huw Watkins is one of Britain's foremost composers and his music has been performed throughout Europe and North America. Highlights include his acclaimed *Violin Concerto* premiered at the BBC Proms by Alina Ibragimova and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, *London Concerto* premiered to mark the London Symphony Orchestra's centenary, and *In My Craft or Sullen Art* for tenor and string quartet premiered at the Wigmore Hall by Mark Padmore and the Petersen Quartet.

Huw Watkins is regularly featured on BBC Radio 3, both as a performer and as a composer. His features on many recordings on the Chandos, Nimbus, Wergo and EMI Classics labels. Most recently, NMC Records have released a disc dedicated to Huw Watkins' work entitled *In my craft of sullen art*.

## BCMG Players performing tonight

Flute / Piccolo /

Alto Flute/

Oboe /

Cor Anglais

Clarinet /

High-pitched Bb Clarinet /

Bass Clarinet

Bassoon /

Contrabassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Percussion

Piano / Celeste

Harp

Violin / Viola

Violin

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

**Elizabeth May**

**Melinda Maxwell**

**Adam Slater**

**Margaret Cookhorn**

**Mark Phillips**

**Jonathan Holland**

**Richard Ward**

**Julian Warburton**

**Malcolm Wilson**

**Céline Saout**

**Katie Stillman**

**Amanda Lake**

**Robert Ames**

**Ulrich Heinen**

**John Tattersdill**



### Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

celebrated its 25th anniversary season in 2012/13. Emerging from within the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BCMG quickly established a reputation for exciting performances, innovative audience-building and learning initiatives, and a central commitment to composers and the presentation of new work. The Group has premiered over 150 works, most commissioned through its pioneering Sound Investment scheme, with a family of Investors supporting each new piece. In addition, BCMG's extensive Learning and Participation programme supports young people as composers, performers and listeners of new music through an exciting range of projects in and out of school, and at CBSO Centre, Birmingham.

BCMG projects in 2012 included the European premiere of Gerald Barry's opera *The Importance of Being Earnest* conducted by Thomas Adès, the premiere of Simon Bainbridge's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* at the BBC Proms, and a tour to the Alicante Festival in Spain conducted by Oliver

Knussen. 2013 included George Benjamin's opera *Into the Little Hill* conducted by the composer in Birmingham and London, premieres by Elliott Carter and Magnus Lindberg at the Aldeburgh Festival, and David Sawer's *The Lighthouse Keepers* at the Cheltenham Music Festival.

Projects in 2014 include a residency at Washington DC's Library of Congress with Oliver Knussen, the premiere of David Lang's *Crowd Out* for 1,000 voices at Millennium Point, Birmingham, concerts celebrating the 80th birthday year of Harrison Birtwistle in Birmingham and London, and the London premiere of Elliott Carter's final work at the Wigmore Hall.

BCMG features on numerous CD recordings, including an ongoing series of NMC discs devoted to British composers, with recent releases of music by Oliver Knussen, Tansy Davies, Alexander Goehr and Richard Causton. The Group has two Artists-in-Association, Oliver Knussen and John Woolrich, and Sir Simon Rattle is the Group's Founding Patron. [bcmg.org.uk](http://bcmg.org.uk)

# BCMG's Learning & Participation Programme



Michael Zev Gordon and Christopher Austin with University of Birmingham music students

**Imagine Compose**, our Youth Music funded project working alongside Birmingham Music Service beginner instrumental ensembles, concluded in April with the final creative workshops and a teacher training session for music service teachers. Children taking part in the project also performed pieces commissioned for them by composers Kirsty Devaney, Sonja Froebel, Ruta Vikauskaite and Jeremy Clay. The project has been challenging but successful and has been a fantastic experience for all those involved – young people, teachers, workshop leaders and composers.

April also saw BCMG run **workshops for student composers** at the University of Birmingham as part of the final year of their degree. The composers received feedback from the conductor and musicians as part of the workshop, which is great opportunity for the students to hear

their music played by top professionals.

This month sees the continuation of our Birmingham City Council funded **Music Maze on the Move** project. Creative music workshops are being held at Broadway Academy for young people aged 9 – 13. The workshops are giving the young people the opportunity to work towards an Arts Award which is a national scheme to encourage young people to develop an interest in the arts.

For information on BCMG's Learning Programme and the variety of projects that the Group runs, please visit [bcmg.org.uk/learning](http://bcmg.org.uk/learning) or contact **Nancy Evans, BCMG Director of Learning and Participation** or **Jeremy Clay, BCMG Learning Co-ordinator** on 0121 616 2616 or email [nancy@bcmg.org.uk](mailto:nancy@bcmg.org.uk) or [jeremy@bcmg.org.uk](mailto:jeremy@bcmg.org.uk).

## Become a supporter of BCMG



**BCMG Foundation**  
Help us to realise our most ambitious and innovative future projects.

*"I love BCMG for its breath-taking performances, its commitment to new music, and most of all, for its ambition. Sometimes that ambition calls for exceptional levels of investment to create something extraordinary."*

Steve Saltaire, BCMG Chair and BCMG Foundation member

The BCMG Foundation allows you to engage with aspects of our work that concert-goers don't usually see. You can choose to help with specific BCMG projects, with a donation starting from £250 per year. You can also support the future development of BCMG's performance and learning activity by becoming a Core Supporter from £1,000 per year.

Projects for which we are currently seeking your support include:

- **Zigzag Ensemble** – a series of 8 creative composing and improvising workshops for 12 – 16 year-olds throughout 2014
- The revival of **David Sawer's Rumpelstiltskin** and *The Lighthouse Keepers* as the double-bill **mad boy clever girl** in 2015

For further information on the BCMG Foundation, please visit:  
[www.bcmg.org.uk/supportus](http://www.bcmg.org.uk/supportus)

## Make a donation

BCMG exists because of the support of those passionate about new music. We always welcome one-off donations to support our commissions, performances and learning programme.

Any level of donation will make a difference to our work. Donations can be made with a cheque written out to 'BCMG', or online at

[www.bcmg.org.uk/donatenow](http://www.bcmg.org.uk/donatenow)

If you would like to find out more about supporting BCMG, contact **Carla Priddon, Director of Development** on: 0121 616 2621  
[carla@bcmg.org.uk](mailto:carla@bcmg.org.uk)



**SUNDAY 8 JUNE 2014, 2.30PM & 4.30PM  
MILLENNIUM POINT, BIRMINGHAM**

**Admission by Free Ticket.  
Must be booked in advance at:  
[www.bcmg.org.uk/CrowdOut](http://www.bcmg.org.uk/CrowdOut)**

Music Director: **Simon Halsey**  
Director: **James Yarker**

1000 people of all ages and abilities give the world premiere performances of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Lang's *Crowd Out* in one of the largest vocal events the city has ever seen!  
A BCMG Sound Investment, Spitalfields Music and Berlin Philharmonic co-commission, *Crowd Out* will be performed under the baton of internationally renowned choral conductor Simon Halsey – with a 'home-grown' community to rehearsing and performing the piece.

## BCMG staff

### Artistic Team and Management

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### Representatives

**Jonathan Mayes** (Arts Council England, West Midlands)  
**Ulrich Heinen** (BCMG player)  
**Alexandra Wood** (BCMG player)  
**Stephen Maddock** (CBSO Chief Executive)

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### Photographs

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For the latest news, reviews, audio and video interviews with composers, conductors and musicians visit **[bcmg.org.uk](http://bcmg.org.uk)**

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