

📖 Topic Page: [Birtwistle, Harrison](#)

Definition: **Birtwistle, Harrison** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

English composer. Influenced by Igor Stravinsky and by medieval and Renaissance music, Birtwistle works include the instrumental motet *The World is Discovered* (1960), *Verses for Ensembles* (1970), and *The Triumph of Time* (1972). He also composed four operas including *Punch and Judy* (1967) and *The Second Mrs Kong* (1995).

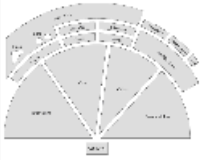


Image from:

[orchestra in The New Penguin Dictionary of Music](#)

Summary Article: **Birtwistle, Sir Harrison**

From *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*

1934-

◆ English composer

Born in Accrington, Lancashire, he began his career as a clarinettist, studying at the Royal Manchester College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music in London. While in Manchester he formed, with other young musicians including Peter Maxwell Davies and John Ogdon, the New Manchester Group for the performance of modern music. He was director of music at Cranborne Chase School (1962-65) and then spent two years studying in the USA. In 1967 he formed the Pierrot Players, again with Maxwell Davies, and much of his work was written for them and for the English Opera Group. His early work was influenced by Igor Stravinsky and by the medieval and Renaissance masters. His first composition, *Refrains and Choruses*, was written in 1957, but it was two works of 1965, the instrumental *Tragoedia* and the vocal/instrumental *Ring a Dumb Carillon*, that established him as a leading composer. He was an associate director of the National Theatre (1975-88), became the composer-in-residence at the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1993, and was Henry Purcell Professor of Composition at King's College London (1994-2001). Among his works are the operas *Punch and Judy* (1966-67), *The Mask of Orpheus* (1974-82), *Gawain* (1990), *The Io Passion* (2004) and *The Minotaur* (2008). Other pieces include the "dramatic pastoral" *Down by the Greenwood Side* (1969), *The Fields of Sorrow* (1971), *On The Sheer Threshold of the Night* (1980), *Pulse Sampler* (1981), *Earth Dances* (1986), the formidable orchestral work *The Shadow of Night* (2001) and *The Corridor* (2009). He was knighted in 1988 and created Companion of Honour in 2000.

Hall, Michael Harrison Birtwistle (1984).

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Birtwistle, Sir Harrison. (2011). In L. Rodger, & J. Bakewell, *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* (9th ed.). London, UK: Chambers Harrap. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/birtwistle_harrison_1934

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Birtwistle, Sir Harrison. (2011). In L. Rodger, & J. Bakewell, *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* (9th ed.). London, UK: Chambers Harrap. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/birtwistle_harrison_1934

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"Birtwistle, Sir Harrison." *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*, Liam Rodger, and Joan Bakewell, Chambers Harrap, 9th edition, 2011. *Credo Reference*, https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/birtwistle_harrison_1934. Accessed 14 Nov. 2019.