Davies, Peter Maxwell

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English composer and conductor. His music combined medieval and serial techniques with a heightened expressionism as in his opera Taverner (1970), based on the life and works of the 16th-century composer John Taverner. Other works included the chamber opera The Lighthouse (1979), concertos for a number of instruments, and ten symphonies.

He was the associate conductor/composer of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the BBC Philharmonic, and the composer laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He was knighted in 1987 and was Master of the Queen's Music (2004–14).

Davies was born in Salford, Lancashire. After training at the Royal Manchester College of Music (1953–56) alongside the British composers Alexander Goehr and Harrison Birtwistle, he studied with the Italian composer Goffredo Petrassi 1957–59. From 1959 to 1962 he taught music at Cirencester Grammar School, and from 1962 to 1964 he studied with the US composer Roger Sessions at Princeton University. He co-founded the Pierrot Players ensemble in 1967 (renamed the Fires of London in 1970) with Birtwistle. From 1970 he was based in Orkney.

Works

Stage
Revelation and Fall, monodrama for soprano and ensemble (1966); Eight Songs for a Mad King, music-theatre piece for voice and ensemble (1969); Vesali i Icones music-theatre piece for dancer, cello, and ensemble (1969); Nocturnal Dances, ballet and concert suite (1970); Taverner, opera (1970); Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, music-theatre piece for mezzo and ensemble (1974); The Martyrdom of St Magnus, chamber opera (1976); The Two Fiddlers, opera for children (1978); The Lighthouse, chamber opera (1979); The No. 11 Bus, music-theatre work for mime, singers, dancers, and instrumental ensemble (1984); Resurrection, opera (1987); Caroline Mathilde, ballet (1990); The Doctor of Myddfai, opera (1995); The Hogboon, opera for children (2015).

Orchestral

CHAMBER
Quartet Movement (1952) for string quartet; St Michael, sonata for 17 wind instruments (1957); string quartet (1961); Sinfonia for chamber orchestra (1962); Four Quartets (1972); Ave Maris Stella, for instrumental ensemble (1975); A Mirror of Whitening Light for instrumental ensemble; two Little Quartets (1982, 1987); ten Naxos string quartets (2002–07); Seven Skies of Winter for instrumental ensemble; Hymn to Artemis Locheia for string quartet and clarinet (2004); piano quartet (2007); Blake Dreaming, for string quartet and baritone (2010); Concerto Accademico for string orchestra and string quartet, oboe quartet (both 2012); String Quartet Movement 2016 (2016).

Vocal
O Magnum Mysterium, four carols a cappella (1960); Leopardi Fragments (1962), cantata for soprano, contralto, and instrumental ensemble; Missa Super L'Homme Armé, parody mass, From Stone to Thorn, cantata (both 1971); Hymn to St Magnus for mezzo and instruments (1972); Fiddlers at the
Wedding song-cycle for mezzo and instruments (1973); Black Pentecost for mezzo, baritone, and orchestra (1979); Into the Labyrinth, cantata (1983); Hymn to the Word of God, motet for chorus and tenor (1990); Hymn to the Spirit of Fire for chorus and organ (2008).

quotations

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