

Paul Patterson 1947 -

Paul Patterson grew up in Exeter. He learnt the trombone at school and gained a place at the Royal Academy of Music, having just started to compose. Early, and sustained, musical influences were the neo-classic lines of Stravinsky and Hindemith and Bartok's motivic structures. His first two published compositions were prophetic. Musical mischief surfaced in his Opus 1, his Dartington Summer School setting of Hilaire Belloc's famous Cautionary Tale, *Rebecca* (1966), containing more than a hint of satire on many of the avant-garde aleatoric techniques of the day. [Opus 2](#) , a wind quintet written for the Nash Ensemble a year later, shows his developing formal style: dance-like vitality of irregular rhythmic patterns, contemplative slow sections and organic growth within an atonal, contrapuntal texture.

He learned to sail in his early teens, and it can be suggested that his music's familiar characteristic of multilayered counterpoint reflects the sea's currents, tides, waves, wavelets and spray. Indeed, the form and orchestration of *White Shadows on the Dark Horizon* Op.67 (1988), written for the Kent County Youth Orchestra, overtly exploits that relationship.

Patterson's student days ended in 1968 with an award for study with Richard Rodney Bennett. He was appointed Manson Fellow and teacher of composition, and founded the enduring Manson Ensemble of advanced Academy students specifically to perform the music of our time. He developed contemporary music resources at the Academy, including equipping an electronic music studio; the London Sinfonietta called for several years upon his ability to read complex electronic scores accurately under the pressure of public performance.

During this time Patterson came across the music of Polish composers Lutoslawski and Penderecki. In spite of this being the time of the Cold War, he made many subsequent trips to Poland, bringing to the UK an awareness of their music by enabling and conducting UK premières. He still adjudicates annually for international Polish festivals.

In his own music he adopted 'Polish' notation symbols and an experimental sound-world in a variety of works, especially *Kyrie* Op.13 premièred in New York, and *Time Piece* Op.16, written in 1973 for the King's Singers; *Voices of Sleep* , Op.40, a weighty work in five movements, was performed at the Proms in 1981. Yet, for many musicians at that time, the unfamiliar notation required extra rehearsal; for practical reasons, Patterson reverted to conventional notation later on, especially for the major choral works *Mass of the Sea* Op.47, *Stabat Mater* Op.57, *Te Deum* Op. 65, *Magnificat* Op.75 and the *Millennium Mass* Op.85 – not forgetting the exquisite a capella *Missa Brevis* Op.54.

Pioneering the concept of 'composer residencies', Patterson spent two years with the English Sinfonia 1970-1972. Subsequently he established the study of contemporary music at the new University of Warwick, was Visiting Lecturer to the University of Queensland, and from 1980-1982 was composer-in-residence for South East Arts and King's School, Canterbury, benefiting many music organisations in Kent, Surrey and Sussex. From this prolific decade, *Comedy for Five Winds* , Op.14, *Conversations* Op.25 for clarinet and piano and *Diversions* Op.32 for saxophone quartet are unmistakably in Patterson's mature style, ensuring their destiny in the main-stream repertoire.

In 1985 Patterson was promoted to Head of Composition at the Academy. In the previous year he had initiated the pioneering series of annual Composer Festivals, to bring such international composers as Lutoslawski, Tippett, Penderecki, Berio and many others for a week of concerts and work with the students – an idea swiftly emulated elsewhere. Poland remained a central influence; *Sinfonia for Strings* Op.46 was written for the Polish Chamber Orchestra, and *Luslawice Variations* Op.50, for solo violin was commissioned by Penderecki (a performance is now available on free download from 'The Naked Violin' on [www.tasminlittle.net](http://www.tasminlittle.net) ).

It was evident early on that Patterson could write in any genre. Among his works are several for electronic tape and various combinations of instruments, film and TV music, and *The Sorriest Cow of Capricorn* Op.63 (1987) a song-cycle for soprano and piano - Mervyn Peake's grim fantasy world served perfectly by the music. Several prestigious commissions included the phenomenally successful *Little Red Riding Hood* Op.73, commissioned by the Roald Dahl Foundation in 1992, which Patterson has since arranged for numerous combinations of instruments. A second commission for *Three Little Pigs* Op.92 (2003) has had similar success and has also been choreographed as a ballet. *The Royal Eurostar* Op.76 for large brass ensemble and percussion, was commissioned for the State Opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994; while *Hell's Angels* Op.81 (1998) commissioned by the Crouch End Festival Chorus, scored for soprano solo, chorus, amplified string quartet and percussion, shows his musical imagination in full flight. Nine of Patterson's concertos are scored for string orchestra – there is a strikingly-dramatic *Clarinet Concerto* Op.34 of 1976, and the unusual one for harmonica, entitled *Propositions* Op.61 (1987). The *Concerto for Orchestra* Op.45, commissioned by the CBSO in 1981 is a powerful work with a memorably intense slow movement.

Patterson's works for organ are signposts to his compositional development, being commissioned at regular intervals between 1969 (*Jubilate* Op.5) and 2015 (*Volcano* Op.121). Of the nine, *Games* Op.37, (commissioned for the finals of the Improvisation Contest of the 1977 St. Albans International Festival) stands unique. Its impressive 18-page graphic score encourages a modern form of directed improvisation, based around Messiaenic harmonies and Polish-style controlled aleatoricism.

In 2005 Patterson composed *The Fifth Continent: a Gift from the Sea* Op.96 to Ben Kaye's poem about the Romney Marsh, for counter-tenor (or mezzo-soprano) solo, chorus, brass ensemble and organ. In 2010 he was in China to hear performances of his *Phoenix Concerto* Op.102 for oboe and string orchestra, and in 2012 he went to Thailand for the world première of his latest work for harp, *Lizards* Op.111, commissioned for the second Thailand International Harp Festival and Youth Competition. Many of Patterson's compositions have been composed for, or are chosen as, competition set pieces such as *Spiders* Op.48 for solo harp and *Tides of Mananan* Op.64 for solo viola.

His increasing international reputation as one of the foremost contemporary composers for the harp began with the popularity of *Spiders* . His harp oeuvre now consists of ten works. These include *Avian Arabesques* Op.106 for harp ensemble, and solo works *Armistice* , Op.108, (commissioned for the 65th Anniversary of ending the Second World War and signing the 1945 Peace Treaty in Wageningen, Holland); also *Spirals* Op.115 (2013). *Fantasia for Harp and Strings*

Op.116, was commissioned as a set piece by the Dutch International Harp Festival held in Utrecht, Netherlands, in March 2014.

Patterson was Artistic Director of the Exeter Festival in the 90s. He is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, Fellow of the Royal College of Music, Hon. Fellow of the London College of Music, Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and Visiting Professor at the Royal Northern College of Music, Canterbury Christ Church University and the Royal Marines school of Music at Portsmouth. In 1987 he received the Medal of Honour from the Polish Ministry of Culture; in 1996 the Performing Rights Society and the Royal Philharmonic Society awarded him the Leslie Boosey Award for outstanding services to contemporary music, and in 2009 he was given the Polish Gold Medal for promoting Polish music.

Paul Patterson's reputation is secure as one of the most versatile, successful and internationally-respected British composers of his generation. All the major UK orchestras, and in numerous countries abroad, have performed his music, as have eminent ensembles and international soloists, and he has a substantial discography. Audiences worldwide enjoy Paul's music as it never alienates - rather, it draws both audiences and performers in to contemplate, and rejoice in, the complex spirit of our time.

Dr.Rosemary Dunn. Revised August 2015