

English Music in the 20th Century

Malcolm Arnold 1921 –2006



Born in Northampton in 1921, Malcolm Arnold is one of the towering figures of the 20th century, with a remarkable catalogue of major concert works to his credit, including nine symphonies, seven ballets, two operas, one musical, over twenty concertos, two string quartets, and music for brass-band and wind-band. He also wrote 132 film scores, among these are some of the finest works ever composed for the medium including *Bridge on the River Kwai* (for which, in 1958, he was one of the first British composers ever to win an Oscar), *Inn of the Sixth*

Happiness (for which he received an Ivor Novello Award in 1958), *Hobson's Choice* and *Whistle Down the Wind*.

Arnold began his professional musical life in July 1941 as second trumpet with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Acknowledged as one of the finest players of the day, he eventually became the orchestra's Principal Trumpet. By the end of the 1940s he was concentrating entirely on composition. The long and close relationship established between Malcolm Arnold and the LPO continues unabated, with the orchestra performing and recording the composer's music widely.

Throughout his life Malcolm Arnold has maintained a strongly held social conscience. In May 1957, as a guest of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers, he represented the British Musicians Union at the Prague Spring Festival. It was at this time that Arnold first met Shostakovich. To mark the Centenary of the Trades Union Congress, he was commissioned to write the *Peterloo Overture*; a work premiered by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Festival Hall on 7 June 1968.

His most popular works have a global audience and his finest body of music, the nine symphonies, are available in numerous recordings including two complete cycles on the Chandos and Naxos labels – and, from September 2006, on Decca. Malcolm Arnold's music has – and continues to be – performed and recorded extensively by leading orchestras both nationally and internationally. His work in musical education has been impressive and consistent. He helped establish and support, through the writing of works and fundraising, the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. His belief in contemporary music led him to be an influential advocate for Pierre Boulez's entry into British musical life.

Sir Malcolm Arnold died on 23 September 2006