

DAVID HARRIES

Dr David C F Wright

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Although of Welsh parents David Harries was born in Portsmouth on 24th March 1933. He started piano and had theory lessons at the age of seven and was educated at Pembroke Grammar School and was awarded the Robert Bryan Scholarship to go up to University College, Aberystwyth where he studied with Ian Parrott obtaining his BMus in 1954.

His first composition, the Introduction and Allegro scherzoso for string quartet Op 1 of 1952 won a prize at the National Eisteddfod. In 1954 he wrote his String Quartet no. 1 and a Missa Brevis. His Noctuary no. 1 of 1961 is a settings of poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins for chorus and string orchestra commissioned by the BBC as was his Petitions and Interludes for male voices and piano of 1962. Both works show his excellent writing for voices.

Up to now his music was basically tonal but he began to write in a chromatic idiom and employed the twelve note system. His Sinfonia da Camera of 1959 is an example of his own version of the dodecaphonic style.

In 1961 the composer Bernard Rands said that Harries had “ a fertile imagination, artistic integrity, a disciplined intellect and a sensitive aural perception of beauty in sound. He believes the motivating force for creativity is the desire to communicate.”

The Clarinet Quintet dates from 1962 and was warmly received.

By the time we get to the concise three-movement Violin Concerto of 1964 the tonal elements are back. That year also saw the appearance of the short Piano Quintet, Op 20, in three movements, Moderato, Lento and Vivo. It was commissioned by the Aberystwyth Arts Festival. The work tries to combine elements of serialism with tonal design.

He composed his Piano Sonata no. 1 in 1965 and his String Quartet no 2 in 1968. This year was very fertile since he also composed his Serenade for brass quintet.

He taught in Staffordshire and Pembrokeshire and was then offered the post of first lecturer at Aberystwyth and later he became senior lecturer. He joined the staff at the Welsh College of Music and Drama in 1975 as head of all courses for performers, and, later still, became composer in residence until his retirement in 1990.

In his days as a lecturer at Aberystwyth he composed a Symphony (1975), a Piano Concerto (1977) the Piano Sonata no. 2 (1986) and set David Jones's Poem The Sleeping Lord in 1983.

He died on 7 January 2003 aged 69.

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