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| **Knussen, Oliver (1952–)** |
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| Oliver Knussen is a British composer and conductor. The son of a double bassist in the London Symphony Orchestra, Knussen came to prominence when he conducted the London Symphony Orchestra in the premiere of his (subsequently withdrawn) first symphony, aged 14. Knussen's background, combined with his studies with John Lambert (1963-1969) and Gunther Schuller (1970-1973), left him with an extensive knowledge of the repertoire. His music represents a refined synthesis of a range of sources, many of which were located in the first half of the twentieth century, as in Symphony No. 2 (1971), which is set to poems by Trakl. Knussen's early fame came at a cost; his works were often presented as fragments (and oftentimes revised thereafter), or commissions were left unfulfilled. Nevertheless, in works such as ‘Ophelia Dances Book 1’ (1975) and the Symphony No. 3 (1979), both of which were eventually shorter than originally planned, Knussen's growing technical facility and propensity for the detailed and complex layering of material demonstrated his increasing confidence. The metrical schemes found in the music of Carter, along with the pitch permutations inherited from Krenek and Stravinsky, play important roles in his technical armoury.  In his two 'fantasy operas,' *Where the Wild Things Are* (1979-1983) and *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* (1984-1985; rev. 1999), written in collaboration with the artist Maurice Sendak, Knussen looked back to the tradition instigated by Humperdinck and Ravel in works such as *Hansel und Gretel* and *L’enfant et les sortilèges*. Integrated into Knussen's own musical language in these operas are several allusions to composers such as Mussorgsky and Debussy.  Subsequent works continued to develop Knussen's concerns, albeit over shorter, more concentrated spans of music. In works such as ‘Flourish With Fireworks’ (1993; it is closely related to Stravinsky's *‘Feu d’artifice*’) and ‘Two Organa’ (1995), intricate musical workings are combined with equally detailed larger-scale planning. More recently, with pieces such as the Horn Concerto (1994), Violin Concerto (2002) and ‘Requiem: Songs For Sue’ (2006), Knussen draws more on compositional intuitions honed by decades of careful pre-compositional structuring, with a consequent increase in emotional immediacy.  As a conductor, Knussen has championed the music of a catholic range of twentieth-century and contemporary composers. Chronological List of Compositions: ‘Masks’ (1968)  Symphony in One Movement (1969-2002)  ‘Three Little Fantasies’ (1970-1983)  ‘Choral’ (1970-1972)  ‘Turba’ (1971)  Symphony No. *2* (1971)  ‘Rosary Songs’ (1972)  ‘Trumpets’ (1975)  ‘Ophelia Dances Book 1’ (1975)  ‘Océan de Terre’ (1976)  ‘Autumnal (Triptych, Part 1)’ (1976-1977)  ‘Cantata (Triptych, Part 3)’ (1977)  ‘Processionals’ (1978)  ‘Scriabin Settings’ (1978)  ‘Sonya's Lullaby (Triptych, Part 2)’ (1978)  ‘Coursing’ (1979)  Symphony No. 3 (1979)  ‘Songs and A Sea Interlude’ (1981)  *Where the Wild Things Are* (1979-1983)  ‘Hums and Songs of Winnie the Pooh’ (1970-1983)  ‘Wild Rumpus, The’ (1983)  ‘Music for a Puppet Court’ (1983)  *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* (1984-1985, rev. 1999)  ‘Frammenti da "Chiara"’ (1986)  ‘Fanfares for Tanglewood’ (1986)  ‘4 Late Poems and an Epigram of Rainer Maria Rilke’ (1988)  Variations (1989)  ‘Way to Castle Yonder, The’ (1990)  ‘Secret Psalm’ (1990)  ‘National Anthem’ (1990)  ‘Elegiac arabesques’ (1991)  ‘Whitman Settings’ (1991)  ‘Whitman Settings (orchestral)’ (1992)  ‘Songs without Voices’ (1992)  ‘Flourish with Fireworks’ (1993)  Horn Concerto (1994)  ‘Organum’ (1994)  ‘“…upon one note”’ (1995)  ‘Notre Dame des Jouets’ (1995)  ‘Two Organa’ (1995)  ‘Prayer Bell Sketch’ (1997)  Violin Concerto (2002)  ‘Cleveland Pictures’ (2004)  ‘Requiem: Songs for Sue’ (2006)  ‘Ophelia's Last Dance’ (2010) |
| Further reading:  (Anderson, A La Mode)  (Anderson, Harmonic Practices in Oliver Knussen’s Music since 1988 (Part I))  (Anderson, Harmonic Practices in Oliver Knussen’s Music since 1988 (Part II))  (Anderson, The Later Music of Oliver Knussen)  (Griffiths)  (Northcott) |