

= Erik Chisholm =

Erik William Chisholm (4 January 1904 ? 8 June 1965) was a Scottish composer , pianist , organist and conductor often known as " Scotland 's forgotten composer " . According to his biographer , Chisholm " was the first composer to absorb Celtic idioms into his music in form as well as content , his achievement paralleling that of Bartók in its depth of understanding and its daring " , which led to his nickname of " MacBartók " . He was also a founder of the Celtic Ballet and , together with Margaret Morris , created the first full @-@ length Scottish ballet , The Forsaken Mermaid . He was also the dean and director of the South African College of Music at the University of Cape Town for 19 years . Chisholm founded the South African College of Music opera company in Cape Town and was a vital force in bringing new operas to Scotland , England and South Africa . By the time of his death in 1965 , he had composed over a hundred works .

= = Early life and education = =

Erik Chisholm was the son of John Chisholm , master house painter , and his wife , Elizabeth McGeachy Macleod . He left Queen 's Park School at the early age of 13 due to ill @-@ health but showed a talent for music composition and some of his pieces were published during his childhood . He had piano lessons with Philip Halstead at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama , and later studied the organ under Herbert Walton , the organist at Glasgow Cathedral . By the time he was 12 he was giving organ recitals including an important one in Kingston upon Hull . The pianist Leff Pouishnoff then became his principal teacher and mentor . In 1927 he travelled to Nova Scotia , Canada , where he was appointed the organist and choirmaster at the Westminster Presbyterian Church , New Glasgow , and director of music at Pictou Academy .

A year later he returned to Scotland and became the organist at Barony Church ; however , as he had no School Leaving Certificate , he could not study at a university . Due to the influence of his future wife , Diana Brodie , he approached several influential music friends for letters of support for an exemption to enter university . In 1928 , he was accepted to study music at the University of Edinburgh , under his friend and mentor , the renowned musicologist Sir Donald Tovey . Chisholm graduated with a Bachelor of Music in 1931 and a Doctor of Music in 1934 . While at university , he had formed the Scottish Ballet Society in 1928 and the Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music in 1929 with fellow composers Francis George Scott and Pat Shannon . In 1930 to 1934 he also worked as a music critic for the Glasgow Weekly Herald and the Scottish Daily Express .

= = Scottish career and World War II = =

After his education , Chisholm 's work was described as " daring and original " , according to Sir Hugh Robertson , while also displaying a strong Scottish character in works such as his Piano Concerto No. 1 , subtitled Pibroch (1930) , the Straloch Suite for Orchestra (1933) and the Sonata An Riobhan Dearg (1939) . In 1933 he was the soloist at the première of his Pibroch Concerto in Amsterdam . He also played the Scottish premieres of Bartók 's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Rachmaninoff 's Piano Concerto No. 3 . From 1930 he was the musical director of the Glasgow Grand Opera Society which performed in the city 's Theatre Royal , conducting the British premières of Mozart 's Idomeneo in 1934 and Berlioz 's Les Troyens and Béatrice et Bénédict in 1935 and 1936 , respectively . He was also the founding conductor of both the Barony Opera Society , the Scottish Ballet Society , the Professional Organists ' Association , and in 1938 he was appointed music director of the Celtic Ballet . As director he composed four works in collaboration with Margaret Morris , the most famous being The Forsaken Mermaid ; the first full @-@ length Scottish ballet . Chisholm had many friends in the music world , including composers like Bartók , Hindemith , Delius , Bax , Medtner , Szymanowski , Ireland and Bush , and invited many of them to Scotland to perform their works .

At the outbreak of World War II , Chisholm , a conscientious objector , was declared unfit for military

service on the basis of poor eyesight and a crooked arm . During the war he conducted performances with the Carl Rosa Opera Company in 1940 , and later joined the Entertainments National Service Association as a colonel touring Italy with the Anglo @-@ Polish Ballet in 1943 and served as musical director to the South East Asia Command between 1943 and 1945 . He first formed a multi @-@ racial orchestra in India , however after arguments with his superior , Col. Jack Hawkins , he was removed to Singapore . Here in 1945 he founded the Singapore Symphony Orchestra . Many of the musicians were ex @-@ prisoners of War , and from them Chisholm recruited Szymon Goldberg as leader . Goldberg had successfully hidden his Stradivarius violin up a chimney in the prison camp for three and a half years . Chisholm created a truly cosmopolitan orchestra of fifteen nationalities from East and West , which gave 50 concerts in Malaya within six months . After returning to Scotland , Chisholm married his second wife , Lillias , the daughter of Scottish composer Francis George Scott . In 1946 he was appointed professor of music at the University of Cape Town and director of the South African College of Music .

= = South African career = =

Chisholm 's obituary in The Edinburgh Tatler recalled that " the three highlights of his life were in hearing at age seven Beethoven 's Moonlight Sonata played by Frederic Lamond on a piano roll ; becoming acquainted with the music of India and lastly being offered the chair of music at Cape Town University in 1947 . "

That year , Chisholm revived the South African College of Music where he eventually would teach composer Stefans Grové and singer Désirée Talbot . Using Edinburgh University as his model , Chisholm appointed new staff , extended the number of courses , and introduced new degrees and diplomas . In order to encourage budding South African musicians he founded the South African National Music Press in 1948 . With the assistance of the Italian baritone Gregorio Fiasconaro , Chisholm also established the college 's opera company in 1951 and opera school in 1954 . In addition , Chisholm founded the South African section of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in 1948 , assisted in the founding of the Maynardville Open @-@ Air Theatre on 1 December 1950 , and pursued an international conducting career .

The South African College of Music 's opera company became a national success and toured Zambia and the United Kingdom . In the winter of 1956 , Chisholm 's ambitious festival of South African Music and Musicians achieved popular success in London with a programme of Wigmore Hall concerts and the London première at the Rudolf Steiner Theatre of Bartók 's opera Bluebeard 's Castle . The company also performed Menotti 's The Consul as well as Chisholm 's own opera The Inland Woman , based on a drama by Irish author Mary Lavin . In 1952 Szymon Goldberg premièred his violin concerto at the Van Riebeeck Music Festival in Cape Town . His opera trilogy Murder in Three Keys enjoyed a six @-@ week season in New York in 1954 , and two years later he was invited to Moscow to conduct the Moscow State Orchestra in his second piano concerto The Hindustani . In 1961 , his company premièred South African composer John Joubert 's first opera , Silas Marner .

Chisholm did not support the South African policy of apartheid and had socialist leanings . Chisholm convinced Ronald Stevenson , a fellow Scot , to perform at the University of Cape Town . During a performance of Stevenson 's Passacaglia , the programme made references to Lenin 's slogan of peace , bread and land and also in salute of the " emergent Africa " . The following day , South African police searched Chisholm 's study in a failed attempt to link him with working for the USSR .

= = Later years and legacy = =

Sir Arnold Bax called Erik Chisholm " the most progressive composer that Scotland has ever produced . " After 19 years at the South African College of Music , Dr. Chisholm composed an additional twelve operas drawing inspiration from " sources as varied as Hindustan , the Outer Hebrides , the neo @-@ classical and baroque , pibroch , astrology and literature " .

Chisholm died of a heart attack at age 61 and left all his music to the University of Cape Town .

Although he composed over 100 works , only 17 were published , of which 14 were issued in printed score . As Scottish composers are few and the quality of his music is often good , his apologists have argued that his works should be heard more regularly . His style was called varied , eclectic , and challenging , but his music was also known to be harsh and often unattractive to audiences . Even so , a number of his works , including his pieces for piano and voice , have been revived and recorded .

He had a lifelong interest in Scottish music and published a collection of Celtic folk @-@ songs in 1964 . He was also interested in Czech music , and completed his book *The Operas of Leo? Janá?ek* shortly before his death . His services to Czech music were formally recognized in 1956 , when he became one of the few non @-@ Czech musicians to be awarded the Dvo?ák medal . The Manuscripts and Archives Library at the University of Cape Town holds the Chisholm collection of papers and manuscripts ; his published scores are in the College of Music library and many copies have now been sent to the Scottish Music Information Centre in Glasgow . In his memory , the South African College of Music offers a memorial scholarship in his name and the Scottish International Piano Competition hosts the Erik Chisholm Memorial Prize .

The biography of Erik Chisholm , written by John Purser with the foreword by Sir Charles Mackerras , *Chasing A Restless Muse : Erik Chisholm , Scottish Modernist (1904 ? 1965)* , was published on 19 June 2009 . An official launch was held at the Conservatoire of Music , Birmingham City University on 22 October 2009 which was attended by his widow , his daughter Morag , two of his granddaughters and great @-@ grandsons . His widow , Lillias , married the clarinettist John Forbes . Many of his works have been released on CD , performed by pianist Murray McLachlan .

= = Works = =

Erik Chisholm wrote well over 100 works , including 35 orchestral works , 7 concertante works (including a violin concerto and two piano concertos) , 7 works for orchestra and voice or chorus , 54 piano works , 3 organ works , 43 songs , 8 choral part @-@ songs , 7 ballets , and 9 operas including one on Robert Burns . He also made several interesting arrangements by composers such as Handel and Mozart . He arranged a string orchestra version of the *Symphony for Solo Piano* , Op. 39 Nos. 4 ? 7 by Charles @-@ Valentin Alkan , a composer still largely unknown at that time , the original of which has been said to surpass even the *Transcendental Études* of Franz Liszt in scale and difficulty .

Pianist Murray McLachlan divided Chisholm 's works into four periods : the Early Period , the " Scottish " Period , the Neoclassical Period and the " Hindustani " Period . The " Early Period " is extremely large , beginning with teenage efforts including a *Sonatina in G minor* , written at 18 , and clearly showing something of the influence of John Blackwood McEwen .

The " Scottish " Period began in the early 1930s where all his works were tinged with a remarkable Scottish nationalistic colouring , indicating most persuasively the ambitions of the composer like contemporary Béla Bartók , to nourish his style on the music of his ancestors and countrymen . Chisholm 's *Sonatine Ecossaise* , 4 *Elegies* , *Scottish Airs* , and *Piano Concerto no . 1 " Piobaireachd "* display a style of percussive bite and energy which made much use of dissonances , note clusters and pounding rhythms in the " Bartók manner " along with material derived from Scottish Folksong and rhythmic dance figurations . His style is so similar that Chisholm 's critics have repeatedly referred to Chisholm as " MacBartók " .

Chisholm 's Neoclassical Period refers to several of his works which were inspired by ancient and obscure motifs from the pre @-@ Classical era . His *Sonatina no . 3* , evidently based on several *ricercare* motifs originally written by Dalza , fuses Brittenesque harmonies and gentle dissonances in quintessentially pianistic textures .

His " Hindustani " Period reflects Chisholm 's love of the East , the occult and his friendship with Sorabji . Important examples of this period are his 2nd " Hindustani " *Piano Concerto* and the *Six Nocturnes* , *Night Song of the Bards* . These compositions display luscious textures , transcendental technical demands and intensity that are comparable to other piano works by Busoni , Szymanowski , Medtner , and Sorabji .

Chisholm 's two piano concertos have been recorded by Danny Driver .

= = Writings = =

Chisholm , E. (1971) The Operas of Leo? Janá?ek ISBN 0 @-@ 08 @-@ 012854 @-@ 8 .