AMBITION AND ACHIEVEMENT:
NICHOLAS MAW, 1935-2009

When I first heard Nicholas Maw's Scenes and Arias back in the 1960s, I was simply bowled over by its soaring melodic lines, its glowing harmonies, its structural mastery over a broad canvas, and its sheer compositional bravura. It sparked an admiration for his music which has never left me and later, in my professional career, I was privileged to work with Nicholas for instance, when I invited him to be composer-in-residence for the 1999 Chester Summer Music Festival, and more recently when Kokoro, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's new music ensemble, performed Ghat Dances.

Scenes and Arias (1962 rev. 66) was the work that made all his subsequent compositions possible here, for the first time, he'd followed the instincts of his inner ear rather than trying to compose music in the prevailing modernist styles of the 1960s. Thereafter he knew that his natural roots belonged to the period 1860 to 1914, and that he would attempt in his music to reconnect with the Romantic tradition which was broken with the onset of modernism. In the context of Nicholas's contemporary British composers also born in the 1930s, for example Maxwell Davies, Britwistle and Bennett, his ambition took him in a direction which was initially perceived as retrogressive, but in hindsight he led the way for composers younger than himself who also re-engaged with Romanticism, such as Robin Holloway.

What were the characteristics that made his music special for me? Firstly its lyricism, 'Music has got to be able to sing' was Nicholas's abiding belief, 'You've got to write melodic material which can be perceived immediately and is memorable and significant'. For me the Violin Concerto (1972) exemplifies this with its lyrical expansive opening theme which grows by degrees, singing all the time, as does the wonderful, life-enhancing melody introduced by the cellos at the beginning of the Piano Trilogy (1990-91) finale. Then his harmony, where he exploited serial and tonal tensions in a distinctly personal manner - 'there must be harmony not just chords', he said - and this is evident in the solo piano works under the collective title Persnæ (1973 & 1985-6). He had a distinctive ear for instrumental colour, as in ensemble works like Ghost Dances (1988) and Shahnama (1992), and these reflect another aspect of his compositions where works comprise a series of character pieces, which may be likened to the albums or studies of the Romantic period; it's another instance of his breathing new life into mid/late 19th century forms. Finally there was his ability to think on a grand scale that was Brucknerian in concept as he strove to 'recapture the ability to hear huge paragraphs that follow each other inevitably.' He achieved this supremely in his magnum orchestral opus, Odyssey (1972-87), which at over 90 minutes is the longest piece of continuous orchestral music yet written. The impact it makes in performance is unforgettable.

Nicholas often returned to composing for the orchestra, a genre in which he felt instinctively at ease, as he remarked, 'I love orchestral sound; I think of it as my instrument'. His orchestral mastery is apparent in works like The World in the Evening (1988), nocturnal and laden with Mahlerian resignation, and Spring Music (1983) whose opening plunges into music of luxuriant burgeoning growth. Equally, Life Studies (1971) demonstrates marvelous string writing, whilst American Games (1991) for symphonic wind band, shows his flair for writing high calibre light music which is ebullient, fun and rewarding to play. Indeed players have told me how much they enjoy playing Nicholas's music: it is superbly crafted for instruments and speaks directly to musicians.

Singers too find his music rewarding, hardly surprising given its lyricism. His comparatively modest vocal and choral legacy includes the brooding, virtuosic The Ruin (1980) for double chorus and horn, Roman Canticle (1989 rev. '91), an impassioned Browning setting for medium voice, viola and harp and One Foot in Eden Still, I stand (1990) (a masterwork in miniature if there ever was one), in which he utterly captures the heart of Edwin Muir's poem. It's a work that never fails to have an impact on audiences, but then I have rarely witnessed Nicholas's music not affect his listeners. This was particularly evident to me at the conclusion of the opera Sophie's Choice (1997-2002), based on William Styron's eponymous novel, at its Royal Opera première performances in 2002. Nicholas undoubtedly viewed the opera as his crowning achievement; he lavished care and attention on its composition and was deeply distressed by some of the critical reaction. How ever, its admirers outnumbered the detractors; Sir Simon Rattle, who conducted the première, believed it to be 'an instant classic, a piece that will immediately touch and move people'. This indeed was what happened; as it did similarly at its subsequent German, Austrian and USA première.

This desire to communicate with audiences and write music which performers would relish was a driving force for Nicholas: never could he be described as a composer in an ivory tower; throughout his career he 'determined to bring music back to the centre of what is important in people's lives in the same way that theatre and literature is - and I look forward desperately to the days when people get excited about contemporary music again.' Arguably it's this characteristic more than anything else that made him one of the most individual and important voices of 20th century British music, and why I believe works like Sophie's Choice and Odyssey will be performed a century from now. The music is simply too good for it not to be.

© Andrew Burn

Andrew Burn is Head of Education and Ensembles at the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and a writer specialising in 20th and 21st century British music.
Nicholas Maw is one of Britain's most admired composers. He was an acknowledged master in whatever genre he expressed himself, and one whose musical language is instantly recognizable. Born in 1935 in Grantham, Lincolnshire, he studied at the Royal Academy of Music, London (1955-58) with Paul Steinitz and Lennox Berkeley; and in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and Schoenberg's pupil, Max Deutsch. His career as a teacher has included positions at Trinity College Cambridge, Exeter University, Yale University and latterly he was Professor of Composition at the Peabody Conservatory, Baltimore. Prizes and awards he has won include the 1959 Lili Boulanger Prize, the 1980 Midsummer Prize of the City of London, the 1991 Sudler International Wind Band Composition Competition for American Games and the 1993 Stoeger Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Maw has received commissions from many of the major musical organisations in the United Kingdom such as the BBC, the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields, the Philharmonia Orchestra, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Nash Ensemble, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Sinfonietta, to name but a few, and he has been the featured composer at the South Bank Summer Music (1973), the Kings Lynn Festival (1985), the BBC 'Nicholas Maw Day' at the South Bank (1989), the Bath Festival (1991), the Park Lane Group and the Royal Academy of Music's British Music Festival (1992), the 60th Birthday Malvern Weekend (1995) and the Chester Festival (1999).

His extensive and varied catalogue includes much chamber, vocal and choral music, two comic operas (the chamber opera One Man Show, 1964, and the three-act The Rising of the Moon, 1967-70), solo instrumental works, and music for children. Maw is, however, most celebrated for his orchestral music: his reputation being established when, at the age of 26, he produced Scenes and Arias (1962) for a BBC Prom, which immediately put him right at the forefront of the British musical scene. This BBC commission is now recognised as one of the most outstanding British works of its decade.

In addition to fulfilling other numerous commissions, from 1973 to 1987 Maw composed Odyssey for orchestra: the single, unbroken 96-minute span of symphonic music which has been unanimously lauded since its initial performance in 1987 at a BBC Prom in London. The EMI recording by Simon Rattle and the CBSO was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1992 and cited by Classic CD (June 2000) as the best recording out of a hundred recommended releases in the decade. Leonard Slatkin and the St Louis Orchestra gave the American premiere of Odyssey in St Louis and New York's Carnegie Hall in 1994. His Violin Concerto recorded by Joshua Bell on Sony, was nominated for the 2000 Mercury Prize.

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Sophie's Choice (1997-2002)

opera in four acts

Libretto by Nicholas Maw based on the novel by William Styron
Duration c. 200 minutes
Commissioned by BBC Radio 3 in association with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

The first performance of Sophie's Choice was given by the artists and orchestra of the Royal Opera House conducted by Sir Simon Rattle and directed by Trevor Nunn, at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on 7 December 2002, and broadcast on BBC television and radio.

The opera has magnificent music... The first half-hour is deceptively calm, almost Vaughan Williams reborn. Then Maw conjures beguilingly sensuous or exuberantly high-spirited ensembles for Sophie, her schizophrenic lover Nathan and Stingo, the virginal young writer who gets sucked into the vortex of their doomed passions... But it is the searing orchestral interludes towards the end that really hit the spot...

Maw's opera has a bigness of sonority, passion, ambition and spirituality that sends it soaring above the work of his contemporaries.

The Baltimore Sun (Tim Smith), 11 December 2002

…an uncompromising involving disturbing, often achingly beautiful opera... Throughout, Maw's orchestration is a marvel of transparency and colour... The overall characteristic of the score is restraint. For the most part, Maw avoids the obvious in his music, just as his own libretto avoids caricature, stereotype and blatancy. It is clear that he appreciates the complex layers of good, evil, innocence and guilt in each of Styron's characters. This helps to give the opera its remarkable depth... (Maw) has achieved what he set out to do - compose something truly meaningful. With its uncommon integrity and imagination, Sophie's Choice enriches the field of contemporary opera considerably.

The Times (Richard Morrison), 9 December 2002

…a remarkable work whose production and performance were superb... It deserves to be staged in every major American city. As for Warsaw and the German-speaking countries, it should be put on everywhere not for the usual pieties of holocaust guilt, but because Maw's Sophie's Choice is a stunning piece of musical theatre on a universal theme which can grip a sophisticated audience anywhere...

Opera Now (Tom Rosenthal), March/April 2003

…the audience greeted the German premiere at the Deutsche Oper with a standing ovation. One has to take the music of Nicholas Maw for what it is serious entertainment, which has its roots in a superbly orchestrated classical tonality... Fine music. Music for a broad audience, which already seems to be abandoning ‘contemporary’ opera.

Leipziger Volkszeitung, 27 September 2005

Sophie's Choice is based on a novel by William Styron published in 1979. The story of two doomed lovers is presented to us by the Narrator, an older incarnation of the young writer Stingo whose friendship with Sophie and Nathan in Brooklyn in 1947 introduces us to their passionate, violent relationship. The scenes shift expansively back and forth over the events of their meeting in 1946 and the terrible events of Sophie's youth in Auschwitz during the war. Their past is populated by a cast of characters bringing the episodes vividly to life. The opera ends in the present and a finally peaceful end to an existence dominated by guilt, passion and despair.
**Concert Suite from Sophie's Choice**

*Orchestra with optional mezzo-soprano*

Duration 22 minutes

3(III=picc).3(II=ec).3(II=Escl).3(II=dsb) - 5321 - timp - perc - harp - strings

FP: 24.4.04, Peabody Institute, Baltimore, USA:

Peabody Concert Orchestra/Hajime Teri Mura

Score and parts for hire

**Concerto for Cor Anglais**

*Cor anglais and orchestra*

Duration 20 minutes

2(II=picc).2.2.2 - 4211 - strings

This work was commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra, Christoph Eschenbach, Music Director. This commission was made possible in part by grants from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation and from the Philadelphia Music Project, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, administered by Settlement Music School.

FP: 27.4.05, Kimmel Center, Philadelphia, PA, USA:

Elizabeth Starr Masoudnia/The Philadelphia Orchestra/

Rosen Milianov

Score and parts for hire

**Concerto for Violin**

*Vioin and orchestra*

Duration 41 minutes


Commissioned jointly by the Orchestra of St Lukes and the Philadelphia Orchestra, London with generous support from the Commissioning Program of the Mary Flager Cary Charitable Trust and the Arts Council of Great Britain.

FP: 29.9.93, Avery Fisher Hall, New York, USA:

Orchestra of St Lukes/Joshua Bell/Roger Norrington

FP(UK): 14.10.93, Royal Festival Hall, London, UK:

Joshua Bell/Philadelphia Orchestra/Leonard Slabkin

Score 0-571-51784-6 on sale, parts for hire

**Dance Scenes**

*Orchestra*

Duration 19 minutes

2(picc.2.2.2.2(II=Escl)).2(II=dsb) - 4330 - timp - perc(1): SD/TD/tamb/cyms/susp.cym/glsp/vib - harp - strings

Commissioned by Rowe & Maw for their 100th anniversary, with support from the Arts Council of England for the opening of the Philharmonia Orchestra's 50th anniversary season.

FP: 27.9.95, Royal Festival Hall, London, UK:

Philharmonia Orchestra/Daniel Harding

Score 0-571-51784-6 on sale, parts for hire

**Little Concert**

*Oboe and small orchestra*

Duration 12 minutes

2 hn - strings

Commissioned by the Orchestra of St John's Smith Square for their 21st Anniversary with funds from the Greater London Arts.

FP: 28.5.88, Wymondham Abbey, Norwich, UK:

Melinda Maxwell/Orchestra of St John's Smith Square/

John Lubbock

Score 0-571-51100-7 on sale, parts for hire

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**Concert Suite from Sophie's Choice**

From the prayerful string chords that start to the raft, high, slowly evaporating notes at the end, the suite evokes a considered tension and emotion in a richly textured musical language. If you knew nothing about the William Syron novel that inspired the opera, you could still sense the pain, love and cruelty that drive the story.

*The Sun (Tim Smith)*, 26 April 2004

**Concerto for Cor Anglais**

The compositional voice one has come to love from Maw's Violin Concerto and the opera Sophie's Choice was there in full. Compelling events grew out of one another with improvisational spontaneity... Maw is a major composer...

*Philadelphia Inquirer (David Patrick Stearns)*, 29 April 2005

**Concerto for Violin**

...infused with that peculiarly English lust for the exotic but with none of the reservations that invariably inhibits it... Elgar said that Englishmen didn't know how to rhapsodize. He hadn't heard of Maw. His songs without words are like rapturous melismas in pursuit of the unattainable. In the trio-tutued-cadenza of the scherzo the soloist's double stopped reverberates to find perfect harmony in the ether. It's Paganini after a night in the pleasure dome... It's Vaughan Williams' "Lark" turned bird of paradise. It's a great piece.

*Financial Times "Compact Choice" (David Murray)*, 2 October 2005

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**Daily Telegraph (Geoffrey Norris)**, 25 September 1993

...the violin is worshipped as god and dreamer in Nicholas Maw's Violin Concerto... it breathes the air of another planet. Melody is spun almost continuously through the four distinct movements, and the soloist glistens. In Maw's Violin Concerto, the violin sings, however - sweetly, continuously, and with the subtlest nuances of feeling. It may seem a work apart, not quite of its time, but a lot of people will come to love it, with every justification.

*Financial Times "Compact Choice" (David Murray)*, 2 October 1999

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**Concert Suite from Sophie's Choice**

...the immediate impact is of a raptly lyrical, far-reaching soliloquy that holds the ear and touches it... The whole thing sings; however - sweetly, continuously, and with the subtlest nuances of feeling. It may seem a work apart, not quite of its time, but a lot of people will come to love it, with every justification.

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*Financial Times "Compact Choice" (David Murray)*, 2 October 1999
**Odyssey** (1972-87)  
**orchestra**  
Duration 96 minutes  
3(1=fl.1I-III=fl.picc).3(1=ca).3(1=Ec.d.1II-III=cl).3(1=bsn)  
- 8431 - timp(2) - perc(3/4): 3 tam-t/BD/2 gsp/t.bells/  
3 susp.cyms/kong/TD/tamb/SD/3 bongos/tg/mica/clyds/  
vib.6 tam/t/spi/whip/cyms - oil - harp - strings  
Originally commissioned by LSO in 1972 with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain. Completed 1987 to a BBC commission  
FP: (incomplete) 10.8.87, BBC Proms, Royal Albert Hall, London, UK: BBC Symphony Orchestra/Mark Elder  
FP: (complete) 8.4.89, Royal Festival Hall, London, UK: BBC Symphony Orchestra/Richard Bernas  
Study score (fp) 0-571-55732-5 on sale, full score and parts for hire

**Shahnama** (1992)  
**small orchestra**  
Duration 28 minutes  
1(=picc=fl.).1(=Ec.d).1 - 1110 - pno - strings (min 66441)  
Commissioned by the London Sinfonietta with funds from the Arts Council of Great Britain  
FP: 7.5.92, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, UK: London Sinfonietta/Anthony Pay  
Score and parts for hire

**Sonata Notturna** (1985)  
**cello and string orchestra**  
Duration 25 minutes  
Strings (min 43221)  
Commissioned by the 1985 King’s Lynn Festival with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain  
FP: 30.5.86, Fenemore Centre, King’s Lynn, UK: Alexander Baillie/Peterborough String Orchestra  
Score 0-571-51030-2 on sale parts for hire

**Spring Music** (1982-83)  
**orchestra**  
Duration 14 minutes  
2(1=picc=fl.).2.2.2 - 4331 - timp - harp - strings  
Commissioned by the Norfolk and Norwich Triennial Festival  
FP: 15.10.82, Norwich, UK: Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/ Norman Del Mar  
Score 0-571-50815-4 on sale parts for hire

**Summer Dances** (1981)  
**orchestra**  
Duration 24 minutes  
3(1=picc).3.3.3 - 4331 - timp/TD/BD/3 cym/tamb/susp.cyms/whip/pt/gls/t.bells/ - harp - strings  
Commissioned by the Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools  
FP: 27.7.81, The Matilges, Snape, UK: APSO/ Nicholas Kraemer  
Score 0-571-50712-3 on sale parts for hire

**orchestra**  
Duration 26 minutes  
Commissioned by the Royal Opera House with funds from the David S Cohen Foundation  
FP: 21.10.88, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, UK: Orchestra of the Royal Opera House Orchestra/ Bernard Haitink  
Score and parts for hire

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**Odyssey**  
...a wonderfully rich score...which left the Prommers cheering.  
The Observer, Nicholas Kenyon, 16 August 1987

**Shahnama**  
The concert's central event...exuded confidence...it revels in invention, delight, terror, without nostalgia or irony, simply unfolding musical tales from a resourceful and richly stocked musical imagination. Like a well-loved book, this music to return to again and again. The lyrical lines and counterpoint, the distinctive harmonic atmosphere were all relished by the Sinfonietta players.  
The Independent (Robert Maycock), 9 May 1992

**Spring Music**  
...a wonderfully rich score...which left the Prommers cheering.  
The Observer, Records of the Year, 22 December 1991

**Summer Dances**  
...a wonderfully rich score...which left the Prommers cheering.  
The Guardian, Andrew Clements, 13 March 1999

**The World in the Evening**  
...beneath the graceful long lines and jiggly sprits of a solo part expressly written for Melinda Maxwell, Maw finds time and space enough to draw quite long-range implications from his basic motif of a sonant plus a major third, and to insert some of his special, dense and poetic harmonies.  
The Independent (Bayan Northcott), 6 June 1988

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**Little Concert**  
...beneath the graceful long lines and jiggly sprits of a solo part expressly written for Melinda Maxwell, Maw finds time and space enough to draw quite long-range implications from his basic motif of a sonant plus a major third, and to insert some of his special, dense and poetic harmonies.  
The Observer (Bayan Northcott), 6 June 1988

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Maw has managed to combine toughness of vision with beauty and openness of texture. This is music that will surely last.  
The Observer, Records of the Year, 22 December 1991

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Maw swaths us in rich, tonal harmonies, varied and balanced, colorful and vague evocative...sweeping lines throughout...  
Washington Post (Pierre Rühe), 4 February 1997

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Wiener Zeitung (Christine Dobretsberger), 22 March 1999

**Shahnama**


**The Independent on Sunday** (Michael White), 8 December 1991

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Easily the most impressive new music release of the year, and one of the most accessible, a landmark score of towering dimensions...has attracted an almost cult following...

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The Guardian (Andrew Clements), 13 March 1999
**Voices of Memory (1995)**
*Variations for Orchestra*
Duration 25 minutes
Commissioned by the BBC for the Royal Concert FP: 23.11.95, Royal Festival Hall, London, UK: BBC Symphony Orchestra Andrew Davis (then entitled Romantic Variations)
Score 0-571-52101-0 on sale, parts for hire

**CHAMBER**

**Flute Quartet** *(1981)*
*flute and string trio*
Duration 26 minutes
Commissioned by the Nash Ensemble with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain FP: 7.5.81, St John’s Smith Square, London, UK: Nash Ensemble/Judith Pearce
Study score 0-571-50670-4 and parts (fp) 0-571-55590-X on sale

**Ghost Dances** *(1988)*
*Imaginary Ballet for 5 players*
Duration 27 minutes
fl([picc=eff-imanjeera];cl=([E=eff-ibb-manjeera+kazoo] - pno=[manjeera+kalimba] - vln=[manjeera+strum stick].vcl=[manjeera+filetone]
Commissioned by the Nash Ensemble with funds from the Arts Council of Great Britain and IBM FP: (USA) 16.5.88, Merkin Hall, New York, USA: Da Capo Ensemble FP: (UK) 12.6.88, Almeida Festival, UK: Nash Ensemble/ Lionel Friend
Score 0-571-51405-7 on sale, parts and strumstick for hire

**The Head of Orpheus** *(1992)*
*soprano and two clarinets*
Duration 6 minutes
Text: Robert Kelly (Eng)
FP: 20.11.92, Children in Need day, Pebble Mill, Birmingham, UK: Composers Ensemble/Mary Wiegold/ Dominic Muldowney
Score and parts (fp) 0-571-55311-7 on sale

**Intrada** *(2001)*
*string quartet*
Duration 4 minutes
Commissioned by The Brentano String Quartet FP: 3.10.02, Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, USA: Brentano String Quartet
Score and parts for hire

**Piano Trio** *(1990-91)*
*Duration 32 minutes*
Commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation in the Library of Congress and dedicated to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky FP: 25.5.91, Bath Festival, University Hall, University of Bath, UK: Montecello Piano Trio
Piano score and parts 0-571-51553-3 on sale

**Sonata Notturna** *(1988)*
...a great many remarkable qualities...it contains numerous praise and beautiful images
The Times (Paul Griffiths), 22 September 1986
Its impact lies not so much in deliberate brilliance of effect as in the intensity of its lyricism...it develops an emotional warmth of expression, a kind of rhapsodic eloquence which is none the less contained within a well-balanced design.
Daily Telegraph (Geoffrey Norris), 20 September 1986
Cellists must even now be queuing up to give repeat performances.
The Listener (Malcolm MacDonald), 12 February 1997
Nicholas Maw’s Sonata Notturna is a superb work which should excite considerable interest.
Fanfare (USA), September/October 1996

**Spring Music**
*A bright and boldly-contoured curtain raiser.*
The Times (Hilary Finch), 5 August 1985
...burbles throughout with lyrical vitality.
The Guardian (Marion Bowen), 19 August 1985
Nicholas Maw’s Spring Music rippled and shimmered with emerging new life a piece well-named.
The New York Times (Benedict Holland), 13 July 1993

...an unbelievably colourful, astonishingly well-orchestrated partita full of blossoming, richly dimensional chords and vocal pastoral melodies, as well as rhythmic exaltation...This superbly accessible and unquestionably appealing work deserves to become established in international concert repertory.
Wiener Zeitung (F.Baumgartner), 16 April 1991

With its rich textures bubbling with activity, not unlike Janácek thrilling at nature’s evergreen renewal, the piece seeks to put into music “the energy and beauty of spring.” It is an approachable example of the music of the 1980s deserving of a re-hearing.
Financial Times (Richard Fairman), 22 April 1993

**The World in the Evening**
...begins with quiet, charged fragments, like late Mahler, but the process of building from them immediately takes on its own character and grows to long, apparently free but carefully shaped melodic lines. At first the harmonies are gentle. A glint of Stravinskian asperity in the high woodwind is mellowed by the strings below it. The central part of the piece is night music, stinging triplets then snarls and roars from trombones, predominantly uneasy, rather than directly frightening like Bartók’s nocturnal interludes. It gathers its threads into knots of high tension and unwinds slowly back to a different but related kind of lullaby, drawn out to unexpected lengths. In the end, the music does not cut off suddenly like the eventual coming of sleep but holds on to the last vestige of consciousness, as though wanting to continue the search.
The Independent (Robert Maycock), 24 October 1988

The music is autumnal, full of rage remembrance and reconciliation. The idiom is as personal, unique, unfashionable and compelling as Sibelius or Elgar were...these lullabies mourn the passing of our civilization, even while they prolong civilized values...for generations people will be buying tickets to hear his music.
The Boston Globe (Richard Dyer), 4 August 1992

...a single movement of half an hour’s duration which always knows where it is heading and expresses itself with originality and beguiling charm. Not that all is amiability: this twilight world brings its nightmare visions...so imaginative is Maw’s scoring and so cohesive his argument that the final impression is one of deep humanity not less benign and deep than Beethoven’s.
The Times (Barry Millington), 12 September 1995
Roman Canticle (1989/91)
Two in the Campagna
medium voice, flute, viola and harp
Duration 9 minutes
Text: Two in the Campagna by Robert Browning (Eng)
Commissioned by the Nash Ensemble with funds provided by IBM (UK) on the occasion of their 25th anniversary in 1989
Score 0-571-51439-1 on sale, parts for hire

String Quartet No 2 (1982)
Duration 30 minutes
Commissioned by the Barbican Centre
FP: 13.1.83, Barbican Centre, London, UK: Gabrieli String Quartet
A4 facsimile score (fp) 0-571-55517-9 and parts (fp) 0-571-55518-7 on sale

String Quartet No 3 (1994)
Duration 22 minutes
Commissioned by Warwick University for the twenty first anniversary of the Coull String Quartet
FP: 11.5.95, Buttenworth Hall, Warwick University, UK: Coull String Quartet
A4 facsimile score (fp) 0-571-55477-6 and parts (fp) 0-571-55478-4 on sale

String Quartet No 4 (2005)
Duration 22 minutes
Commissioned by the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society
FP: 10.2.06, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society
International Chamber Music Series, Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, PA, USA: Emerson Quartet
Score and parts for hire

String Sextet (2007)
Melodies from Drama
Duration 25 minutes
2 vn.2 vla.2vlc
Commissioned by the Wharton Center and The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, David Shifrin, Artistic Director
FP: 27.4.07, Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York, USA: Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center
Score and parts for hire

INSTRUMENTAL

Night Thoughts (1982)
solo flute
Duration 10 minutes
FP: 10.6.82, Wigmore Hall, London, UK: Judith Pearce
Score 0-571-50746-8 on sale

Little Suite (1984)
solo guitar
Duration 12 minutes
Score 0-571-50563-4 on sale

Personae IV - VI (1985-86)
piano
Duration 25 minutes
Commissioned by the 1986 Bath International Festival with funds provided by South West Arts
FP: 7.6.86, Assembly Halls, Bath, UK: Peter Donohoe
Score 0-571-50964-9 on sale

Roman Canticle (1989/91)
Two in the Campagna
medium voice, flute, viola and harp
Duration 9 minutes
Text: Two in the Campagna by Robert Browning (Eng)
Commissioned by the Nash Ensemble with funds provided by IBM (UK) on the occasion of their 25th anniversary in 1989
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Duration 25 minutes
Commissioned by the 1986 Bath International Festival with funds provided by South West Arts
FP: 7.6.86, Assembly Halls, Bath, UK: Peter Donohoe
Score 0-571-50964-9 on sale

Flute Quartet
It has a lucidly and balance, a subtle refinement of substance and texture...it is a work that will no doubt quickly establish, or certainly ought to establish, a regular place in what is a surprisingly limited repertoire.
Daily Telegraph (Robert Henderson), 9 May 1983

...a marvellous essay in the poetry of atonality - tender, subtly interweaving strands of thought...
Daily Telegraph (Peter Stadlen), November 1981

Starting with modal phrases that echo Debussy, it soon settles on its own purposeful but elegant path.
The Independent (Robert Maycock), 14 November 2005

Ghost Dances
...shows an ability to rework the romantic tradition in ways that are fresh and inventive...attractive, highly diverse music, which sometimes touches on the nightmarish intensity of Pierrot Lunaire, but more often takes a sly, sideways glance at many other 20th-century styles; the very tangle of influences through which Maw has steered his own, dogged course.
The Guardian (Andrew Clements), 25 July 1997

...a genuinely atmospheric, highly allusive, tautly organized suite of dance references. Maw's titles and tempo indications suggest a fashionably vampiric nightmare, but the music sounded warm and lyrical as often as cold and frenzied...the chill chimes of small cymbals and the gentle plunking of a kalimba became the essential components of a transfigured epilogue.
Los Angeles Times (John Henken), 2 December 1992

...it is inspired by such an individual aural imagination, motivated by such captivating rhythms, coloured by such sensitive scoring that it sounds consistently and engagingly like nothing else.
The Times (Gerald Larner), 19 February 1997

Piano Trio
When this Trio comes to an end with a radiant and triumphant D major, every shooting beam of it seems earned, logical, justified, as well as astonishing and thrilling to hear.
The Boston Globe (Richard Buell), 5th November 1991

Maw's Trio is a work of huge confidence, scope and scale, properly compared in the accompanying notes to Fauré in its ample melodic sweep. Indeed, has there been a finer piano trio since Shostakovich?
The Guardian (Michael Oliver), July 1995

Roman Canticle
Maw's harmonic eloquence and rhythmic fervour crystallize the initial agitation to become a flowing vocal line coloured by the writing for flute, viola and harp, the words borne aloft like a continuation of the musical idea and resolved into the gentlest of instrumental postludes.
The Times (Noel Goodwin), 6th November 1989

...found a musical language to match - unironic, early-20th-century expressive lush but mannerly.
The Boston Globe (Richard Buell), 11 May 1995

String Quartet No 2
Nothing should prevent this Quartet from snuggling firmly into the repertoire.
The Independent (Robert Maycock), 14 November 2005

...one of the most rewarding additions to the medium in many a year...both the succinctness and logic of the writing have an almost Beethoven cut.
Daily Telegraph (Alan Blyth), 14 January 1983
Music of Memory (1989/91)
guitar
Duration 20 minutes
Written for and dedicated to Eliot Fisk
FP: 9.7.89, Lichfield Festival, Lady Chapel, Lichfield Cathedral, UK: Eliot Fisk
Score 0-571-51454-5 on sale

Cadenzas to Mozart’s Piano Concerto K491 (1991)
Duration 6 minutes
B3 facsimile (fp) 0-571-55252-8 on sale

Sonata for solo violin (1996-97)
solo violin
Duration 27 minutes
Commissioned by Minnesota Public Radio International as part of their continuing commitment to present contemporary music to radio audiences nationally and internationally
FP: 10.1.98, Gustavus Adolphus College, Minnesota, USA: Jorja Fleezanis
0-571-51926-1 on sale

Stanza (1997)
solo violin
Duration 4 minutes
Score (fp) 0-571-56293-0 on sale

Narration (2001)
solo cello
Duration 20 minutes
Commissioned for the RNCM Manchester International Cello Festival by the BBC
FP: 3.5.01, RNCM Manchester International Cello Festival, Manchester, UK: Ralph Kirshbaum
Score (fp) 0-571-56698-7 on sale

VOCAL

Concert Suite from Sophie’s Choice (2003)
orchestra with optional mezzo-soprano
see p. 5

Five American Folksongs (1989)
high voice and piano
Duration 12 minutes
FP: 29.9.89, Wigmore Hall, London: Lucy Shelton/ Roger Vignoles
Score 0-571-51191-0 on sale

The Head of Orpheus (1992)
soprano and two clarinets
see p. 7

Roman Canticle (1989/91)
Two in the Campagna
medium voice, flute, viola and harp
see p. 8

String Quartet No 3
…the Coull Quartet has brought into the world a work that will retain a place in the repertoire…a string quartet of exceptionally high quality…the motivation in an inspired surge of melody is both unmistakable and emotionally convincing.
The Times (Gerald Larner), 12 May 1995

…mastery. I’m tempted to declare this Quartet the finest example of its genre to have appeared anywhere since Britten’s Third. Certainly I know of no recent work that compares with it for elegance, invention and sheer beauty, a completeness that I’d willingly deposit in a time capsule to show the next century what the 1990s could achieve.
The Independent on Sunday (Michael White), 12 November 1995

String Quartet No 3
It begins in a spirit of restless lyricism which builds compellingly, eloquence and drama intensifying in ways which place the music firmly in the traditions of Berg and Bartók without any hint of abject dependency. The work is crowned by a concluding passacaglia which creates tension from the superimposition of contrasting layers of texture before reaching a climax with a unison line for all four players, a moment of revelation which subsides into a regretful resolution.
Gramophone (Arnold Whittall), October 2007

String Quartet No 4
…a single movement packed with lush, dissonant yet non-intimidating textures, big thrummed chords and a grand symphonic climax.
The Los Angeles Times (Richard S Ginell), 22 May 2006

String Sextet
…the product of an accomplished mind, and a mind not enslaved by modern day compositional orthodoxies.
The New York Sun (Jay Nordlinger), 30 April 2007

…players took turns unfurling long arias over rich, ambiguous chords. Memorable themes returned and collided as the music progressed through a series of dark, ruminative episodes and agitated outbursts…the finale unsnagged, settled calm was powerful.
The New York Times (Steve Smith), 30 April 2007

The themes are warmly expressive and lyrical, another reminder of Maw’s declared musical aim of picking up the threads of late European romanticism from the point before they morphed into modernism, and developing them.
The musical world of the sextet is closer to the Richard Strauss of Metamorphosen, or the Schoenberg of Verklärte Nacht than anything else, though there is also something curiously English about the music too, with an echo of Vaughan Williams in the opening moments, as the first theme is unwind over archaic, Tallis Fantasia-like harmonies. The string writing is rich and sonorous, every theme is supported and carried on detailed textures that must be a delight to play.
The Guardian (Andrew Clements), 25 June 2007
CHORAL

Hymnus (1995-96)
SATB chorus and orchestra

Duration 34 minutes
Text: St Ambrose 4th Century/Anon 6th Century (Latin)

Commissioned by the Oxford Bach Choir on the occasion of their centenary year, with financial assistance from Southern Arts
FP: 1.6.96, Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, UK: Oxford Bach Choir/CBSO/Christopher Robinson
Vocal score 0-571-56481-X and full score (fp) 0-571-56464-X on sale and parts for hire

One Foot in Eden Still, I Stand (1990)
Motet for SATB soloists or semi-chorus and unaccompanied mixed chorus (SSAATTBB) with opt organ

Duration 6 minutes
Text: Edwin Muir (Eng)
Commissioned by King’s College, Cambridge, to mark the 550th anniversary of the founding of the college: 1441-1991
FP: 18.9.90, King’s College Chapel, Cambridge, UK: Choir of King’s College Cambridge/Stephen Cleobury
Score 0-571-51406-5 on sale

Swete Jesu (1992)
Carol for unaccompanied SATB

Duration 3 minutes
Text: Anon 13th Century (Eng)
Commissioned by King’s College, Cambridge for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
FP: 24.12.92, King’s College Chapel, Cambridge, UK: King’s College Choir/Stephen Cleobury
Score 0-571-51401-4 on sale

Three Hymns (1989)
SATB chorus and organ

Duration 12 minutes
Text: Joseph Beaumont, John Hall, Sir Thomas Browne (Eng)
Commissioned by the Lichfield Festival for the Choir of Lichfield Cathedral
FP: 9.7.89, Lichfield Cathedral, Lichfield, UK: Choir of Lichfield Cathedral/Nicholas Maw
Score 0-571-51143-0 on sale

SYMPHONIC WIND ENSEMBLE

American Games (1991)
symphonic wind ensemble

Duration 23 minutes
Text: E. coli (Eng)
Commissioned by the BBC for the 1991 BBC Proms
FP: 23.7.91, BBC Proms, Royal Albert Hall, London, UK: Royal Northern College of Music Wind Band/ Timothy Reynish
Score and parts 0-571-56413-5 on sale

Personae IV - VI
...the pieces cares, ravish, astound and seriously engage the ear.
Financial Times (Paul Driver), 10 June 1986
...such not, effective character sketches whose corrosive raps and great, crashing chords demand phenomenal technique and reward it with phenomenal music.
The Washington Post (Joseph McLellan), 1 November 1990

Sonata for solo violin
Maw has contributed a work of stature and substance to the repertory... Despite its virtuoso rhetoric of its technical demands - ghostlike harmonics, contrapuntal lines punctuated with left-hand pizzicati, and darkly shaded tremolos... a vehicle for an expressive intimacy, richly inventive and many voiced. It plausibly echoed the strain of spiritual questing that can be heard in Bach's pioneering examples of the genre.
The Washington Post (Thomas May), 4 March 1998

...an epic achievement... Maw's discriminating relationship with traditional material is one of the most intriguing and most rewarding aspects of his creativity.
The Times (Gerald Larner), 26 July 1999

Stanza
...Maw seems the true marriage between the classical and the modern, an important value for musical societies... adopts moments of Romantic lyricism...
The Evening Bulletin (Alicia Oltuski), 26 September 2006

Choral
Why so little, and so under-performed? These are the questions asked by this overdue survey of Maw's choral music, covering a 32 year span. Regenerative and Romantic, his music aches for a tonality lost that Britten, Vaughan Williams and Berkeley also felt keenly. "Ringleted youth of my love", "Swete Jesu", "One foot in Eden still I stand": these should be amongst the set pieces of English choral music, and I'd be delighted if this disc nudged them nearer this position... More Maw, say I.
BBC Music Magazine (William Whitehead), June 2007

Hymnus
It begins with pre-dawn musings at the very bottom of the register, in E♭ minor, and concludes ethereally in D major... There are flashes of bright colour from the orchestra... The choruses climax with the Sheldonian gorgeously. Hymnus is a well-made piece...
Financial Times (David Murray), 4 June 1996

One Foot in Eden Still, I Stand
...a lyrical and artful structure, full of contrasting texture and dynamic and typically rich harmony.
The Times (Stephen Pettitt), March 1993

Full of beautiful, elegiac cadences... a miniature masterpiece that should be in the repertoire of every adventurous choir.
The Times (Richard Morrison), 5 October 2002

American Games
...a sequence of dances which make up a vigorous rhythmic romp, brilliantly written for the instruments.
The Guardian (Edward Greenfield), 25th July 1991
DISCOGRAPHY

American Games
Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music Wind Symphony/
Eugene Corporon
Klavier KCD: 11047 (USA)

Concerto for Violin
Joshua Bell/London Philharmonic Orchestra/
Sir Roger Norrington
Sony Classical: SK 62856

Dance Scenes
Philharmonia/Daniel Harding
EMI Classics: MDS 8 82648 2

Dance Scenes
Philharmonia/Daniel Harding
EMI Classics: 5851452

Flute Quartet/Piano Trio
Judith Pearce/Paul Coletti/Monticello Trio
ASV: CDDCA 920

Flute Quartet/Night Thoughts/
Roman Canticle
Aureole Trio/Mary Nessinger/Curtis Macomber/
John Whitfield
Koch: 3-7355-2

Ghost Dances/Roman Canticle
20th Century Consort/Christopher Kendall
ASV: CDDCA 999

Hymnus/Little Concert/Shahnama
Oxford Bach Choir/BBC Concert Orchestra/
Nicholas Daniel/Britten Sinfonia/Nicholas Cleobury
ASV: CDDCA 1070

Music of Memory
Stephen Marchionda
Chandos: CHAN 10305

Night Thoughts
Emily Beynon Metier
MSVCD: 92006

Odyssey
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Sir Simon Rattle
EMI Classics: CDS 7 54277 2 (2 cds)

One Foot in Eden Still, I Stand
Choir of King’s College, Cambridge/Stephen Cleobury
EMI Classics: CDC 7 54418 2 (“English Anthems”)

Three Hymns
Schola Cantorum of Oxford/Mark Shepherd
Hyperion: CDA67615

Sonata Notturna
Raphael Wallfisch/English String Orchestra/
William Boughton
Nimbus: NI 5471

Sophie’s Choice (DVD)
Angelika Kirchschlager/ROH/Simon Rattle
Opus Arte: OA1024D

String Quartet No. 3
Coull Quartet
SOMMCD: 065

Maw could have been described as a neo-Romantic long before the term was invented, but as the 1985 Odyssey and the far slighter Dance Scenes show, his style is totally without contrivance: this is the music of a composer who has taken the threads of early 20th-century modernism to a very different endpoint from that of most of his contemporaries.
The Guardian
(Andrew Clements)
15 August 2003

...a superb example of choral writing performed by a first-class choir. Maw’s striking miniatures...The composer illuminates a text from within with wit and charm and total understanding of the occasional accompaniment, adding another dimension to the overall sound. Schola Cantorum of Oxford gives an excellent performance and I obviously enjoying every minute. A totally enjoyable experience.
Choir & Organ magazine, May/June 2007
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Key to publishers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Sonatina (1957) flute &amp; piano (Chester)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957-8</td>
<td>Nocturne (1957-8) mezzo-soprano &amp; chamber orchestra (Chester)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>Five Epigrams (1960) unaccompanied mixed voices (Chester)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1961</td>
<td>Our Lady's Song (1961) carol for unaccompanied SATB chorus (Novello)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>Chamber Music (1962) chamber ensemble of 5 players (Chester)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>Scenes and Arias (1962 rev. '66) soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto &amp; orchestra (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Round (1963) children's voices, SATB chorus &amp; piano (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>The Angel Gabriel (1963) carol for unaccompanied SATB chorus (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>Balulalow (1964) carol for unaccompanied SATB chorus (OUP)</td>
<td>OUP Oxford University Press</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>One Man Show (1964 rev. '66/70) comic opera in 2 acts (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>Corpus Christi Carol (1964) arranged for sopranos &amp; descant with piano (Cambridge Hymnals)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>String Quartet No 1 (1965) (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1965</td>
<td>Sinfonia (1965) small orchestra (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1966</td>
<td>The Voice of Love (1966) song-cycle for mezzo-soprano &amp; piano (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Six Interiors (1966) tenor &amp; guitar (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1966</td>
<td>Double Canon for Igor Stravinsky on his 85th birthday (1967)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>Severn Bridge Variations (1967) orchestra (Tempo no 89)</td>
<td>Tempo quarterly magazine</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>Sonata (1967) strings &amp; two horns (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1967-70</td>
<td>The Rising of the Moon (1967-70) opera in 3 acts (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Epitaph-Canon in Memory of Igor Stravinsky (1971) flute, clarinet &amp; harp (Tempo no 97)</td>
<td>Tempo quarterly magazine</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>Concert Music (1972) orchestra (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>Five Irish Songs (1973) unaccompanied SATB chorus (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>Serenade (1973 rev. '77) small orchestra (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>Life Studies (1973) 15 solo strings (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>Personæ I-III (1973) solo piano (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>Te Deum (1975) treble (or soprano), tenor, SATB chorus, congregation &amp; organ (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Reverie (1975) five songs for male voices (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>Annes! (1976) unaccompanied SATB chorus (OUP)</td>
<td>OUP Oxford University Press</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>Nonsense Rhymes for Children 20 (1976) songs with piano accompaniment (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>La Vita Nuova (1979) soprano &amp; chamber ensemble of 10 players (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>The Ruin (1980) SSATTTB chorus &amp; solo horn (B&amp;H)</td>
<td>B&amp;H Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Flute Quartet (1981) flute &amp; string trio (FM)</td>
<td>FM Faber Music Ltd</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>Night Thoughts (1982) solo flute (FM)</td>
<td>FM Faber Music Ltd</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>The Old King's Lament (1982) solo double bass (Yorke)</td>
<td>FM Yorke Edition</td>
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<td>1985-6</td>
<td>Personæ IV-VI (1985-6) solo piano (FM)</td>
<td>FM Yorke Edition</td>
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<td>1985-6</td>
<td>Little Concert (1985) cello &amp; small orchestra (FM)</td>
<td>FM Yorke Edition</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>Odyssey (1987-2) orchestra (FM)</td>
<td>FM Yorke Edition</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>One Foot in Eden Still, I Stand (1990) unaccompanied SATB chorus with optional organ (FM)</td>
<td>FM Yorke Edition</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Piano Trio (1990-1) piano, violin &amp; cello (FM)</td>
<td>FM Yorke Edition</td>
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<td>Sonata for Solo Violin (1996-7) (FM)</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Concerto for Cor Anglais (2004) cor anglais and orchestra (FM)</td>
<td>FM Yorke Edition</td>
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**Key to publishers**
- **Chester**: Chester Music Ltd
- **Novello**: Novello & Co
- **B&H**: Boosey & Hawkes Ltd
- **OUP**: Oxford University Press
- **Tempo**: quarterly magazine (published by B & H)