

The Cambridge Companion to Composition

There are as many ways of creating music as there are composers in the world, with a vast array of possible methods and practices. This book provides essential critical and practical tools for composers as they try to navigate this complex landscape, whilst also offering provocations for practitioners discovering their own voices and solidifying their place in their musical communities. Designed to be a companion in the truest sense, the book offers practical support throughout the creative process and thought-provoking insights on technical questions for a range of compositional approaches.

TOBY YOUNG is Professor of Composition at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. An award-winning composer and producer, his music has been performed by ensembles and orchestras including the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and Academy of Ancient Music, and he has collaborated with pop and jazz artists including the Rolling Stones, Chase & Status, Duran Duran, Florence Welch, Kano, Snow Ghosts, MOKO, and Jacob Banks.

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*A blank page or canvas.
The challenge. Bring order to the whole
Through design, composition, tension,
balance, light, and harmony.*

Stephen Sondheim

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Contributors

ELEANOR ALBERGA is a highly regarded composer with commissions from the BBC Proms and The Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Originally from Jamaica, Alberga's music is performed all over the world. In 2015 her commissioned work *ARISE, ATHENA!* for the opening of the Last Night of the BBC Proms was seen and heard by millions. Alberga has gathered a number of awards, notably a NESTA fellowship in 2000 and a Paul Hamlyn Award in 2019. In 2020, she was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music. She was awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2021 for services to British Music. At different times, Alberga was a member of the African Dance Company Fontomfrom and played guitar and sang with the Jamaican Folk Singers.

JULIAN ANDERSON is Professor of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and President of the Music Council for the Fondation Prince Pierre de Monaco. His first acknowledged work, *Diptych* (1990) for orchestra, won the 1992 Royal Philharmonic Society Prize for Young Composers. His two commissions for the London Sinfonietta, *Khorovod* (1994) and *Alhambra Fantasy* (2000), have been widely performed by leading ensembles across Europe and the USA. In October 2002, Anderson was appointed Artistic Director of the Philharmonia Orchestra's 'Music of Today' series. Throughout the 2002/3 season he was 'Composer in Focus' with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He was the Cleveland Orchestra's Daniel Lewis Young Composer Fellow for 2005–7. Most recently, Anderson received the highly coveted Grawemeyer 2023 Award for his Cello Concerto *Litanies* (2018–19).

DAVID BEDNALL is recognized as one of the leading choral composers of his generation. He studied for a PhD in Composition with John Pickard at the University of Bristol and is signed to Oxford University Press. He is Choral Director of Clifton Cathedral, Musical Director of Bristol Bach Choir, Bristol Chamber Choir and Chew Valley Choral Society, alongside an extensive freelance career. He has improvised on live radio, and performed extensively in the UK and abroad, including at Notre-Dame de

Paris. He was stunt-organist on *Dr Who*. David's compositions are widely performed, recorded, and broadcast on BBC Radio and Classic FM. His first CD *Hail, gladdening light* was a Gramophone Editor's Choice, as was *Stabat Mater* with Jennifer Pike (violin) and Benenden Chapel Choir under Edward Whiting. *Flame Celestial* received a Gramophone Recommendation and *Requiem* with Philip Dukes (viola) and St Mary's Calne and *Welcome All Wonders* garnered superb international critical acclaim.

NAOMI BELSHAW is a composer manager and classical music PR specialist. Originally trained as an archaeologist, fifteen years ago Naomi swapped her hobby in music for her career, taking up roles across the music industry including Classical Account Manager at PRS for Music, Grants and Programmes Manager at PRS Foundation, and PR Executive and PR Manager at WildKat PR. She has a wealth of experience across a broad range of areas within the arts, particularly in contemporary music. In 2019, Naomi set up her own consultancy to be able to offer composers and artists more formal help in their careers, drawing on her uniquely broad perspective and extensive knowledge in funding, festival curation, publishing, licensing, royalties, PR, marketing and more. In her spare time, Naomi plays violin in the progressive rock band The Wood Demons.

CHERYL FRANCES-HOAD is a composer whose work has been widely premiered, broadcast and recorded. She trained as a cellist and pianist at the Yehudi Menuhin School before going on to Cambridge and King's College, London. Frances-Hoad was chosen to be a featured composer on BBC Radio 3's 'Composer of the Week' ('Five under 35', March 2015), and her works have garnered many awards, from the BBC Lloyds Bank Composer of the Year award when she was just fifteen years old to more recently the Mendelssohn Scholarship, The Bliss Prize, The Cambridge Composers Competition, The Robert Helps International Composition Prize (USA), The Sun River Prize (China), The International String Orchestra Composition Prize (Malta), The RPS Composition Prize, and three Ivor Novello (formally BASCA) British Composer Awards (for *Psalm 1* and *Stolen Rhythm* in 2010, and *Scenes from the Wild* in 2022).

CHRISTOPHER FOX is Honorary Professor at the University of York. Between 1984 and 1994 he taught at the Darmstädter Ferienkurse für neue Musik and returned to the courses to teach again in 2014. In 2021, he was elected to the Music Section of the Academy of Arts, Berlin. Fox's

work has been performed and broadcast worldwide, and he regularly collaborates with conductors Ilan Volkov and Edward Wickham, pianists Ian Pace, Philip Thomas, and John Snijders, ensemble recherche, Ensemble Offspring, KNM Berlin, Apartment House, and EXAUDI. His writings on music have also been published widely, in the journals *Contact*, *Contemporary Music Review*, *Musical Times*, *TEMPO* (which he has edited since 2015), and *The Guardian*. *Perspectives on the Music of Christopher Fox: Straight Lines in Broken Times* (edited by Rose Dodd) was published in 2017 by Routledge.

HOLLIE HARDING is Associate Head of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She is interested in looking at different ways of curating and constructing performance scenarios and her piece *Melting, Shifting, Liquid World* was the first composition to incorporate the use of open-ear, bone-conduction headsets alongside live acoustic and amplified instruments. Hollie has worked with Alwynne Pritchard, Sjøforsvarets Musikkorps (Norwegian Navy Band), London Philharmonic Orchestra, CHROMA ensemble, Castalian String Quartet, Ensemble Via Nova (Weimar), and DeciBells (Basel). She was 2017 Composer in Residence with CoMA and subsequently led workshops at their Summer School in Orkney. In 2019, Hollie won the Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize and in the same year she was also awarded a place on the LSO Jerwood Composer+ Scheme to develop two new pieces for members of the London Symphony Orchestra.

JON HARGREAVES is a conductor specialising in contemporary music. Jon founded the Octandre Ensemble with composer Christian Mason in 2011, and since then the group has established a strong reputation for their performances of carefully curated programmes of original works and contemporary and modernist repertoire. Recent performances include Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* with the mezzo soprano Lore Lixenberg; the world premiere of *Iris Dreaming*, a one-woman chamber opera by Dame Gillian Whitehead; and 'Layers of Love', an epic programme in the Principal Sound Festival at St. John's, Smith Square featuring the music of Morton Feldman, Christian Mason, Claude Vivier, and Anton Webern, which was recorded and broadcast by BBC Radio 3. Hargreaves holds a PhD in Music from the University of York, where his thesis discusses communication between composers and listeners in twentieth-century repertoire.

KENNETH HESKETH is Professor of Composition at the Royal College of Music. He has received numerous international commissions from such organisations as the Fromm Foundation, the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic, the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, the London Sinfonietta, the Göttinger Symphonie Orchester, the Asko ensemble, and Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal. He has been represented at festivals from London (Proms) to the USA (Tanglewood/Bowdoin) to China (Beijing Modern Music Festival) and has worked with an array of conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Oliver Knussen, Vasily Sinaisky, and Susanna Malkki. His awards include the André Chevallion-Yvonne Bonnaud Foundation Prize, and a British Composer Award in 2017 for his work *In Ictu Oculi*. His work has been recorded by NMC, BIS, Paladino Music, Somm Records, Prima Facie, and Chandos labels.

TONIA KO is Lecturer in Composition at Royal Holloway, University of London. Recipient of a 2018 Guggenheim Fellowship, Ko has been commissioned by leading soloists and ensembles including American Composers Orchestra, Tangram, Riot Ensemble, and Spektral Quartet. Her work has been featured at festivals including Tanglewood (USA), Windhoek (Germany), Plurisons (Brazil), Huddersfield (UK), and the Thailand International Composition Festival. Born in Hong Kong and raised in Honolulu, Ko earned a DMA from Cornell University and served as Composer-in-Residence for Young Concert Artists. Following aural, visual, and tactile instincts in a holistic way, Ko is known for transforming air packaging into an expressive musical instrument. As free improviser on bubble wrap, she has performed at Cafe OTO, Hundred Years Gallery, and the Ear Taxi Festival. In 2021, she was awarded a Koussevitzky Commission for *Breath, Contained III*, a concerto for amplified bubble wrap soloist with chamber orchestra.

LIZA LIM is Professor of Composition and Sculthorpe Chair of Australian Music at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Her compositional practice is deeply imbued with a sense of the sociocultural lineages of people, objects, and performance practices, hence her interest in musical form as an emergent expression of group processes. Lim has received commissions from some of the world's pre-eminent orchestras and ensembles including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Musikfabrik, ELISION, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Ensemble Modern, Klangforum Wien, International Contemporary Ensemble, and Arditti

String Quartet. She was Resident Composer with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 2005 and 2006. Her music has been featured at the Spoleto Festival, Miller Theatre New York, Festival d'Automne à Paris, Venice Biennale, and at all the major Australian festivals. Her music is published by Casa Ricordi Berlin and on CD labels Kairos, Hat Art, HCR, and Winter and Winter.

CECILIA LIVINGSTON is composer-in-residence at the Canadian Opera Company (2022–) and was composer-in-residence at Glyndebourne (2019–22). Forthcoming projects include an opera adaptation of *Fugitive Pieces* with poet and novelist Anne Michaels. Cecilia's music has been heard at Glyndebourne, Bang on a Can's summer festival, Toronto's Nuit Blanche festival, in recital at Carnegie Hall, the Barbican, the Kennedy Center, with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Soundstreams, and is available on recording with Deutsche Grammophon. She was a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Postdoctoral Fellow in Music at King's College London and her articles and reviews have appeared in *Tempo*, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, and *The Opera Quarterly*; she has given papers on contemporary opera at the Royal Musical Association, American Musicological Society, and Modern Language Association annual conferences.

CHRISTIAN MASON is visiting teacher of Composition at the University of Cambridge. A 2015 winner of an Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung Composer Prize, he has had prolific commissions including the completion of the orchestral cycle *Time and Eternity* for Konzerthausorchester Berlin and Christoph Eschenbach, as well as *The Singing Tree* for Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (with Neue Vocalsolisten). Recent years saw the premieres of orchestral works for the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (conducted by Christian Thielemann), hr-sinfonieorchester, Philharmonia Orchestra (with Anu Komsu), Münchener Kammerorchester, Orchestre National de France (Alla Breve); ensemble works for Ensemble Recherche (at the Ultraschall Festival in Berlin, the CONNECT project (London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Remix, Ensemble Askö-Schönberg), Lucerne Festival (Ensemble Intercontemporain), BBC Proms (London Sinfonietta), and, in 2021, Donaueschingen Festival. His works are recorded on the London Sinfonietta Label, LSO Live, Col Legno, Winter & Winter, and nonclassical.

NICO MUHLY is an American composer who writes orchestral music, works for the stage, chamber music, and sacred music. He has received

commissions from The Metropolitan Opera: *Two Boys* (2011) and *Marnie* (2018); Carnegie Hall, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Tallis Scholars, and King's College, Cambridge, among others. He is a collaborative partner at the San Francisco Symphony and has been featured at the Barbican and the Philharmonie de Paris as composer, performer, and curator. An avid collaborator, he has worked with choreographer Benjamin Millepied at the Paris Opéra Ballet and artists Sufjan Stevens, The National, Teitur, Anohni, James Blake, and Paul Simon. His work for film includes scores for *The Reader* (2008) and *Kill Your Darlings* (2013). Recordings of his works have been released by Decca and Nonesuch, and he is part of the artist-run record label Bedroom Community.

LAUREN REDHEAD is Head of Department at Goldsmiths, University of London, focusing on the aesthetics and socio-semiotics of music, psychoanalytic perspectives on music, minority discourse, anti-aesthetics, materialism, and notation. She is a composer of experimental music whose scores are published by Material Press (Berlin) and a performer of music for organ and electronics. Redhead's music has been released on the engraved glass, sfz music, Innova, and pan y Rosas discos labels. Her current research falls into three broad areas: the methodological critique of practice research, concentrating on its epistemology and phenomenology; the investigation of materiality and notation through experimental approaches to composition; and the development of live-interactive approaches to performance for organ and electronics through collaboration with other composers. From 2013 to 2018, she was the president of the Royal Musical Association's Music and/as Process Study group, and the chair of the conference committee for the RMA's 56th Annual Conference in 2020.

ROBERT SAXTON was Professor of Composition at Oxford University from 1999 until his retirement in 2021. He won the Gaudeamus International Composers Prize in Holland at the age of twenty-one, and in 1986 was awarded the Fulbright Arts Fellowship. He has written works for the BBC (TV, Proms, and Radio), LSO, LPO, ECO, London Sinfonietta, Nash Ensemble, Northern Sinfonia and David Blake, Antara, Arditti and Chilingirian String Quartets, St Paul Chamber Orchestra (USA), Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival/Opera North, Aldeburgh, Stephen Darlington and the choir of Christ Church Cathedral Oxford, Leon Fleisher, Tasmin Little, Steven Isserlis, Mstislav Rostropovich, Susan Bradshaw, and Richard Rodney Bennett. Saxton has been Composer-in-Association at the Purcell School for Young Musicians

since 2013 and was appointed Senior Research Fellow at the Royal Academy of Music in 2021. Recordings have appeared on the Sony Classical, Hyperion, Metier, EMI, NMC, Divine Art, and Signum labels.

ROBERTO SIERRA is Old Dominion Foundation Professor Emeritus at Cornell University. Sierra came to prominence in 1987, when his first major orchestral composition, *Júbilo*, was performed at Carnegie Hall by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. Major commissions and performances include the Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Houston Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, and Phoenix Symphony, as well as by the American Composers Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Buffalo Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Tonhalle Orchestra (Zurich), the Kronos Quartet, and others. Sierra has been Composer-in-Residence with the Milwaukee Symphony, Puerto Rico Symphony, New Mexico Symphony, and the Philadelphia Orchestra. In 2003, he was awarded the Academy Award in Music by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Recent recordings include the highly acclaimed *Missa Latina* for the Naxos label. In 2010, he was elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.

HOWARD SKEMPTON is Lecturer in Composition at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. In May 2005, Skempton's *Tendrils* for string quartet was awarded the prize for 'best chamber-scale composition' by the Royal Philharmonic Society, and in December 2005 it won in the chamber music category at the annual British Composer Awards. Skempton won a second British Composer Award in 2008 for *The Moon is Flashing*, a song cycle for tenor and orchestra. Skempton's works have been commissioned and performed by many leading artists and music organisations including the BBC, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Ensemble Bash, OKEANOS, New Noise, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's 'Ensemble 10/10'. Recent commissions include the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group – a setting of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* for baritone Roderick Williams – and a *Piano Concerto* for John Tilbury for premiere at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival.

DEBBIE WISEMAN is an award-winning TV and film composer, and Classic FM's Composer in Residence since 2015. With more than 200 scores under her belt, Wiseman is one of the UK's most successful composers. Her film credits include *Tom and Viv* – which was nominated for two Academy

Awards – *Haunted*, and *Wilde*. She has also written a host of popular scores for television such as *Warriors*, *Judge John Deed*, *A Poet in New York*, *Father Brown*, and the soundtrack to *Wolf Hall*. Wiseman's first commission for Classic FM was *The Musical Zodiac*, a twelve-movement suite in which every piece reflects the personality and unique quality of each sign. She most recently joined Classic FM presenter and renowned gardener Alan Titchmarsh on *A Glorious Garden*.

RAYMOND YIU is a Hong Kong-born composer, jazz pianist, conductor, and writer on music. He is the winner of a BASCA British Composer Award in 2010 (*Northwest Wind*) and was nominated for the same award in 2004 (*Beyond the Glass*), 2012 (*Les Etoiles au Front*), 2013 (*The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured*), and 2018 (*Mielo*) respectively. He has worked with ensembles and artists including BBC Singers, BBC Philharmonic, Chroma, Concorde Ensemble, Ensemble 10/10, London Sinfonietta, Lontano, London Symphony Orchestra, and Nouvel Ensemble Moderne. His 'hugely impressive' (*The Guardian*) *Symphony* was commissioned by the BBC, and premiered by countertenor Andrew Watts, BBC Symphony Orchestra (BBCSO), and Edward Gardner during the BBC Proms 2015. Co-commissioned by BBC Radio 3, Hong Kong Philharmonic and Seattle Symphony, his Violin Concerto, written for Esther Yoo, was premiered in March 2024.

TOBY YOUNG is Professor of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He studied at King's College, Cambridge, where he was a choral scholar, and was Lecturer in Composition and Research Fellow at the University of Oxford. His music has been performed by ensembles and orchestras including the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Rambert Dance Company, The King's Singers, and the choirs of Westminster Abbey and King's College, Cambridge. He has created soundtracks to a variety of TV and stage works, including BAFTA-nominated productions for HBO, Sky Arts, and the BBC, and is currently the music director for Punchdrunk who specialise in immersive and site-specific theatre. In the pop world, Young has collaborated with artists including the Rolling Stones, Chase & Status, Duran Duran, Florence Welch, Snow Ghosts, MOKO, and Jacob Banks.