



Nathaniel Stookey Biography and Works



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Nathaniel Stookey

First commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony at age 17, Nathaniel Stookey has gone on to collaborate with many of the world's great orchestras, including The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center, the Orchestra of St. Luke's at Carnegie Hall, the Toronto Symphony, the Hallé Orchestra, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and the Sinfonieorchester des Norddeutschen Rundfunks (NDR), among many others. According to BBC commentator Norman Lebrecht, Stookey's *The Composer is Dead* is one of the five most performed classical works of the 21st century, worldwide. His latest orchestral work, *Mahl(er)werk*, commissioned by NDR-Sinfonie (Hamburg) for the final concert of their centennial Mahler cycle, was premiered under Christoph Eschenbach before an audience of 10,000 and will be recorded by NDR in 2013. The Schleswig-Holsteiner Zeitung describes this "crazy puzzle" as an "intelligent, musically very appealing, even exhilarating homage to Gustav Mahler."

In 1993, upon graduating from the University of California at Berkeley, Stookey was awarded the first Hallé Orchestra Composition Fellowship, serving as resident composer under Kent Nagano from 1993 to 1996 and producing a wide range of works including the gamelan-inspired *Tame Me* and *Colliding with Chris*, which was a (London) *Times* Critic's Choice in 1995. In 1999, Stookey's concerto for two violins and string orchestra, *Double*, was the millennium commission for Music in the Round's Festival of 999 Years of Music in Sheffield, England. Of the work's second movement, "Remembering," *Boston Globe* critic David Perkins writes "the latter is so daringly suspended and slow-building; I kept imagining movie scenes that it might serve as a score: a widow's rediscovery of love letters, a child's slow feverish dying, a couple making love ... and realizing they've fallen out of love. It's that intense."

In 2000, having returned to the United States, Stookey received a three-year New Residencies Award from Meet The Composer to serve as composer-in-residence with the North Carolina Symphony and The Ciampi Quartet. That partnership drew national press attention with over 60 performances of five new and three existing works, including *Big Bang* for the opening of Meymandi Hall, *Wide As Skies* for the centennial of the first manned flight (which was immediately taken up by The Philadelphia Orchestra), and *Out*

of the Everywhere, "a lushly beautiful evocation of the birth of his children," according to Joshua Kosman of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

In 2006, the San Francisco Symphony commissioned, premiered, and recorded *The Composer Is Dead*, a sinister guide to the orchestra with narration by Lemony Snicket. "Having created a furor in the United States" (*Hamburger Abendblatt*), the work was performed twice back-to-back to sellout crowds at the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's New Creations Festival, conducted by Peter Oundjian, and has since been performed by over 100 orchestras on four continents. Two more vocal-orchestral works followed. In 2008, singers Manoel Felciano and Eisa Davis premiered *Zipperz: a soaPOpera* for two pop singers and orchestra, "a hip and edgy dream come true for any lover of music and the written word," (*SFist.com*) with texts by poet Dan Harder. In 2009, Frederica von Stade launched her farewell tour with Stookey's *Into the Bright Lights*, a setting of three of her own texts. Programmed alongside her perennial favorites, it was nonetheless "the surprise hit of the evening," according to Tamara Bernstein of *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto). Stookey is currently planning an opera based on Rumer Godden's "The Doll's House."

Profiled in the January 2009 issue of *Strings Magazine* as a leader among the "Next Generation of String Composers," Stookey, himself a violinist, has continued to produce a rich body of chamber music, with works featured on series and festivals in the U.S., U.K., Italy, and Germany. *All Music Guide* describes Stookey as "a highly imaginative and original talent, particularly as a composer of string quartets." England's legendary Lindsay Quartet were champions of Stookey's music and featured his *String Quartet No. 1* on their final North American tour in 2004. His *String Quartet No. 2*, "*Musée Mécanique*," commissioned and recorded by the Ciampi Quartet, inspired the Carolina Ballet production "Game Over" by choreographer Tyler Walters, former principal dancer of the Joffrey Ballet. The Lee Trio has toured extensively worldwide with *Above the Thomas Gate* and commissioned Stookey's *Piano Trio No. 1*, which premiered in 2009. Kronos Quartet will premiere his *String Quartet No. 3*, "*The Mezzanine*" in 2013.

In addition to works for conventional ensembles, Stookey has continued to attract new audiences with music that challenges the established boundaries of classical music. In 2007, *Junkestra*, for an orchestra of objects scavenged at the San Francisco dump, drew

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thousands of listeners to warehouses, public squares, and YouTube before being taken up by the San Francisco Symphony and other classical presenters. Stephin Merritt of The Magnetic Fields called the work “gorgeous music [...] delicate yet blunt, like a battle scene by Fabergé.” That same year, Stookey contributed original music for string quintet to The Mars Volta’s Grammy-winning album “The Bedlam in Goliath.” In 2010, he wrote the score for Tony-award winning director John Doyle’s new production of Brecht’s “Caucasian Chalk Circle” at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. Of the premiere, *LA Times* critic Charles McNulty wrote “I can’t recall when I’ve found a music drama this eclectically satisfying.”

Stookey is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and Duke University, where he was a Mary Duke Biddle Fellow and was awarded the Klenz Prize during his first year of graduate study. His principal teachers were Peter Scott Lewis, Donald Erb, Andrew Imbrie, Cindy Cox, George Benjamin, Stephen Jaffe, and Scott Lindroth. Concurrently with his orchestral residencies, Stookey served on the faculties of the University of Sheffield (UK) and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where, from 1998 to 2003, he was artistic director and host of Composers-in-Context, a broadcast new music series for NPR affiliate WUNC-FM. Commercial recordings include Nathaniel Stookey: “Music for Strings” (1992–2002) by The Ciampi Quartet and the strings of the North Carolina Symphony; *Fling* by the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble (part of the live anthology “San Francisco Premieres”); *The Composer is Dead* by the San Francisco Symphony, a *New York Times* bestseller; and *Junkestra* by members of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Nathaniel Stookey’s music is published by Associated Music Publishers, with four early works available in print from PRB Productions.

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Orchestra

Big Bang (2000) 8'
3222/4331/timp+4perc/str; [opt. crystal glasses]
Performance materials on rental

Mahl/er/werk (2011) 14'
2+pic.3.3(ebcl).3/4.3.2+btbn.1/timp.3perc/hp/str
Performance materials on rental

Out of the Everywhere (2003) 22'
3333/4431/timp+3perc/hp.pf/st
Performance materials on rental

Soloist(s) and Orchestra

Colliding with Chris (The Rhythmical Tale of a Runaway Bike) (1995) 15'
Text: (English) Dan Harder
Solo: Narrator
3333/4231/timp+4perc/hp.cel/str
Performance materials on rental

The Composer is Dead 30'
Text: (English) Lemony Snicket (Daniel Handler)
Solo: Narrator/Speaker
2(pic)2(ca)2(bcl)2(cbn)/4231/timp.3perc/hp/str
Performance materials on rental

Double: Concerto for Two Violins and String Orchestra (1999) 22'
Solo: 2vn
str
Performance materials on rental

Into the Bright Lights (2009) 12'
Text: (English) Frederica von Stade
Solo: Mezzo-soprano
1.1.1.1/2.0.0.0/hp/str
Alt: Mezzo-soprano; pf
Performance materials on rental

Zipperz (2008) 40'
Text: (English) Dan Harder
Solo: Female Vocalist; Male Vocalist
2(pic).2(ca).2(bcl).2(cbn)/4231/timp.2perc/hp/str
Performance materials on rental

Works for 2-6 Players

Above the Thomas Gate (2001) 7'
vn, vc, pf
Performance materials sold by Rental Library

Fling (2005) 7'
fl, 2vn, va, vc
Score and Part(s) 50486750 for sale

Piano Trio No. 1 (2009) 22'
vn, vc, pf
Performance materials sold by Rental Library

Solo Keyboard(s)

Three Elevens are Thirty-Three (1996) 6'
pf

Chorus and Orchestra/Ensemble

Wide as Skies (2002) 8'
Text: (English) James Applewhite
Chorus: Children's chorus
3222/4231/timp+perc/str

Solo Voice(s) and up to 6 players

A (not so) simple logic (2004) 5'
Text: (English) Dan Harder
Solo: Soprano
perc

Work List

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AVAILABILITY

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The rental agent in your territory is the source for performance materials. Not every composition is available in every territory. Full scores, vocal scores, piano reductions, and libretti may be for sale by music dealers.

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UNAVAILABLE

Due to composer revisions, performer exclusivity, or other reasons, a work may not be available.

For more information on the music of Nathaniel Stookey, please visit www.musicsalesclassical.com or contact:

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