

FARNE for symphony orchestra (1980)

*Farne* was composed in 1979 for the University of London Orchestra, who commissioned it with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

*Farne* opens with different instrumental groups in the orchestra pursuing apparently different paths. Sometimes one layer is in the foreground, sometimes another; fast music predominates. Occasionally we glimpse stillness, in quiet string chords or a wind solo. The fast music plays itself out and we approach closer to the stillness. First the string chords become continuous, but they are still in the background. In the foreground is a proliferating tapestry of tunes for wind and brass soloists. These in their turn subside and the gentle string music comes to the fore. Led by a flute tune and then a muted trumpet, the music finds a central stillness in quiet tutti chords. The energy of the opening has been translated in to vertical sonority.

Beginning in the depths with tuba, low horns and double basses, the last part of *Farne* renews the onward movement. The music becomes louder, faster, denser, pulling in more and more of its strands. It passes through successive climaxes, until the apparent contradictions in the piece are resolved, and it can end in a celebration of the harmony that unifies it.

*Farne* lasts just over a quarter of an hour; it plays continuously with its sections overlapping. It takes its title from a visit to the Farne Islands in July 1978. The quiet of the saints who lived there is enshrined on those islands amidst the constant sound of wind and waves and screaming terns. The first images of my *Farne* stem from that day.

*Farne* is dedicated to my father, for his safe recovery from illness.

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