

GILES SWAYNE was born in Hertfordshire in June 1946. His infancy was spent in Singapore and Australia, his later childhood in the Wirral, in Liverpool, and at a boarding-school in Yorkshire. He began composing when he was ten, and in his teens was inspired and helped by his mother's cousin, giles_1composer Elizabeth Maconchy. He studied the piano with Gordon Green, Phyllis Hepburn-Lee, James Gibb and Vlado Perlemuter, and in 1964 attended Guido Agosti's classes at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena. On leaving Cambridge in 1968 he won a composition scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, London, where he studied with Harrison Birtwistle, Alan Bush and Nicholas Maw. On leaving the Academy he worked as an accompanist & répétiteur, and was on the Glyndebourne music staff in the 1973 and 1974 seasons. In 1976-77 he made visits to the Paris Conservatoire to study with Olivier Messiaen. In 1978 the BBC commissioned CRY for twenty-eight amplified voices. Dedicated to Messiaen en hommage, it was premièred by the BBC Singers under John Poole in October 1980. Widely hailed as a musical landmark, it has been performed many times in Britain (twice at the London Proms, in 1983 and 1994) and many times in Europe and America. The 1985 recording was issued first on vinyl and giles_2then on CD by NMC Records.

In 1981 Swayne made a field trip to Casamance (southern Senegal) to record the music of the Jola community; these recordings are in the British Library's Sound Archive and are available online. Between 1990 and 1996 he lived in the Eastern Region of Ghana, where he built a house at Konkonuru in the Akuapem Hills – a house now owned by Rita, widow of Bob Marley.

Swayne now lives in London with his wife & duo-partner, violinist Malu Lin. From October 2001 to June 2014 he taught composition at Cambridge University; for the last eight years of that period he was Composer-in-residence at Clare College.

The silent land for cello and 40-part choir, premièred at the 1998 Spitalfields Festival by Raphael Wallfisch with the choir of Clare College, Cambridge under Tim Brown, was described by The Times as "a masterpiece", and Swayne himself as "the most accomplished choral composer in Britain". After the première of HAVOC at the Proms in September 1999 by the BBC Singers and the Endymion Ensemble under Stephen Cleobury, The Independent commented simply: "Swayne is a master".

His Symphony no. 1 – a small world, commissioned by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, was premièred by them in Cardiff under Jac van Steen in November 2007; Leonardo's dream for alto saxophone and piano was premièred at the Purcell Room on London's South Bank by Hannah Marcinowicz and the composer in January 2008; and Agnes Wisley's Chillout Fantasy was first performed at the Barbican Hall, London in March 2008 by the Guildhall Symphonic Wind Ensemble, conducted by Peter Gane.

In 2009 Swayne completed his String quartet no. 4, which was premièred by the Solstice String Quartet at the Cambridge Festival in November 2009. Zig-zag for organ, commissioned by Leeds Catholic Cathedral, was premièred at Westminster Abbey by James McVinnie in May 2010. The joys of Travel, a song-cycle for voice and piano celebrating the horrors of package holidays, was commissioned by tenor Benjamin Hulett for a recital CD which appeared in autumn 2010; and Adam lay ibounden was commissioned by St. John's College, Cambridge for their advent carol service in November 2009. Hubbub, a choral setting of a poem by Kevin Crossley-Holland, was premiered by the choir of Clare College, Cambridge under Tim Brown on their USA tour in August 2010. On 4th September of that year

Hubbub – a setting for solo flute and choir of a poem by Kevin Crossley-Holland – was premièred in King’s College Chapel, Cambridge by the same choir under their outgoing musical director, Tim Brown.

In November 2010 Naxos released a CD of Swayne’s choral music performed by the Dmitri Ensemble under Graham Ross. This included *The silent land* of 1997 (with Raphael Wallfisch as solo cellist) and the *Stabat mater* of 2004, and was widely praised. BBC Music Magazine wrote “everything is held together by a sense of sustained, muscular line rare among modern British composers. A very worthwhile disc, foregrounding a composer who should be much more widely appreciated.” Ross has also recorded Swayne’s *Coventry Carol* with the choir of Clare College, and his dramatic anthem for the Ascension, *God is gone up* (Harmonia Mundi, 2014).

In June 2010 Swayne visited Leipzig for the première of *Der Wandersmann* for 12-part a cappella voices by the Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk Choir under their conductor Howard Arman, as part of the celebration of the bicentenary of Robert Schumann’s birth. In August of that year he appeared as composer and pianist at the *Tout-petit festival de musique* in St Germain de Calberte in southern France, where he gave the première of a new song-cycle, *Complaintes* for soprano and piano, with soprano Juliette de Massy, and also gave recitals with Malu Lin (violin) and Rohan de Saram (cello).

In June 2011 the Westdeutscher Rundfunk Choir under Rupert Huber gave two performances of Swayne’s *CRY* in Cologne and Aachen; in August Swayne appeared again as pianist at the *Tout-petit festival de musique* in St Germain de Calberte in a duo recital with violinist Malu Lin, and also gave the world première of his second book of *Bagatelles*. In November 2011 the Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk Choir, under their conductor Howard Arman, gave the world première in Leipzig of *Dolorosa*, the reworked & extended version (with solo cello) of Swayne’s *Stabat mater*, with cellist Anna Carewe. After the second performance in Dessau on 13th November, Thomas Altmann, writing in the *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, described *Dolorosa* as “disturbingly beautiful”.

In the years since 2012 Swayne has produced a steady stream of new work, including *Laulu laululle* for the Helsinki Chamber Choir; *Clare Canticles*, *Uncommon prayers*, *God is gone up*, and *Double act* (a concerto for trombone & chamber orchestra) for Clare College, Cambridge; *Strumming* for guitarist Craig Ogden; *The Yonghy Bonghy Bo* for James Armitage Memorial (JAM); *Our orphan souls* for the University of Wisconsin and Temple University, Philadelphia; *Kaleidoscope* and *Quackenbush* – the Musical for the University of Wisconsin, *Sommertage* for Deutscher Chorverband; *Everybloom* for the New Cambridge Singers; and *Benedicta filia* for ORA and Suzi Digby. He celebrated his seventieth birthday in June 2016. In April 2017 *Leapfrog* for saxophone quartet, commissioned by the Park Lane Group, was premiered at St John’s, Smith Square.

In March 2016 the British Library purchased the Giles Swayne Collection, which consists of the manuscripts of Swayne’s work and a series of work-books (containing many first drafts), dating from about 1968 to 2015.