

## **Edward McGuire - short biographical note:**

Glasgow-born Edward (Eddie) McGuire studied with James Iliff (RAM) and Ingvar Lidholm (Sweden). He received a British Composers Award in 2003 and has been featured composer at many festivals including Bath International Guitar Festival, International Viola Congress and Scottish International Flute Summer School. The BBCSSO London Proms performance of *Calgacus* was selected for BBC Music Magazine's CD 'The Very Best of the BBC Orchestras' (1997). Commissions and broadcasts have included those from St Magnus Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, Lorient Festival, Glasgow Festival Strings, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, Scottish Ballet and BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He writes for and plays with The Whistlebinkies folk group. Both his CD collections (Delphian Records) achieved 'Editor's Choice' in Gramophone Magazine - *Eddie McGuire: Music for Flute, Guitar and Piano* (2006) and *Entangled Fortunes* (2015).

## **Edward McGuire - autobiographical note**

My career as a composer was well grounded and inspired by my years at the Royal Academy of Music in London from 1966 to 1970 (studying with James Iliff and privileged to write **Nine Decades** for his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2013) and the State Academy of Music, Stockholm in 1971 with Ingvar Lidholm (I greeted him again in 2011 at his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday concert in Stockholm). I was born in Glasgow in 1948, where I now work. I attended the Junior Department of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama from the age of 15. My flute teacher there was the late David Nicholson and I continued flute as a second study at the RAM with Derek Honner. While a student there I was gratified to have won the Edward Hecht Prize and the National Young Composers' Competition (held at University of Liverpool in March 1969).

As a valuable contrast to home-based composing, my flute playing has taken me all over Britain and as far as China and the Navajo nation. Since 1973 I have played it with The Whistlebinkies and I have composed for the group several times - including having them at the centre of my grand finale (**Epopée Celtique**) for the Lorient Festival in 1997 scored for orchestra, male voice choir, pipe bands and soloists from Brittany, Wales, Isle of Man, Scotland, Ireland, Galicia and Cornwall. The Whistlebinkies' 1991 exchange tour of China (the first Scottish group to do so) led to my joining - and writing for - the Scotland-based Chinese musicians of the Harmony Ensemble in which I play bamboo flute. My Chinese connection continues with my **Chinese Dances** (used as encores by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra on their China tours) and my **Chinese Folksong Suite** (used at the opening ceremony of the Confucius Institute at the University of Glasgow).

Thanks to the University of Glasgow's McEwen Bequest, my career was kick-started by commissions premiered there. These included my first - from James Durrant in 1972 - **Martyr** for violas, followed by **Liberation** (1975) for the New Music Group of Scotland and **Wind Octet** (1980). Larger scale works ensued - like my symphonic poem **Calgacus** (premiered, and broadcast live, in the Bute Hall, University of Glasgow on St Andrew's Night 1976 (its 1997 Proms performance with BBCSSO and Robert Wallace on Highland Bagpipes was chosen for BBC Music Magazine cover-mount CD 'The Very Best of the BBC Orchestras'); other orchestra works celebrating my home city are **Clydebuilt** (for the Ulster Orchestra), **Hall of Memories** (for opening of the refurbished Glasgow City Hall), **Junk Shop Blues** (portrayal of Joan Eardly's painting of a 1950s Glasgow 'rag and bone' shop at the Fleming Collection, London) and **Riverside** celebrating the Clyde and its ships (performed by The Whistlebinkies folk group and Scottish Chamber Orchestra, 1991, to be revived by them and The Glasgow Barons conducted by Paul MacAlindin on its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021 in Govan); operas to librettos by Marianne Carey - a 3-act opera **The Loving of Etain** (Paragon Opera, 1990) and **Cake-Talk** (a Scottish 'creation myth' for RSNO and 100-strong RSNO Junior Chorus celebrating its 25th anniversary in 1996); and a 3-act ballet **Peter Pan** - faithful to the JM Barrie original - performed over 120 times by Scottish Ballet and Hong Kong Ballet between 1989 and 1996.

I have been gratified to have been asked to compose new pieces for such great youth orchestras as the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland (**A Glasgow Symphony** in 1990 and **Symphonies of Trains** for the 150th anniversary of the Glasgow to Edinburgh railway), the RSAMD Junior Orchestra (**Scottish Dances on Original Themes**), Glasgow Schools Orchestra with Alice Durrant (**Double Bass Concerto**), Edinburgh Youth Orchestra (**Prazdnik** with Evelyn Glennie on marimba, for their 25th anniversary and also celebrating the 300th anniversary of St Petersburg, where it was performed) and County of Avon String Orchestra (**Divertimento for May Day**): and to experience enthusiasm of amateur orchestras such as The Meadows Chamber Orchestra (**A Meadows Muse**), Glasgow Chamber Orchestra (**The Caledonian Muse** - a celebration of Scottish science), Highland Chamber Orchestra (**Dancing on a Ground**), Edinburgh's Really Terrible Orchestra (**Homage to Glasgow**) and Glasgow Wind Band (**Mistral**).

A very special commission came in 2002 when the University of Cambridge celebrated the awarding of a Nobel prize to Sir James Mirrlees, and the piece that resulted - **Entangled Fortunes** - was premiered at the Fitzwilliam Museum and recorded by Red Note ensemble for Delphian Records. It was cited in several excellent reviews of the CD and in Gramophone Magazine where the CD was highlighted in an Editor's Choice in its Awards Issue of November 2006.

My enthusiasm for voices came to fruition in such works as **The Pipes of Peace** for

solo bagpipes (again performed by Robert Wallace) with the 80-strong RSNO Chorus for their 1986 tour of Israel and Palestine and repeated at the Musica Nova festival; **Three Chorales of Struggle** for Cadenza Choir (setting my own poems); **Memory** for Cappella Nova and works for NYCOS, Scottish Voices, Kevock Choir and the John Currie Singers. A vocal highlight was writing **Let the Games Begin** for the 2014 Commonwealth Games festival for Glasgow Chamber Choir, setting a new poem that I in turn commissioned from Tom Furniss. In 2017 I worked again with Tom Furniss (Senior Lecturer in English University of Strathclyde) to compose a work for Heriot-Watt University Choir and New Music Group for performance in Iona Abbey - **On Inchcolm**. Tom and I were thrilled to hear it at the Abbey in June. My setting of poems by John Donne for Paisley Abbey Choir (conducted by George McPhee with Ewan Robertson on bass flute) premiered on March 4th 2018, titled **Three Donne Lyrics**. Priory Records has now released it on the CD *Celtic Prayer*. When John Wallace retired from the position of Principal of RCS, I was commissioned to compose a farewell piece, setting my own text in **Songs from the North** which has now been recorded by soprano Julia Daramy-Williams and The Wallace Collection brass quintet and released on CD. In addition, I have been honoured to have been asked to write songs and song cycles for soloist such as Jane Manning, Joan Busby, Alison Smart, Stuart Buchanan, Jamie MacDougall and Irene Drummond. In much of this body of work for voices, I have opted to work with or use the texts of living Scottish poets. These writers have included Alan Bold, Rod Cameron, Marianne Carey, Marcella Evaristi, Tom Furniss, Tom McGrath, Fong Liu, William Montgomerie, David Purdie, Donny O'Rourke, Lesley Siddall and Simon Steel.

Early on, my confidence in composing for strings was boosted by **Rant** being chosen as test piece for the Carl Flesch International Violin Competition (1978) and **String Quartet** for the 40th anniversary Barbican Gala of the SPM (thrillingly, this was broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 by the Arditti Quartet). The 1972 success of **Martyr** led to **Divertimento** (for 20 Violas) and **Viola Concerto** (for the 1998 International Viola Congress). A body of work for guitar, including a **Guitar Concerto**, (largely commissioned by Phillip Thorne) led to my being Featured Composer at the 1996 Bath International Guitar Festival. I was proud to receive a similar accolade at the 1993 Park Lane Series at the Purcell Room and at the Edinburgh International Harp Festival. My knowledge of the harp had been developed by having composed for the renowned harpist and RSAMD teacher Sanchia Pielou in the context of the New Music Group of Scotland under Edward Harper. I received several lessons on the small harp (clarsach) from her in 1977 and wrote **Harp Octet** in 1992 commissioned in her honour by her students on her retirement.

A British Composers Award (2003) and Creative Scotland Award 2004 were followed by my CD 'Eddie McGuire - Music for Flute, Guitar and Piano' on Delphian Records becoming Editor's Choice in Gramophone Magazine Awards Issue in 2006. A follow up CD of my

ensemble works, 'Entangled Fortunes', performed by Glasgow-based Red Note Ensemble on the same label, also achieved Editor's Choice in the magazine in 2015. My wind band music has been championed and recorded by Nigel Boddice and his colleagues and includes works for symphonic wind band such as **Mistral** and **Sirocco**. A complete catalogue of my work is at the Scottish Music Centre on [www.scottishmusiccentre.com/edward\\_mcguire](http://www.scottishmusiccentre.com/edward_mcguire)

Although my work in film music is rare, a documentary on the work (particularly in Glasgow) of Scotland's great architect Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, for which I was commissioned to compose the score, won the Europa Nostra Award in August 2005. This was presented at the Toblach Heritage Film Festival in Italy. Originally screened on BBC2 TV, **Nineveh on the Clyde** is by the prominent Scottish film maker Murray Grigor who collaborated with architecture expert Gavin Stamp in creating the documentary. Irina Subotic, chairwoman of the jury, singled out my "evocative score for enhancing Thomson's innovative architecture based on Classical Foundations."

In recent years I have enjoyed greatly working with such fine ensembles as Paragon (in a piece dedicated to Martin Luther King Junior, **Dangerous Orations**), Sax Ecosse (**Hidden Dialects** - inspired by George Donald's tales of the Doric), Illuminati Wind Quartet (**Winds at Sea** - inspired by my voyages performing on National Trust for Scotland cruises), Kyle Horch's saxophone ensemble Flotilla (**Remembrance** - in memory of my parents), Mr McFall's Chamber (**Nocturnes** - a remembrance of the war in Yugoslavia), the Da Vinci Trio (**Elegy**) and the Edinburgh Quartet with Jessica Beeston, viola (**The Silent Traveller Returns** inspired by Chung Yee's *Silent Traveller in Edinburgh*) and with them, John Kenny (trombone) and Catriona McKay (Harp) in a brilliant recording of my **Guest Sextet** (portraying the betrayal of Highland hospitality at the massacre of Glencoe).

The Monzani Trio recently performed my **Four Dorset Folksongs** and their string trio members were chosen to premiere my **String Trio II** - a McEwen Bequest Commission - at the University of Glasgow's Concert Hall in 2019.

Through the Daniel's Beard ensemble, performances of several of my works have taken place at Glasgow's West End Festival. They produced a CD which, unusually, featured the premiere of my **Horn Trio** composed 45 years earlier while I was playing on the Glasgow Schools Orchestra summer course at Toward Castle in 1966, a piece requested by fellow student Tom Barrie and encouraged by horn student Robert Cook. A full account of my early days of composing music can be heard in a podcast recording in which I was interviewed by Chris Glasgow for the Scottish Music Centre in July 2011.

An understanding of my own early development as a composer has informed my outlook when doing workshops and pieces for young people. As well as writing for the youth

orchestras mentioned above, I have worked on several projects with Children's Classic Concerts including the **Bonnie Pandas Suite** (celebrating the gifting of pandas to Edinburgh Zoo from China) in collaboration with O Duo, Chinese singer Fong Liu, RSNO Junior Chorus and various schools' choirs.

An unusual commission came from the BBC Scottish Symphony Club. To mark their 30th year and the 75th anniversary of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra they asked me to write a fresh encore for the orchestra. What resulted was a choice of three encores which I formed into a dance suite (**Encores en Suite**) suitable for normal concert performance - duly premiered on the In Tune programme on BBC Radio 3 in October 2010. One of the movements features themes from my incidental music for John McGrath's play *The Albannach* - a study of the depopulation of the Scottish Highlands.

It was a great privilege to find myself working on a commission from the Trade Union Movement to compose a celebratory suite (**Work-In at UCS: A Celebration Suite**) for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the work-in at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders of 1971, premiered in Glasgow's Mitchell Theatre on October 2011 by The Whistlebinkies, Alba Brass and Sax Ecosse. The occupation was starting just as I returned back home that year from 5 years of composition studies in London and Sweden. I attended meetings and concerts in support and composed **Music for Saxophones** in honour of the event, a score of which was presented to Jimmy Reid in 1971 in the College Club in the University of Glasgow, where he had been elected rector.

Over 4 decades on, such social engagement continues and included volunteering for the Scotland and Northern Ireland Regional committee of the Musicians' Union (doing 15 years as elected chairman), being a delegate to Glasgow Trades Union Council and writing about social and political issues for *Workers* journal. Walking the Scottish hills (and the streets of Glasgow!) keeps me fit! One of my favourite places is Glasgow's Botanic Gardens - and my piece **Botanic Gardens** premiered at London's Purcell Room on May 21st 2018. It celebrated the 200th anniversary of the Gardens and was played by the four members of Piano40 at two pianos, thus taking a bit of Glasgow news to London! And just before that, there was a trip to the premiere of my **Wiltshire Serenade** for violin and viola with strings - commissioned for Marlborough College Chamber Orchestra.

Ongoing work includes writing music for the art-videos of my old schooldays friend James Cowan, composing a new song for the St Andrews University songbook project and looking forward to the premiere of my new **Cello Concerto**.

~ **Eddie McGuire, September 30, 2020**