

## **Forgotten, neglected or overlooked?**

Many talented classical composers from the past are overlooked today, not due to lack of skill, but because history tends to spotlight a few famous names. Factors like limited publication, lack of powerful patrons, or working outside major cultural centers meant their music wasn't widely preserved or performed. Over time, musical tradition developed around a restrictive canon, leaving equally deserving composers in the shadows. As a result, we often miss the full richness of classical music history. Rediscovering these forgotten voices can broaden our understanding and reveal a wealth of beautiful, unexplored music.

I would like to spotlight one of these composers: Robert Simpson.

Robert Simpson (1921–1997) was a British composer, musicologist, and broadcaster known for his powerful symphonies and string quartets. Born in Leamington Spa, he studied at the Royal College of Music and later worked for the BBC, where he championed serious music and promoted composers like Nielsen and Bruckner. In addition to various chamber music, Simpson composed 11 symphonies and 15 string quartets, noted for their structural rigor and emotional intensity that brings Beethoven to mind. A fierce advocate for musical integrity, he resigned from the BBC in protest against its programming policies.

While Schoenberg had already established his 12-tone system and Stravinsky (as many other composers) had an eye on it as well, Simpson, in the 1960's and thereafter, followed his own path, finding his 'solution' for tonality, form and structure with Beethoven, Sibelius and Nielsen as his landmark, for which the avant garde labelled him as conservative.

Now that the dust of the 1950s and 1960s avant garde has settled down and exerts little to no influence in the present day, (we are now living in an eclectic musical environment) composers who remained uninfluenced by this period are now being 'discovered'.

Already during his lifetime the Robert Simpson Society was founded to guard his legacy and promote his work. Thanks to their huge efforts we will be able to discover Simpson's importance and to acknowledge his place in the history of classical music.

The Robert Simpson Society are now beginning to prepare for his 30th anniversary of death in 2027.

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