

Joseph Schwantner – Full Biography



Born in Chicago in 1943, Joseph Schwantner received his musical and academic training at the Chicago Conservatory and Northwestern University. While developing a profile as a leading American composer, he also served on the faculties of The Juilliard School, Eastman School of Music and the Yale School of Music, simultaneously establishing himself as a sought-after composition instructor.

Schwantner's compositional career has been marked by numerous distinctions and awards. His early accolades include three BMI Student Composer Awards, the Beams Prize, a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, and many other awards, grants and fellowships. In 1979 his orchestral composition *Aftertones of Infinity* won the Pulitzer Prize. In 1985 his life and music were the focus of a television documentary entitled *Soundings*, produced by WGBH in Boston for national broadcast. That same year his work, *Magabunda* "Four Poems of Agueda Pizarro," recorded on Nonesuch Records by the Saint Louis Symphony, was nominated for a 1985 Grammy Award in the category "Best New Classical Composition," and his *A Sudden Rainbow*, also recorded on Nonesuch by the Saint Louis Symphony, received a 1987 Grammy nomination for "Best Classical Composition." Schwantner is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Schwantner's Percussion Concerto, among the most often performed of contemporary concert works, was commissioned for the 150th anniversary season of the New York Philharmonic. He has also been commissioned by numerous other leading orchestras and organizations, including the National Symphony Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, Chamber Music America, Fromm Music Foundation, Naumburg Foundation, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, among many others.

Schwantner has enjoyed particular success in the orchestral world. After winning the Pulitzer Prize for *Aftertones of Infinity*, Schwantner composed *New Morning for the World: Daybreak of Freedom* on words from Martin Luther King, Jr. for narrator and orchestra, which has since entered the standard repertory of orchestras nationwide. His Percussion Concerto has garnered over one hundred performances since its 1995 premiere and is one of the most performed concert works of the past decade. His music is noted for its deft implementation of luminous color and fluctuating rhythms in a dramatic and unique style, heard in such signature works as the Percussion Concerto, *New Morning for the World*, and *Magabunda*, among others. Schwantner's recent work, *Morning's Embrace*, was commissioned by the National Symphony Orchestra and premiered at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, on February 23, 2006. *The Washington Post* praised its "delicate timbres" and "unique and original" sound. His music has been championed by such conductors as Leonard Slatkin,

Marin Alsop, Andrew Litton, Hugh Wolff and artists including Evelyn Glennie, Sharon Isbin and Anne Akiko Meyers, among many others.

In January 2007, the League of American Orchestras and Meet The Composer announced that Schwantner had been selected as the composer for the second cycle of the nation's largest commissioning consortium of orchestras: Ford Made in America. Schwantner's new work, entitled *Chasing Light...*, will receive its world premiere with the Reno Chamber Orchestra in September 2008.

Other recent projects for the composer include the world premiere by eighth blackbird in October 2006 of *Rhiannon's Blackbirds*, which the group commissioned and included on their nine-month United States tour during the 2006-07 season. Schwantner composed a new flute quartet for the 25th anniversary season of Flute Force in 2007, and, further on, he will write a Concerto for Percussion Section, Timpani and Orchestra for the Percussive Arts Society and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, for the Society's 50th anniversary.

Joseph Schwantner's music is published by Schott Helicon Music Corporation.