

WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? (A little background)

- **Premiere:** Written in 1979, *The Lighthouse* received its premiere performance on September 2, 1980 at the Murray House Gymnasium in Edinburgh, Scotland as part of the Edinburgh Festival. The singers were Neil Mackie, Michael Rippon, and David Wilson-Johnson with the Fires of London conducted by Richard Dufallo. The piece had been commissioned by the Edinburgh International Festival.
- **U.S. Premiere:** In 1983, the American premiere was presented by the Boston Shakespeare Company directed by Peter Sellers with Michael Brown, Sanford Sylvan, and Kenneth Bell, and conducted by David Hoese.
- The scenario was inspired by a true story. In December 1900 a lighthouse supply ship called the *Hesperus*, based in Stromness, Orkney, went on its routine tour of duty to the Flannan Islands in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. The lighthouse was empty - all three beds and the table looked as if they had been left in a hurry, the lamp, though out, was in perfect working order, but the men had disappeared into thin air. The composer has, in his words, " taken considerable liberties and changed the name of the lighthouse to Fladda, this being not a usual name in the western Isles of Scotland - to avoid offense or distress to any relatives of those concerned in the original incident. "
- With just three voices in the cast (a tenor, a baritone, and a bass) much of the musical color of the piece comes from the orchestra. In fact, early in the Prologue the brass instruments act as commentator and character, putting questions to the officers in the Court of Inquiry.

The instrumentation is as follows:

Flute (plus piccolo and alto flute)

Clarinet in A (plus bass clarinet)

Horn

Trumpet in C

Trombone

Piano (plus celeste, slightly out-of-tune upright piano, flexatone, and referee's whistle)

Guitar (plus banjo and bass drum)

Violin (plus tam-tam)

Viola (plus flexatone)

Cello

Double bass

The percussion (1 player): marimba, 4 timpani, glockenspiel, bass drum, maracas, roto-tom, suspended cymbal (small), bones, tambourine, tom-toms, side drum with snares, crotales (2 octaves)

- Besides *The Lighthouse*, Peter Maxwell Davies has written a number of other operas and music theatre works:

Eight Songs for a Mad King (1969)

Taverner (1972)

Miss Donnithorne's Maggot (1974)

The Martyrdom of St. Magnus (1977)

Resurrection (1987)

The Doctor of Myddfai (1996)

Mr. Emmet Takes a Walk (2000)

Kommilitonen! (2010)