



# Harrison Birtwistle: Wild Tracks - A Conversation Diary with Fiona Maddocks

*Fiona Maddocks, Harrison Birtwistle*

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**'Anyone with the smallest interest in composition - not just concertos but novels, buildings, lives, you name it, should read this absorbing, spiky, dazzling book.'** Adam Thirwell, *TLS Books of the Year*

Harrison Birtwistle is recognised worldwide as one of the greatest of living composers, behind such works of trail-blazingly modern classical music as *The Shadow of Night* and *The Mask of Orpheus*, famously staged at the English National Opera in 1986, and winner of the Grawemeyer Award. His music is both deeply original and highly personal, yet he has always been notoriously reticent about explaining either his music or himself. In this 'conversation diary', spanning six months, he talks openly to the distinguished writer and critic Fiona Maddocks (author of the acclaimed *Hildegard of Bingen: The Woman of her Age*), offering rare insights into the challenges, uncertainties and rewards which have shaped his life and work since childhood, and which remain with him today as he enters his ninth decade.

We see the composer in the privacy of his Wiltshire studio and garden, and in the public glare of the elite Salzburg and Aldeburgh Festivals. But mostly he is at his kitchen table, talking about the essential aspects of his life - family, cooking, cricket, landscape, pruning trees - and reflecting on the never easy-process of composition. What distinguishes him and his remarkable music is an ability to see the extraordinary in the everyday, giving rise to work that is both elemental and profound. For anyone concerned with the future of music this book is essential reading.

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