

Christopher Nupen

began his broadcasting career in the Features Department of BBC Radio when he wrote and presented HIGH FESTIVAL IN SIENA in 1962 for the BBC Third Programme, at the invitation of Laurence Gilliam — a radio documentary of a very unusual kind about the extraordinary summer music school of the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, where Nupen studied with Andrés Segovia and Alirio Diaz.

His radio programmes prompted an invitation from Huw Wheldon, Managing Director, BBC TV, to move to television where Nupen became the originator of a new kind of intimate classical music film made possible, for the first time in history, by the invention of the first lightweight, silent 16mm film cameras in the 1960s. Nupen took cameras to musicians in places where cameras had never been before and put images on the screen that had never been there before, neither in the cinema nor on television.

His first film, Double Concerto, made for the BBC in 1966 at the invitation of Huw Wheldon and David Attenborough, with Vladimir Ashkenazy, Daniel Barenboim and the English Chamber Orchestra, won two international prizes (Prague and Monte Carlo) and had a profound and enduring influence on television music programming both in Europe and in the USA.

Constantly pioneering and developing the discoveries of his first attempt, Nupen has gone on to produce a series of intimate portrait films which have come to be regarded as classics.

In 1968 Nupen became the first entirely independent television producer in the United Kingdom. He has spent 45 years in the service of the idea of bringing music to people and people to music through the dedicated use of film and television. Still pioneering today, his recent films have been true late work, in the best sense of the term.

He has made 96 television productions, 89 of which have been shown on major networks in the United Kingdom and 91 on major networks in Germany

He has been described by both Sir Jeremy Isaacs and Sir Denis Forman as

the “Undoubted master of the genre which he pioneered and one whose work is an enduring source of musical delight”. He has brought many to music for the first time, while retaining the respect of the musicians and the cognoscenti, a notable achievement.

Much of Nupen’s work has been built on intimate friendships with leading musicians among them Jacqueline du Pré, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Daniel Barenboim, Pinchas Zukerman, Itzhak Perlman, Zubin Mehta, Nathan Milstein, Andrés Segovia, Isaac Stern, Gidon Kremer, Evgeny Kissin and Karim Said.

Among his many notable legacies he has made five television films with Jacqueline du Pré: thus keeping her unique personality and her artistry alive in the world in a way that had never before been possible.

He has won the music documentary DVD of the Year Award four years out of six (2005, 2006, 2008 and 2010) and is nominated again in 2012.

In 1969 Nupen produced and directed *The Trout*, almost certainly the most frequently broadcast classical music film ever made and his composer portraits are much admired and respected for their individuality, their depth and their sensitivity.

He has worked with the same lighting cameraman, David Findlay and the same film editor, Peter Heelas, from his first film until now.

He was given the longest retrospective that has ever been shown on British television, sixteen consecutive Saturday evenings on Channel 4 at 9.05 p.m. from the beginning of September until Christmas — an event described by Channel 4 as their biggest success of the year, not in music or arts programming but over the entire range of their output. Jeremy Isaacs has described it recently as the high point for music programming in the history of British television.

Through his work Christopher Nupen has demonstrated convincingly that film and television are capable of remembering the artistic persona in a way that is not only new in the world but which not one of the other media is quite able to match — a significant development of the audiovisual age. His films rank among the most enduring work that has yet been done for television.

The internationally respected Oxford philosopher and historian of ideas, Sir Isaiah Berlin, described some of them as being "At just about the highest level which television is capable of reaching".

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