

Meet Errollyn Wallen.

She's a composer who has written music for everything from huge orchestras to solo instruments, for massive choirs and solo voices; she's written operas, cabaret songs and songs for children. Her music has been performed all over the world, on TV and radio, at the London Paralympics opening ceremony, at the Last Night of the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall...And that's just on planet earth: did you know that she even wrote a song with an astronaut while he was aboard a space shuttle? Look it up, it's true!

Anyway...back to Planet Earth, where Errollyn was born, in Belize, Central America. At the age of two she moved with her family to London. They were a musical family and her father sang, wrote songs and introduced his daughter to jazz and blues. Errollyn was a musical child for sure, it wasn't music that took up all her time. It was her dancing. She trained as a dancer and took it so seriously she went to study all the way over in New York City in the USA.

But while she was there, she found herself not practising her dance steps, but practising the piano ten hours a day; not choreographing, but composing. And so she gave up her dance training and came back to the UK to study composition instead at the universities of London and then Cambridge.

Her music is influenced by so many composers from the great J.S. Bach, to unconventional Stravinsky, to the jazz of Ella Fitzgerald and you can certainly hear the influence of dance in her vibrant rhythmic writing. She loves writing for the voice and has written more vocal music than anything else, writing songs that she performs herself and songs for more operatic voices. And Errollyn even wrote a set of songs for Friday Afternoons, entitled Map: songs for children everywhere. These songs, which are settings of her own lyrics, tell stories about everything from a sweet shop to a lonely dog, to wondering about clouds, or the point of money, not to mention her favourite foods. With all of her songs, she captures our imaginations and challenges us look at world differently.

And that's Errollyn Wallen.