

Morten Johannes Lauridsen (born February 27, 1943) is an American composer. A National Medal of Arts recipient (2007), he was composer-in-residence of the Los Angeles Master Chorale (1994–2001) and has been a professor of composition at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music for more than 40 years.

A native of the Pacific Northwest, Lauridsen worked as a Forest Service firefighter and lookout (on an isolated tower near Mt. St. Helens) and attended Whitman College before traveling south to study composition at the University of Southern California with Ingolf Dahl, Halsey Stevens, Robert Linn, and Harold Owen. He began teaching at USC in 1967 and has been on their faculty ever since.

In 2006, Lauridsen was named an 'American Choral Master' by the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2007 he received the National Medal of Arts from the President in a White House ceremony, "for his composition of radiant choral works combining musical beauty, power and spiritual depth that have thrilled audiences worldwide."

His works have been recorded on more than 200 CDs, five of which have received Grammy Award nominations, including *O Magnum Mysterium* by the Tiffany Consort, *A Company of Voices* by Conspirare, *Sound The Bells* by The Bay Brass and two all-Lauridsen discs entitled *Lux Aeterna* by the Los Angeles Master Chorale led by Paul Salamunovich and Polyphony with the Britten Sinfonia conducted by Stephen Layton. His principal publishers are Peermusic (New York/Hamburg) and Faber Music (London).

A recipient of numerous grants, prizes, and commissions, Lauridsen chaired the Composition department at the USC Thornton School of Music from 1990–2002 and founded the School's Advanced Studies program in Film Scoring. He has held residencies as guest composer/lecturer at over seventy universities and has received honorary doctorates from Whitman College, Oklahoma State University, Westminster Choir College and King's College, University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Lauridsen now divides his time between Los Angeles and his summer residence on a remote island off the northern coast of Washington State.

His eight vocal cycles and two collections—*Les Chansons des Roses* (Rilke), *Mid-Winter Songs* (Graves), *A Winter Come* (Moss), *A Backyard Universe*, *Madrigali: Six "FireSongs" on Italian Renaissance Poems*, *Nocturnes* (Rilke, Neruda and Agee), *Cuatro Canciones* (Lorca), *Four Madrigals on Renaissance Texts*, *Five Songs on American Poems* (Moss, Witt, Gioia and Agee) and *Lux Aeterna*—his series of sacred a cappella motets (*O Magnum Mysterium*, *Ave Maria*, *O Nata Lux*, *Ubi Caritas et Amor*, and *Ave Dulcissima Maria*) and numerous instrumental works are featured regularly in concert by distinguished artists and ensembles throughout the world. *O Magnum Mysterium*, *Dirait-on* (from *Les Chansons des Roses*), *O Nata Lux*

(from *Lux Aeterna*) and *Sure On This Shining Night* (from *Nocturnes*) have become the all-time best-selling choral octavos distributed by Theodore Presser, in business since 1783.

His musical approaches are very diverse, ranging from direct to abstract in response to various characteristics (subject matter, language, style, structure, historical era, etc.) of the texts he sets. His Latin sacred settings, such as the *Lux Aeterna* and motets, often reference Gregorian chant plus Medieval and Renaissance procedures while blending them within a freshly contemporary sound while other works such as the *Madrigali* and *Cuatro Canciones* are highly chromatic or atonal. His music has an overall lyricism and is tightly constructed around melodic and harmonic motives.

Referring to Lauridsen's sacred music, the musicologist and conductor Nick Strimple said he was "*the only American composer in history who can be called a mystic, (whose) probing, serene work contains an elusive and indefinable ingredient which leaves the impression that all the questions have been answered. From 1993 Lauridsen's music rapidly increased in international popularity, and by century's end he had eclipsed Randall Thompson as the most frequently performed American choral composer.*"

The first film made about Lauridsen won four Best Documentary awards since opening the American Documentary Film Festival on February 7, 2012 in Palm Springs, California. *Shining Night: A Portrait of Composer Morten Lauridsen*, was named 'a heartening rarity' by Terry Teachout of the Wall Street Journal. Directed by Michael Stillwater and co-produced with Doris Laesser Stillwater for Song Without Borders, *Shining Night* provides audiences worldwide with a rare glimpse into the inner world of the composer. A companion giftbook to the film, *Morten Lauridsen's Waldron Island Reflections*, photographed and edited by Michael Stillwater, is published by GIA Publications, Chicago.