

Oliver Knussen, ‘Where the Wild Things Are’ Composer, Dies at 66

By Michael Cooper

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The British composer Oliver Knussen — who leapt to fame at 15 conducting the London Symphony Orchestra in his First Symphony, created a wild rumpus of an opera out of Maurice Sendak’s “Where the Wild Things Are,” and championed contemporary composers as a conductor and mentor — died on Sunday in Snape, England. He was 66.

His death was announced by his publisher, Faber Music. The company did not specify the cause, but Mr. Knussen (NUH-sen) had battled health problems for years.

A bear of a man who was sometimes likened to one of Sendak’s Wild Things, Mr. Knussen was among the most influential British composers of his generation. His output was not huge — he became known for composing slowly, and missing deadlines — but he leaves behind a catalog of finely wrought works that, while rooted in 20th-century modernism, are beholden to no school but his own.

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