

John Adams

Biography and Works



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John Adams is one of the best known and most often performed of America's composers. As Andrew Porter wrote in *The New Yorker*, Adams is the creator of a "flexible new language capable of producing large-scale works that are both attractive and strongly fashioned. His is a music whose highly polished resonant sound is wonderful." *Le Monde* says that his music "...gives the impression of a rediscovered liberty, of an open door which lets in the fresh air in great gusts."

Adams was born in Worcester, Massachusetts on February 15, 1947. During his youth, growing up in Vermont and New Hampshire, he was strongly influenced by the intellectual and cultural institutions of New England. He received both his BA and MA degrees from Harvard University, where he was active as a conductor, clarinetist, and composer. His principal teachers included Leon Kirchner, David Del Tredici, and Roger Sessions.

In 1971 Adams began an active career in the San Francisco area, teaching at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (1972-83) and serving as new music adviser and composer-in-residence for the San Francisco Symphony (1978-85). His creative output spans a wide range of media: works for orchestra, opera, video, film, and dance, as well as electronic and instrumental music. Such pieces as *Harmonium*, *Harmonielehre*, *Shaker Loops*, and *The Chairman Dances* are among the best known and most frequently performed of contemporary American music. In these works he has taken minimalism into a new and fresh terrain characterized by luminous sonorities and a powerful and dramatic approach to form.

Adams's works have been programmed by every major orchestra in the United States as well as orchestras throughout Europe, Asia, and Australia. His music has also been choreographed by numerous dance companies including Dance Theater of Harlem (Garth Fagan) and the New York City Ballet (Peter Martins).

Adams's operas have been among the more controversial and widely seen stage events in recent history. In 2003 Lincoln Center presented a festival entitled "John Adams: An American Master," the most extensive festival ever mounted at Lincoln Center devoted to a living composer. Other festivals of his music have been presented in London and in Rotterdam, as well as in Stockholm.

John Adams has become increasingly active as a conductor of his own and other new music. From 1987 to

1990 Adams served as creative chair of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, conducting four weeks of concerts and overseeing their new music activities. In 1993, he served as music director of the Ojai Festival. With the Ensemble Modern he led a European tour in 1993 and an American tour in 1996. Adams has also served as Music Director of the Cabrillo Festival and as Artist in Association with the BBC Symphony. He has conducted the Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Concertgebouw, and the London Sinfonietta. In February 1997 he led the San Francisco Symphony in performances and a recording of *Harmonium*. He was also the focus of the New York Philharmonic's Composer Week in the spring of 1997.

Winner of the 2003 Pulitzer prize, Adams is also a member of the American Academy of Arts & Letters. He is also the recipient of the Centennial Medal of Harvard University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences as well as the first ever recipient of the Nemmers Prize in Music Composition. He has been awarded an honorary doctorate by Cambridge University in England as well as an honorary membership in Phi Beta Kappa. In April of 2000 he was given a proclamation by the governor of California for his distinguished service to the arts in his home state.

The music of John Adams has been recorded in multiple versions on the Nonesuch, EMI/Angel, Philips, ECM, Chandos, New Albion, and 1750 Arch labels. Among these recordings are his *Grand Pianola Music* with the Netherlands Wind Ensemble conducted by Stephen Mosko, *Harmonielehre* and *The Chairman Dances* conducted by Simon Rattle, and *Harmonium* conducted by Leonard Slatkin. In 1985, *Harmonielehre* was honored as "Best Classical Album" by both *Time* and *USA Today*. *Harmonium*, *Grand Pianola Music*, *Shaker Loops*, *Harmonielehre*, *Phrygian Gates*, and *China Gates* are available in published form from Associated Music Publishers.

— September 2012

Orchestra

The Chairman Dances:

Foxtrot for Orchestra (1985) 12'
2(2pic).2.2(bcl).2/4.2.2.1/timp.3perc/hp.pf/str
Performance materials on rental
Score 50480014 for sale.

Common Tones in Simple Time (1979-86) 19'
3(3pic)232/2.2Ctpt.00/2perc[glock.2mba.met]/2pf/str
Performance materials on rental

Harmonielehre (1985) 40'
4(3pic)3(ca)4(2bcl)3+cbn/4.4Ctpt.32/
timp.4perc[glock.2mba.vib.xyl]/cel.2hp.pf/str
Performance materials on rental
Score 50488949 for sale.

Shaker Loops (1978, rev. 1982) 25'
str
Alt: 3vn, va, 2vc, db
Performance materials on rental
Score 50488934 for sale.

Works for Band/Wind/Brass Ensemble

Grand Pianola Music (1981-82) 30'
Solo: 2 Pianos
2(2pic)22(bcl)2/2221/3perc/3 amp female voices
Performance materials on rental
Score 50480554 for sale.

Solo Keyboard(s)

China Gates (1977) 5'
pf
Score 50236190 for sale.

Phrygian Gates (1977) 26'
pf
Solo Part 50236310 for sale.

Chorus and Orchestra/Ensemble

Harmonium (1981) 33'
Text: John Donne and Emily Dickinson
Chorus: SATB chorus divisi
4(3pic).3.3(bcl).3(cbn)/4.4(Dpictpt).3.1/
timp.4perc/cel.hp.pf(syn)/str
Performance materials on rental
Score 50480015 for sale.

Work List

John Adams

AVAILABILITY

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The rental agent in your territory is the source for performance materials. Not every composition is available in every territory. Full scores, vocal scores, piano reductions, and libretti may be for sale by music dealers.

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UNAVAILABLE

Due to composer revisions, performer exclusivity, or other reasons, a work may not be available.

For more information on the music of John Adams, please visit www.musicsalesclassical.com or contact:

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