



# Peter Lieberson Biography and Works

“Like all of Lieberson's music, it is acutely, actively heard and written along every line, without padding. The composer handles his orchestra with imagination and with new, fertile invention; the string writing and the episodes for small, unusual ensembles are especially striking.”

— *The New Yorker*



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Peter Liebererson's works first came to national attention in 1983, with the premiere of his *Piano Concerto*, composed for Peter Serkin and commissioned by Seiji Ozawa and the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) for their centennial. Andrew Porter wrote in *The New Yorker* that it was a "major addition to the modern concerto repertory." It was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the subsequent recording of the work won *Opus Magazine's* Contemporary Music Award for 1985.

Following that work's success, Liebererson was again commissioned by Ozawa and the BSO, which resulted in *Drala* (1986), "a short symphony but a profound one and, in many of its pages, a profoundly beautiful one," according to the *Boston Globe*. *Drala* has since been performed by many of the world's top international orchestras including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, the Toronto Symphony, The Cleveland Orchestra, the New World Symphony, and the London Sinfonietta.

Liebererson's best-known work, *Neruda Songs*, a setting of five sonnets by Pablo Neruda for mezzo-soprano and orchestra, was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony for Lorraine Hunt Liebererson. The world premiere took place in Los Angeles in May 2005, followed by performances with the Boston Symphony in Boston and at Carnegie Hall.

*Neruda Songs* has also been performed frequently by soloist Kelley O'Connor with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Louisville Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony, and the Aspen Festival Orchestra, among others. The BBC Symphony with soloist Sarah Connolly presented the British premiere in 2010. Two recordings of *Neruda Songs* have been released: Lorraine Hunt Liebererson, in one of her final performances, with the Boston Symphony and James Levine (Nonesuch, 2006) and Kelley O'Connor with the Atlanta Symphony and Robert Spano conducting (ASO Media, 2011).

Honored many times in his career — including the University of Louisville's Grawemeyer Award in Music Composition for *Neruda Songs* — Liebererson's composition was profoundly influ-

enced by his practice of Tibetan Buddhism and in particular by the teachings of Chogyam Trungpa.

Liebererson's recent concert works include: *Songs of Love and Sorrow*, settings of a second group of Neruda love sonnets for baritone Gerald Finley and the Boston Symphony Orchestra; *Remembering JFK: An American Elegy*, for narrator and orchestra with selected excerpts from Kennedy speeches, commissioned by the National Symphony Orchestra to commemorate the 50th anniversary of John F. Kennedy's inauguration; *Remembering Schumann* for Yo-Yo Ma (cello) and Emanuel Ax (piano); and *The Coming of Light*, for baritone, oboe, and string quartet. At the time of his death, Liebererson was at work on a percussion concerto for soloist Pedro Carniero, commissioned jointly by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Lisbon's Gulbenkian Orchestra. This work will be premiered in the 2013-14 season.

Other compositions of the past decade include: *Piano Concerto No. 3*, for pianist Peter Serkin and the Minnesota Orchestra; *Piano Quintet* for Peter Serkin and the Orion Quartet; *Ah* for The Cleveland Orchestra; *Six Realms*, a cello concerto for Yo-Yo Ma and the Toronto Symphony; *Red Garuda*, his second piano concerto for Peter Serkin and the Boston Symphony Orchestra; and *Fire*, a 150th-anniversary commission from the New York Philharmonic, who also commissioned and premiered *The World in Flower* for mezzo, baritone, chorus, and orchestra in 2009.

Dramatic works figured prominently, though few, in Liebererson's creative output. *Ashoka's Dream*, is the second of a pair of dramatic works, with *King Gesar*, on the topic of enlightened rulership and the creation of enlightened society. Set to a libretto by Douglas Penick and commissioned by the Santa Fe Opera, *Ashoka's Dream* received its premiere in July 1997. Mark Swed of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote that *Ashoka's Dream* is "both splashy and stirring in its revealing of the majesty of its storytelling. The colors of the orchestra dazzle with the sonorities of great bell-like, all-encompassing chords, with rich lyrical passages and with martial orchestral conflagrations ... It is music in which one feels the force of progress and senses not only its power but also the scari-

ness of change ... Ashoka's music is the most beautiful of all, and it is an inspiration to watch the complexities fall away from it as his wisdom grows." Based on material from the opera Liebererson created an orchestral work, *Suite from Ashoka's Dream* (2009), commissioned by the Aspen Music Festival and the Toronto Symphony. *King Gesar*, a work for narrator and chamber ensemble, premiered at the 1992 Munich Biennale Festival, and was recorded for Sony Classical with a documentary filmed on its creation.

Liebererson's collaborations with Peter Serkin resulted in the three piano concerti and the piano pieces *Garland*, *Fantasy Pieces*, *Bagatelles*, *Scherzo*, and *The Ocean that has no West and no East*. Other notable chamber works include *Variations for Violin and Piano*, premiered at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. in 1995; *Variations for Piano*, for Emanuel Ax, first performed at Lincoln Center in 1996; and the chamber works *String Quartet*, *Ziji*, and *Raising the Gaze*.

A significant portion of his catalog has been commercially recorded, much in the last decade. A 2002 Deutsche Grammophon release included *Drala*, *Ziji*, and *Fire* (performed by The Cleveland Orchestra/Knussen); *Raising the Gaze*, *Accordance*, and *Three Songs*, (ASKO Ensemble); and *Free and Easy Wanderer* (London Sinfonietta). In 2006, Bridge Records released a new recording of Liebererson's *Six Realms*, the *Horn Concerto*, and *Rilke Songs*, and in 2010, released a new disc including *Red Garuda*, *Piano Quintet*, and *Rilke Songs*, recorded by Lorraine Hunt Liebererson and Peter Serkin. Other recent recordings include the *Tashi Quartet*, performed by Antares; and *Remembering JFK*, performed by the National Symphony Orchestra with Christoph Eschenbach conducting.

Peter Liebererson was born in New York City in 1946. He was the son of the late Goddard Liebererson, former president of Columbia Records, and the ballerina Vera Zorina. Liebererson's principal teachers in composition were Milton Babbitt, Charles Wuorinen, Donald Martino, and Martin Boykan. After completing musical studies at Columbia University, he left New York City in

1976 for Boulder, Colorado, to continue his studies with Chogyam Trungpa, a Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist master he met in 1974. Liebererson then moved to Boston to direct Shambhala Training, a meditation and cultural program. During this period he also attended Brandeis University and received his Ph.D. From 1984 to 1988 he taught at Harvard University, and then became international director of Shambhala Training in Halifax. Beginning in 1994 he devoted his time exclusively to composition. In April 211 Liebererson died following complications from leukemia and lymphoma.

Among Liebererson's many awards were those from the National Institute of Arts and Letters and a Brandeis Creative Arts Award. In 2006, he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Peter Liebererson's music is published exclusively by Associated Music Publishers.

— September 2012

# Opera and Music Theatre

**Ashoka's Dream** (1997) 1h 40'  
Text: (English)  
Solo: 13 Vocal Soloists: Bar, B, T, T, B, B, T, Bar, S, Mz, S, S, Mz, A  
Chorus: SATB chorus  
2(pic).2.2(bcl).1+cbn/4.3(in C).2+btbn.1/  
timp.2perc/hp.pf/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

## Orchestra

**Ah** (2002) 18'  
3+pic.3+ca.2+Ebcl+bcl(cbcl).3+cbn/4.3+Dtpt.3.1/  
timp.5perc/pf.hp/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Drala** (1986) 17'  
3(3pic,af).2.3(Ebcl).2+cbn/4331/timp.6perc/hp.pf/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Fire (from "The Five Great Elements")** (1995) 5'  
3(pic).2.2+Ebcl.2+cbn/2.3.2+btbn.1/4perc/pf.hp/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**The Gesar Legend** (1988) 18'  
4(2pic).3(ca).3(bcl).3+cbn/4331/timp.4perc/  
hp.pf[=cel]/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Processional** (1995) 5'  
1+pic.2.2.2+cbn/4.2.2+btbn.0/2perc/pf/str

**Suite from "Ashoka's Dream"** (2008) 25'  
*Performance materials under revision*  
3(pic).2(ca).2+bcl.asx.2(cbn)/4.3.2+btbn.1/  
timp.2perc/hp.pf(ce)/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**World's Turning** (1991) 18'  
4(2pic).2+ca.3(bcl).2(cbn)/4331/timp.perc.hp/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

## Soloist(s) and Orchestra

**Concerto for Piano** (1980-83) 45'  
Solo: Piano  
3(pic).2+ca.2+bcl(cbcl).2+cbn/4.3.2+btbn.1/  
timp.6perc/cel.hp/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Concerto for Violoncello with Accompanying Trios** (1974) 13'  
Solo: Cello  
I: fl.ob.tpt; II: dm.man.hp; III: 2vn.va; IV: bcl.pf.db;  
V: 3timp  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Horn Concerto** (1998) 18'  
Solo: Horn  
2(pic).2.2.2(cbn)/1000/str (min 5.4.3.3.1)  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Neruda Songs** (2005) 30'  
Text: (Spanish) Pablo Neruda  
Solo: Mezzo soprano  
2(pic).1+ca.2(bcl).2/2200/2perc.hp.pf/str  
*Performance materials on rental*  
*Vocal Score 50486461 for sale*

**Piano Concerto No. 3** (2003) 31'  
Solo: Piano  
3(pic).2+ca.2+Ebcl(bcl).2+cbn/4.3.2+btbn.1/  
timp.4perc/hp/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Red Garuda** (1999) 24'  
Solo: Piano  
2(pic)+pic.2+ca.2+Ebcl+bcl(cbcl).2+cbn/  
4.3.2+btbn.1/timp.5perc/cel.hp/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Remembering JFK (An American Elegy)** (2010) 15'  
Text: (English) John F. Kennedy  
Solo: Narrator  
3(pic).2.3(bcl).2(cbn)/4.2.0.0/timp.perc/pf.hp/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Rhapsody for Viola and Orchestra** (1994) 8' 30"  
Solo: Viola  
2(pic).1+ca.2.2/2221/timp/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**The Six Realms** (2000) 25'  
Solo: Cello  
3(3pic).2+ca.2+bcl(cbcl).2+cbn/4331/timp.5perc/  
pf(ce).hp/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Songs of Love and Sorrow** (2010) 25'  
Text: (Spanish)  
Solo: Baritone  
2(pic).1+ca.2.2(cbn)/2.2.0.0/timp.2perc/pf.hp/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Viola Concerto** (1992-94) 18' 30"  
Solo: Viola  
2(pic).1+ca.2.2/2221/timp/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

# Work List

# Peter Liebersson

## Large Ensemble (7 or more players)

**Accordance for 8 Instruments** (1975-77) 12'  
 afl.bcl.ob/vib[=glock]/hp.pf/va.db  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Concerto for Four Groups of Instruments** (1972-73) 9'  
*prem. 1973*  
 I: fl, ob, cl; II: 2vn, va; III: bn, vc, db; IV: hp, pf  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Free and Easy Wanderer** (1998) 6'  
 0+pic.1.2(bcl).1/1110/perc/pf/2vn.va.vc.db  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Lalita, Chamber Variations** (1984) 18'  
 fl(pic), ob, cl(bcl), hn, perc, pf, vn, va, vc, db  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Raising the Gaze** (1988) 7'  
 fl(pic), cl(bcl), perc, pf, vn, va, vc  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Wind Messengers** (1990) 8'  
 3.2.2+2bcl.2/2000  
*Performance materials on rental*

## Soloist(s) and Large Ensemble (7 or more players)

**King Gesar** (1991) 55'  
 Text: (English) Douglas Penick  
 Solo: Narrator  
 fl(pic), cl(bcl), hn, tbn, perc, 2 pf, vc  
*Performance materials on rental*

**Three Songs** (1981) 7'  
 Text: (English) Douglas Penick  
 Solo: Soprano  
 1111/1110/hp.pf/2vn.va.vc  
*Performance materials on rental*

## Works for 2-6 Players

**Elegy** (1990) 8'  
 vn, pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*

**Feast Day** (1985) 20'  
 fl(pic, afl), ob, hpd[=pf], vc  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*

**Little Fanfare** (1991) 3'  
 fl, tpt, vn, hp  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*

**Little Fanfare (II)** (1993) 3'  
 cl, vn, va, vc, pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*

**Piano Quintet** (2001) 14'  
 2 vn, va, vc, pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*

**Remembering Schumann** (2009) 17'  
 vc, pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*

**Rumble** (1994) 14'  
 va, db, perc  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*

**String Quartet** (1994) 9'  
 2 vn, va, vc  
*Score and Part(s) 50482304 for sale*

**Tashi Quartet** (1978-79) 30'  
 clarinet, violin, cello, and piano  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*

**Three Variations for Violoncello and Piano** (1996) 5'  
 vc pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*

**Variations** (1993) 12' 50"  
 vn, pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*

**Ziji** (1987) 10'  
 cl, hn, pf, vn, va, vc  
*Score 50480535 for sale*  
*Set of Parts 50480531 for sale*

## Solo Works (excluding keyboard)

**Flute Variations** (1971) 7'  
 fl  
*Score 50501760 for sale*

## Work List

Peter Lieberson

## Solo Keyboard(s)

- Bagatelles** (1985) 10'  
pf  
*Solo Part 50480119 for sale*
- Fantasy Pieces** (1989) 8'  
pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*
- Garland** (1994) 12'  
pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*
- The Ocean that has  
No West and No East** (1997) 5'  
piano  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*
- Piano Fantasy** (1975) 11'  
pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*
- Piano Variations** (1995) 16'  
pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*
- Scherzo No. 1** (1989) 5'  
pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*
- Tolling Piece** (1998) 1' 30"  
pf  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*

## Chorus and Orchestra/Ensemble

- The World in Flower** (2007) 40'  
Text: (English, Spanish)  
Rilke/Maxwell/Hopkins/Solomon/Rumi/Mechtild of  
Magdebur/Uvanuk/Neruda/Porete/Whitman/Navajo  
Solo: Mezzo soprano, Baritone  
Chorus: SATB chor  
2+pic.2.2(bcl,asx).2/2200/timp.2perc/hp.pf/str  
*Performance materials on rental*

## Solo Voice(s) and up to 6 players

- C'mon Pigs of Western Civilization Eat More  
Grease** (2001) 3'  
Text: Allen Ginsberg  
Solo: Baritone  
piano  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*
- The Coming of Light** (2009) 20'  
Text: (English) John Ashbery, William Shakespeare,  
Mark Strand  
Solo: Baritone; Oboe  
2vn, va, vc  
Alt: baritone; piano  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*
- Forgiveness** (2001) 3'  
Text: (English) John Ashbery  
Solo: Baritone  
cello  
*Performance materials sold by Rental Library*
- Rilke Songs** (2001) 18'  
Text: Rainer Maria Rilke  
Solo: Mezzo soprano  
piano  
*Vocal Score 50485417 for sale*

Work List

Peter Liebersson

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