



JOHN ADAMS

CREATIVE CHAIR

Composer, conductor, and creative thinker – John Adams occupies a unique position in the world of American music. His works, both operatic and symphonic, stand out among contemporary classical compositions for their depth of expression, brilliance of sound, and the profoundly humanist nature of their themes. Over the past 25 years, Adams’ music has played a decisive role in turning the tide of contemporary musical aesthetics away from academic modernism and toward a more expansive, expressive language, entirely characteristic of his New World surroundings.

Born and raised in New England, Adams learned the clarinet from his father and played in marching bands and community orchestras during his formative years. He began composing at age ten and heard his first orchestral pieces performed while still a teenager. The intellectual and artistic traditions of New England, including his studies at Harvard University and attendance at Boston Symphony Orchestra concerts, helped shape him as an artist and thinker. After earning two degrees from Harvard, he moved to Northern California in 1971 and has since lived in the San Francisco Bay area.

Adams taught at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music for 10 years before becoming composer-in-residence of the San Francisco Symphony (1982–1985), and creator of the orchestra’s highly successful and controversial “New and Unusual Music” series. Several of Adams’ landmark orchestral works were written for and premiered by the San Francisco Symphony, including *Harmonium* (1980–1981), *Grand Pianola Music* (1982), *Harmonielehre* (1984–1985), *My Father Knew Charles Ives* (2003) and *Absolute Jest* (2012).

In 1985, Adams began a collaboration with the poet Alice Goodman and stage director Peter Sellars that resulted in two groundbreaking operas: *Nixon in China* (1987) and *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991). Produced worldwide, these works are among the most performed operas of the last two decades. Five further stage collaborations with Sellars followed: the 1995 “songplay”, *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky*, with a libretto by June Jordan; *El Niño* (2000), a multilingual retelling of the nativity story; *Doctor Atomic* (2005), about J. Robert Oppenheimer and the creation of the first atomic bomb; *A Flowering Tree*, inspired by Mozart’s *Magic Flute* and premiered in Vienna in 2006, and the Passion oratorio *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* (2012). Gustavo Dudamel toured *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Europe and New York City in the spring of 2013.

Other signal Adams works that have become repertory with orchestras, choruses and ensembles include *Shaker Loops* for strings, *The Dharma at Big Sur* (a concerto

for electric violin inspired by the writings of Jack Kerouac), *Doctor Atomic Symphony* (a 22-minute symphony drawn from the opera), Violin Concerto, *Chamber Symphony* and *Son of Chamber Symphony* (choreographed as *Joyride* by Mark Morris).

His recent works include *City Noir* for orchestra, *Absolute Jest* (based on fragments of late Beethoven) for string quartet and orchestra, and the new Saxophone Concerto. *City Noir* and the Saxophone Concerto will be released on Nonesuch Records, featuring David Robertson and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra with soloist Tim McAllister. Adams is currently writing a new work for violin and orchestra for Leila Josefowicz. Further ahead, the Metropolitan Opera presents *The Death of Klinghoffer*, directed by Tom Morris. Together with *Doctor Atomic* in 2007 and *Nixon in China* in 2011, this will be the Met's third production of an Adams opera.

In May of 2012 Harvard University awarded Adams an honorary doctorate in music, its highest honor. Harvard has also conferred on him the Harvard Arts Medal and the Centennial Medal for "contributions to society." Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California honored him with the Governor's Award for his distinguished service to the arts in his adopted home state. Adams has also been awarded honorary doctorates by Cambridge University, Northwestern University and the Juilliard School. His Violin Concerto won the 1993 Grawemeyer Award, and for composing *On the Transmigration of Souls*, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic to commemorate the first anniversary of 9/11, he received the 2003 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

John Adams is an active conductor, appearing with the world's major orchestras in programs combining his own works with a wide variety of repertoire ranging from Beethoven and Mozart to Ives, Carter, Zappa, Glass, and Ellington. In past seasons, he has conducted the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and BBC Symphony Orchestra, among others. In the 2013/14 season, Adams appears with the Houston Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the New World Symphony orchestras, as well as the Orquesta Nacional de España in Madrid. Adams is currently Creative Chair with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

In addition to being a composer and conductor John Adams is also a highly esteemed and provocative writer. He is a frequent contributor to *The New York Times Book Review* and has written for *The New Yorker* and *The Times of London*. *Hallelujah Junction*, Adams' much praised volume of memoirs and commentary on American musical life, won the Northern California Book Award for Creative Nonfiction and was named one of the "most notable books of the year" by *The New York Times*.

The official John Adams website is www.earbox.com.