

John Adams



Photo credit: Margareta Mitchell

The Music of John Adams

The strains of his grandfather's lakeside New England dance hall were among the earliest layers of John Adams's aural memory. So too were the marching bands in which he played clarinet as a young student. Learning the basic European canon in front of the family Magnavox, Adams readily assimilated it alongside the crazy quilt of American vernacular music he encountered in the early postwar decades. Duke Ellington is a recurrent inspiration, and Adams's love of jazz—which returns in unexpected forms, such as the improvisatory “hypermelody” of the Violin Concerto (1993) or the electric violin's raga-like musings in *The Dharma at Big Sur* (2003)—was early nurtured by his parents' activities in jazz groups. As a student at Harvard during the cataclysmic upheavals of the late Sixties, Adams experienced the cognitive dissonance of the arid pronouncements of contemporary serialists when confronted with the fresh, Dionysian inventiveness of this golden age of rock.

Adams eventually found his voice in the loosely experimental atmosphere of the California Bay Area where he relocated in his twenties. The Minimalist aesthetic lighted the way for Adams to reactivate the energetic pulsation and tonal basis of the jazz and rock idioms which seemed to legitimize the “pleasure principle” of listening. Yet early on Adams saw beyond the inherent limitations of Minimalism to a larger musical vision, as the seminal string septet *Shaker Loops* made clear. Already in his breakthrough orchestral works written for the San Francisco Symphony—culminating in *Harmonielehre*—Adams was displaying a genius for revitalizing the lofty rhetoric of romanticism and large forms with a contemporary sensibility. At the same time his early fascination with electronic music grew into a technologically enhanced palette that marries acoustic and synthesized sounds. Among Adams's most experimental soundscapes are the Pulitzer Prize-winning *On the Transmigration of Souls* and the music to depict the desert test site for the bomb in *Doctor Atomic*. From this array of influences, Adams continually generates new, unexpected compounds. His career can be viewed, as the composer puts it, as a quest “to forge a language, Whitman-like, out of the compost of American life.”

This grounding in the vernacular can lead to surprisingly witty collisions, such as the Chamber Symphony's mash-up of early Schoenberg with cartoon soundtracks. Alongside the rascally, Mark Twain-like “trickster” humor is a vein of deeply felt nostalgia and rueful intimacy that can evoke the elegiac, unsentimental tenderness of Copland. Adams is among the most frequently choreographed of contemporary composers in part because of the fascinating contexts in which he situates his dramatically propulsive rhythmic sensibility. He also refracts the pioneering perspective of Charles Ives, who remains a role model for keeping “the vernacular roots of the art alive” while experimenting without inhibition.

Adams's uniquely American perspective comes into intense focus in his operatic work, beginning with 1987's *Nixon in China*, whose theatrical depiction of the cultural clash between Communism and Capitalism revitalized the genre for an entire generation. Adams's works for the stage have profoundly shaped not just the evolution of his own musical language but contemporary perceptions of opera and its possibilities. His choice of subject matter in collaboration with long-term artistic partner Peter Sellars, while sometimes controversial, is rooted in the mythic potential of contemporary icons and events. Adams strives to create an American opera with larger cultural implications, a work of art that addresses the defining conflicts of our time without pap solutions, whether terrorism (in *The Death of Klinghoffer*), the experience of urban immigrants (in the millennial oratorio/opera *El Niño*), or the beginning of the atomic age (*Doctor Atomic*). Yet Adams continues to draw on the inspiration of old masters, as in the Mozart-tinged *A Flowering Tree*, in which an ancient South Indian folk tale proves a fertile source for yet another act of cultural cross-pollination. Adams has become a representative 21st-century composer who continues to find ideal subjects for his own art of musical metamorphosis.

Thomas May, 2008

(Thomas May is the editor of *The John Adams Reader* and author of *Decoding Wagner*, both from Amadeus Press. He writes frequently about music and theater.)

OPERAS

The Death of Klinghoffer

1990

2 hr 20 min

Opera in two acts

Text: Libretto by Alice Goodman (E)

S,M,C,T,3Bar,B; chorus(min:24 singers); dancers

orchestra: 2(I,II=picc).2(II=corA).2(II=bcl).2(II=dbn)-2.2.2.0-perc(1):KAT MIDI mallet controller/timp-2kbd samplers-harp-strings(8.8.6.6.4)

For complete technical specifications go to:

mhgrey.wordpress.com

"A work that fires the heart... Adams creates a revolutionary, continually shifting tapestry."

-- *Katrine Ames, Newsweek*

"Here is what [The Death of Klinghoffer] does do: Explore the roots of a conflict that has shaped our era, demonstrate the common humanity of all those involved in it, condemn violence and shine a light on the everyday heroism of ordinary people ... The music in "Klinghoffer" varies from lyrical to edgy, mechanistic to ecstatic."

-- *Sarah Bryan Miller, St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

"The Death of Klinghoffer ripples, sways and flows, exerting a melancholy undertow ... the work deals openly with political and spiritual crises that are still very much a part of everyday life. ... what the opera has to say is worth hearing..."

-- *Steve Smith, The New York Times*

9790051968800 (Vocal Score)

World Premiere: 19 Mar 1991

Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels, Belgium

Peter Sellars, director/Mark Morris, choreographer; Théâtre de la Monnaie

Conductor: Kent Nagano

Doctor Atomic

2004-05

2 hr 53 min

opera in 2 acts

Text: libretto by Peter Sellars drawn from original sources

M, A, 2T, 2Bar, BBar, B; chorus;

3(II, III=picc).3(III=corA).3(II=Ebcl, III=bcl,dbcl).3(III=dbn)

-4.3(III=picc.tpt).3.1-harp-cel-timp-perc(4):I=thunder sheet/gisp/tgl/tuned

gong/crot/susp.cym/med tam-t/BD/2roto toms/chinese cym/SD/tuned

gongs;II=chimes/lg.tam-t/susp.chinese cym/crot/BD/tgl;III=tuned gongs/lo

gong/susp.cym/thunder sheet/med tam-tlg tam-t/hi susp.cym/xyl/crot/chimes/low

susp.cym/antique cym/hi tgl/med tam-t/sm tam-t/med gong/alarm bell/BD;IV=lg chinese

cym/susp.cym/tam-t/tuned gongs/BD/2 high tgls/bass chime-computer-controlled sound

system-strings

"Doctor Atomic is a magnificent accomplishment that easily takes its place alongside the other Adams-Sellars triumphs — Nixon in China, The Death of Klinghoffer and El Niño — and in important respects goes beyond them. It contains music of unearthly splendour and gorgeous lushness, and its rich expressivity will take many hearings to absorb."

Los Angeles Times

"Since Britten's death some 30 years ago, the American composer John Adams has emerged as the most powerful voice in the creation of opera... Doctor Atomic is a moving and compelling work of moral, as well as musical, grandeur... one is left with a sense of the terrible magnificence of atomic fission as well as its unimaginable destructiveness."

Daily Telegraph

World Premiere: 01 Oct 2005

San Francisco Opera House, San Francisco, CA, United States

Gerald Finley, bar / Kristine Jepson, mezz / Peter Sellars, dir; San Francisco Opera

Conductor: Donald Runnicles

A Flowering Tree

2006

1 hr 53 min

Opera in 2 acts

Text: Libretto adapted by John Adams and Peter Sellars from a South Indian folktale and poems translated by A.K.Ramanujan (E-S)

lyrS,T,B soloists, SATB chorus (min.40);

2.picc.treble recorder(=perc,opt.picc).alto recorder(=soprano recorder, perc,opt.fl)

*.2(II=corA).2.bcl.2(II=dbn)-4.2.3.0-timp.perc(4):! = glsp/wdbl/claves/pedal

BD/SD/2susp.cyms/2tuned bongos (or roto toms)/tom-t/shaker/3

tpl.blks/cowbell/bongo/maracas/BD/2 Japanese Bowl gong/Chinese

cym/2tgls/slapstick;II= chimes/tgl/tamb/wdbl/susp.cym/rainmaker

(med.)/BD/cast/bongo/SD; III=maracas/tamb/rainmaker (low)/high tgl/low tubular wind

chimes; IV=shaker/rainmaker (low)-harp-cel-strings(min. 12.10.8.6.5) *OPTIONAL:

recorder players play some very simple percussion (rain sticks, etc.), or they can play only recorder.

"The score is opulent, dreamlike, fiercely lyrical, at times shadowy and strange – unlike anything that the fifty-nine-year-old composer has written..."

The New Yorker

"...some of the most ravishingly beautiful passages of music that Adams has yet composed..."

[He] continues to develop and surprise — something of a late-flowering tree himself."

Daily Telegraph

"...a radiant sunburst of orchestral beauty. This score abounds in ravishing music, some of the most purely gorgeous music of recent years. ...Adams has grown into possibly our finest living composer. He never utilizes anything other than an utterly appropriate compositional element, a hallmark of this score's beauty and poise."

Audiophile Audition

"...this is Adams' most sensuous, spacious and evocative score, with delicate and colorful instrumentation evoking 'world music,' primitive rhythms echoing Stravinsky and mystical chanting for the chorus."

-- Janelle Gelfand, Cincinnati Enquirer

World Premiere: 14 Nov 2006

Halle E im MuseumsQuartier, Wien, Austria

Peter Sellars, dir / Jessica Rivera, sop / Russell Thomas, ten / Eric Owens, bar;

Orquesta Sinfónica Juvenil Simón Bolívar; Schola Cantorum de Caracas

Conductor: John Adams

I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky

1995

1 hr 50 min

Songplay in two acts

Text: Libretto and lyrics by June Jordan (E)

3M,highT,T,2Bar

Orchestra: 2reeds(I=cl,bcl,II=asax)-3kbd(I=pft/sampler,II=sampler,III=synth)

-gtr(=elec.gtr)-db(=elec.bgtr)-drum kit(=MIDI drums)

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

World Premiere: 03 May 1995

Zellerbach Playhouse, University of California, Berkeley, USA

Peter Sellars, director; Paul Drescher Ensemble

Conductor: Grant Gershon

El Niño

1999-2000

1 hr 45 min

A Nativity Oratorio for chorus and orchestra

Text: Biblical texts, Gnostic Infancy Gospels, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Rosario Castellanos (E-S)

S,M,Bar,3CT; chorus;

2(I,II=picc).2(I,II=corA).2(II=bcl).2(II=dbn)-3.0.3.0-perc(3):! =glsp/lo

tgl/gong/almglocken/guero/maracas; II=crot/almglocken/gong/hi cowbell/3tgl/tp.l.bl;

III=gong/chimes/crot/claves/2tgl/2temple bowls-harp-pft(=cel)-2kbd

(I=pft,cel;II=sampler,cel)- 2steel string gtr-strings(minimum 14.0.6.6.4)

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

9790051096756 **(Vocal Score)**

World Premiere: 15 Dec 2000

Châtelet, Paris, France

Dawn Upshaw/Lorraine Hunt-Lieberson/Willard White/Peter Sellars, director; Deutsches

Symphonie Orchester/London Voices

Conductor: Kent Nagano

Nixon in China

1987

2 hr 57 min

An opera in three acts

Text: Libretto by Alice Goodman (E,G)

colS,lyrS,3M,T,lyrBar,Bar,BBar; chorus; dancers

2(I,II=picc).2(II=corA).3(I=Ebcl;II,III=bcl).4sax(S,2A,Bar).0-0.3.3.0-perc(1):BD/pedal

BD/wdbl/susp.cym/SD/sandpaper blocks/tamb/hi-hat/TD/sizzle cym/glsp/slapping

sound/tgl/sleigh bells-2elec pft-synth or sampler (Kurzweil K2000)

-strings(minimum:6.6.4.4.2)

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

9790051968701 **(Vocal Score)**

World Premiere: 22 Oct 1987

Wortham Theater Center, Houston, TX, USA

Peter Sellars, director / Mark Morris, choreographer; Houston Grand Opera

Conductor: John DeMain

FULL ORCHESTRA

Absolute Jest

2011

22 min

for string quartet and orchestra

2.picc.2.corA.2.bcl.2.dbn-4.2.2.0-timp.perc(2):cowbell/xyl/BD/chimes/glsp/vib-harp-pft.c el-strings

"Absolute Jest may well be the finest concerto for string quartet and orchestra ever written."

— Lawrence A. Johnson, *Chicago Classical Review*

"Absolute Jest is a work of terrific imagination and out-of-the-gate energy..."

— Richard Scheinin, *San Jose Mercury News*

"Adams' single-movement opus for string quartet and orchestra [Absolute Jest] is an audacious and affectionate riff on Beethoven's scherzos. Dense, roiling and furiously inventive, it emerges as a gripping 25-minute sonic joy ride."

— Georgia Rowe, *Musical America*

"The wedding between string quartet and orchestra was masterly...a significant addition to the increasingly impressive Adams canon."

— David Littlejohn, *Wall Street Journal*

World Premiere: 15 Mar 2012

Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA, USA

San Francisco Symphony / St Lawrence String Quartet

Conductor: Michael Tilson Thomas

City Noir

2009

34 min

for orchestra

picc.3(III=picc).3.corA.3(III=bcl).bcl.Asax2.dbn-6.4.3.1-timp.perc(5):vib/lg sus.cym/SD/bongos; tuned gongs/sus.cym/glsp/mar/tam-t/BD/chimes/vib/low tom-toms/tgl/castanets/cowbell/clave/temple bl; chimes/glsp/tamb/med tam-t/2 timbales/sus.cym/crotales/xyl; BD/tuned gongs/med tam-t/2 sus.cym/mar/crotales/castanet/tgl/glsp; 2 tam-t/BD/sus.cym/tgl/temple block/SD/2 tom-t/timbale/bongo/conga/tuned gongs.trap set--pft--cel--2harps--strings

"Making a telling artistic statement, Mr. Dudamel began his tenure conducting the premiere of the new Adams piece, City Noir, a bustling, complex work... He has become a master at piling up materials in thick yet lucid layers. Moment to moment the music is riveting." NYTimes

"The first movement, titled The City and Its Double, is a swirling panoply of scurrying strings and winds, ominous brass chords, syncopated jazz drumming, along with, typically in Adams, syncopated everything. Melodies appear as inexplicably as a dirty blond in Philip Marlowe's office. The second movement is softer and, on the surface, sweeter than the first, and jazzy ...

The third movement, Boulevard Night, begins with a CinemaScope sunrise, which is followed by a dazzling trumpet solo. Stravinsky pops up here as well in a knockout finale." LATimes

"...a gritty, sultry, and wonderfully inventive 35-minute symphony..." Boston Globe

World Premiere: 08 Oct 2009

Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Los Angeles Philharmonic

Conductor: Gustavo Dudamel

Doctor Atomic Symphony

2007

25 min

for orchestra

2.picc.3(III=corA).3(II=Ebcl, III=bcl).3(III=dbn)

-4.4(IV=picc.tpt).3.1-harp-cel-timp-perc(4):crotales/chimes/SD/thunder sheet/glsp/BD/2 tam-t/2 susp.cym/tuned gongs-strings

World Premiere: 21 Aug 2007

Royal Albert Hall, London, United Kingdom

BBC Symphony Orchestra

Conductor: John Adams

El Dorado

1991

31 min

for orchestra

3(II,III=picc).2.corA.3(II=Ebcl,III=bcl.2.dbn-4.3.

(I,II=flgn).3.1-timp(=claves,sandpaper,tamb).perc(4):I=marimba/claves/cowbell/xyl/SD;

II=cabasa/hi&lo tom-t/pedal BD/xyl/claves/bongos/3tpl.bl/bowed vib; III=hi-hat

cym/SD/pedal BD/4timbales/metal pipe(2 small

pieces)/TD/5tom-t;IV=claves/guero/maracas/tamb/sandpaper/hi wdbl/BD-2kybd

samplers-harp-strings

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

9790051096381 **(Full score)**

World Premiere: 11 Nov 1991

San Francisco, CA, United States

San Francisco Symphony

Conductor: John Adams

Guide to Strange Places

2001

27 min

for orchestra

2(II=picc).picc.2.corA.2.bcl.dbcl.2.dbn-4.3.3.1-timp.perc(4):I=marimba/glsp/BD/SD/cow

bell; II=marimba/chimes/almglocken/tgl/crot; III=glsp/BD/lo roto-tom/hi

tgl/crot/chimes/claves/almglocken; IV=chimes/BD/4 roto-toms/susp.cym/3

susp.tgl/wdbl/almglocken-harp-pft-cel-strings

World Premiere: 06 Oct 2001

Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Radio Filharmonisch Orkest

Conductor: John Adams

Lollapalooza

1995

6 min

for orchestra

picc.2(III=picc).2.corA.2.Ebcl.bcl.3.dbn-4.3.2.btrbn.1-timp.perc(4):I=xyl/3lg
roto-toms/susp.cym/sm tam-t;II=SD/pedal
BD/maracas/tamb/claves;III=claves/wdbl/bongo/SD/low floor tom-t;IV=vibes, lg
BD-pft-strings

9790051096367 (Full score)

World Premiere: 10 Nov 1995

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, United Kingdom
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
Conductor: Simon Rattle

My Father Knew Charles Ives

2003

25 min

for orchestra

picc.3(III=picc).2.corA.3(III=Ebcl).bcl.2.dbn-4.4.3.1-timp(=2bowl gongs)
-perc(4):crot/glsp/cowbell/xyl/2bowl
gongs/mar;xyl/crot/SD/susp.cym/2tom-t/vib/almglocken/3high tgl/mar;chimes/crash
cym/susp.cym/3high tgl;3tgl/2BD/tuned gongs/tam-t/almglocken/low
susp.cym/vib/crot-pft-cel-harp-strings

World Premiere: 30 Apr 2003

Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, California, United States
San Francisco Symphony
Conductor: Michael Tilson Thomas

Naive and Sentimental Music

1999

48 min

for orchestra

4(III,IV=picc).3(III=corA).3(II=bcl2).bcl.3(III=dbn)
-4.4.3.2-timp.perc(5):I=vib/almglocken/xyl/2tgl/susp.cym/2sm chinese gongs/sm
hipitched bell/glsp; II=marimba/shaker/xyl/crot/almglocken/vib/susp.cym;III=xyl/glsp/lg
BD/sm hi pitched bell/bowed vib/susp.cym; IV=chimes/hi anvil/tam-t/"ranch"
tgl/5japanese temple bowls; V=5logongs/chimes/lg sleighbells/3"ranch" tgl/hi
tgl/tam-t/susp.cym/susp.sizzle cym-2harps-pft-cel-kbd sampler-steel stringed gtr-strings

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

9790051261680 (Full score)

World Premiere: 19 Feb 1999

Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles, California, USA
Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra
Conductor: Esa-Pekka Salonen

FULL ORCHESTRA 6

Short Ride in a Fast Machine

1986

4 min

Fanfare for orchestra

2.2picc.2.corA.4(III,IVadlib).3.dbn-4.4.3.1-timp.perc(3):2wdbl/tgl/
xyl/crot/glsp/susp.cym/sizzle cym/SD/pedal BD/large BD/large tam-t/
tamb-2synth(opt)-strings

for recommendations about synthesizer requirements go to:

mhgrey.wordpress.com

No specific software is required or supplied with hire materials

World Premiere: 13 Jun 1986

Mansfield, MA, USA
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Conductor: Michael Tilson Thomas

Slonimsky's Earbox

1996

14 min

for orchestra

2.picc.2.corA.3(III=Ebcl).bcl.3-4.4.3.1-timp.perc(3)-crot/marimba/
glsp/xyl/2susp.cym/wdbl/claves/SD/hi-hat/tpl.bl/cast/shaker/tamb/
tam-t/tgl/vib-harp-pft-sampler-strings

Sampler is Kurzweil K2000 or Akai. Alternative would be celesta or
small electronic jazz organ.

For complete sampler requirements go to:

mhgrey.wordpress.com

9790051096497 (Full score)

World Premiere: 12 Sep 1996

Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, United Kingdom
Halle Orchestra
Conductor: Kent Nagano

FULL ORCHESTRA 6

Tromba Lontana

1986

4 min

Fanfare for orchestra

2.2picc.2.2.0-4.2(solos).0.0-perc(3):glsp/crot/susp.cym/vib-pft-harp-strings

9790051211500 **Study Score - Hawkes Pocket Score 1150**

World Premiere: 04 Apr 1986

Jones Hall, Houston, TX, USA

Houston Symphony

Conductor: Sergiu Commissiona

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Berceuse elegiaque

Ferruccio Busoni, arranged by John Adams

1989 9 min

arrangement for chamber orchestra of Busoni's Berceuse No.7 of Elegies (1907) for solo piano

2.1.1.bcl.2-2.0.0.0-timp(=gong)-pft(=cel)-harp-strings(min:6.6.4.4.2)

World Premiere: 08 Jun 1989

St Paul, Minnesota, United States

St Paul chamber Orchestra

Conductor: John Adams

The Black Gondola

Franz Liszt, arranged by John Adams

1989 9 min

for orchestra or chamber orchestra, arrangement of Liszt's La Lugubre gondola II (1882)

2.2(II=corA).2(II=bcl).2-3.0.0.0-timp-harp-strings (min:6.6.4.4.2)

Chamber Symphony

1992 23 min

for chamber orchestra

1(=picc).1.2(II=Ebcl, II=bcl).2(II=dbn) - 1.1.1.0 - perc:trap set(cowbell/hi-hat cym/SD/pedal BD/wdbl/2bongos/3tom-t/roto toms/tamb/timbale/claves/conga)- keyboard sampler (Yamaha SY-77/SY-99 or Kurzweil K2000/2500)-strings(1.0.1.1.1)

9790051212231 **Study Score - Hawkes Pocket Score 1223**

World Premiere: 17 Jan 1993

Dr Anton Philipszaal, The Hague, Netherlands

Schoenberg Ensemble

Conductor: John Adams

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA 8

Christian Zeal and Activity

1973 10 min

for chamber ensemble

1.0.1.1-0.0.0.0-pre-recorded tape*-harp-strings

*tape may also be prepared by performing organisation

World Premiere: 23 Mar 1973

San Francisco Conservatory, San Francisco, CA, USA

San Francisco Conservatory New Music Ensemble

Conductor: John Adams

Fearful Symmetries

1988 27 min

for orchestra or chamber orchestra

2(I,II=picc).2(II=corA).2.bcl.1-4sax(S,2A,Bar)-2.3.3.0-timp-2kybd samplers(Kurzweil K2000)-pft-strings(minimum:6.6.4.4.2)

For complete technical specifications go to:

mhgrey.wordpress.com

"John Adams's Fearful Symmetries is such a perfect score for dance that it virtually choreographs itself. With its pulsating rhythms and minimalist drive, it sounds like an orchestrated traffic jam..." -- The Times (London)

9790051096350 **(Full score)**

World Premiere: 29 Oct 1988

Avery Fisher Hall, New York, New York, United States

Orchestra of St Luke's

Conductor: John Adams

Wiegenlied

Franz Liszt, arranged by John Adams

1989 4 min

for orchestra or chamber orchestra, arrangement of Liszt's Wiegenlied (1881)

2.1.2.0-0.0.0.0-harp-strings

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA 8

SOLO INSTRUMENT(S) AND ORCHESTRA

Century Rolls

1997 31 min

for piano and orchestra

2.picc.2.corA.2.bcl.2-3.3.2.0-timp.perc(2):vib/xyl/wdbl/marimba/
high bongo/glsp-harp-cel-strings

9790051246335 **Piano**
9790051096480 **(Full score)**

World Premiere: 25 Sep 1997
Severance Hall, Cleveland, USA
Emanuel Ax, piano; Cleveland Orchestra
Conductor: Christoph von Dohnanyi

The Dharma at Big Sur

2003 27 min

for electric violin and orchestra

0.0.2bcl.0-4.3.2.btrbn.1-timp.perc(4):vib/glsp/mar/chimes; almglocken/xyl; 4bowl
gongs/glsp/chimes/almglocken/tgl; tuned gongs/2pots/crotales-pft-2hrp-2kbrd
samplers-solo amplified violin-strings

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

World Premiere: 24 Oct 2003
Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, California, United States
Tracy Silverman, violin; Los Angeles Philharmonic
Conductor: Esa-Pekka Salonen

Eros Piano

1989 15 min

for piano and orchestra or chamber orchestra

2(I,II=picc).2.2(II=bcl).2-2.0.0.0-perc(1):vib/crot/maracas-synth(opt)
-strings(minimum:6.6.4.4.2)

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

World Premiere: 24 Nov 1989
London, Queen Elizabeth Hall, United Kingdom
Paul Crossley, piano; London Sinfonietta
Conductor: John Adams

Gnarly Buttons

1996 26 min

for clarinet and small orchestra

corA.bn-trbn-gtr(=banjo/mandolin)-2kbd(I=pft)-strings (min 1.1.1.1.1.1, max 6.6.4.4.2)

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

9790051582211 **Clarinet, Piano**
9790051096404 **(Full score)**

World Premiere: 19 Oct 1996
Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, United Kingdom
Michael Collins, clarinet; London Sinfonietta
Conductor: John Adams

La Mufa

Tango

Astor Piazzolla, arranged by John Adams

1995 5 min

for violin and orchestra

2.1.1.bcl.2-2.0.0.0-pft-strings

World Premiere: 16 Jan 1997
Philharmonie, Cologne, Germany
Gidon Kremer, violin; Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen

Todo Buenos Aires

Astor Piazzolla, arranged by John Adams

1996 5 min

for violin and orchestra

1.1.1.bcl.2-2.0.0.0-timp-pft-strings

World Premiere: 19 Feb 1997
Heidelberg, Germany
Gidon Kremer, violin; Philharmonische Orchester Heidelberg
Conductor: Thomas Kalb

Violin Concerto

1993

33 min

for violin and orchestra or chamber orchestra

2(I,II=picc).2(II=corA).2(II=bcl).2-2.1.0.0-perc(2):

I=marimba/t.bell/2bongo/2conga/BD/susp.cym/tamb;

II=bongo/guero/timp/bowed vib/t.bells/clave/hi cowbell/BD-

2synth(Yamaha SY99 & Kurzweil K2000, or 2 Kurzweil K2000)-

strings(min:6.6.5.5.2) NB: min strength advised in 1st movement

for complete synthesizer/sampler requirements go to:

mhgrey.wordpress.com

9790051351619 **Violin, Piano**

9790051096398 **(Full score)**

World Premiere: 19 Jan 1994

Ordway Music Theater, Saint Paul, MN, USA

Jorja Fleezanis, violin; Minnesota Orchestra

Conductor: Edo de Waart

VOICE(S) AND ORCHESTRA

The Death of Klinghoffer

Aria of the Falling Body 1990

7 min 30 sec

for baritone and orchestra

picc.1.2.2.2-2.0.2.0-2 or 3kbd samplers-strings(8.8.6.6.4)

For complete technical specifications go to:

mhgrey.wordpress.com

The Death of Klinghoffer

Bird Aria 1990

4 min 30 sec

for baritone and orchestra

Text: Alice Goodman (E)

picc.1.2.(II=corA).2(II=bcl).1.dbn-2.0.2.0-2 or 3kbd samplers-strings(8.8.6.6.4)

For complete technical specifications go to:

mhgrey.wordpress.com

Doctor Atomic

Batter my heart, three person'd God 2005

7 min

for baritone and orchestra

Text: John Donne (E)

2.picc.3.3(III=bcl).3-4.3.3.1-timp-harp-perc(2)chimes/tuned gongs-strings

"Oppenheimer begins to sing, pouring out his soul in stark, anguished, cantorial phrases. The words – 'Batter my heart, three-person'd God' – are John Donne's, the music is the creation of America's greatest living composer, and the scene compresses all the terror and fascination of the opera's subject into eight minutes of wrenching, sinewy musical genius... a major addition to the operatic repertory of this new century."
San Francisco Chronicle

Doctor Atomic

Easter Eve 1945 2004

12 min

for mezzo-soprano and orchestra

Text: Muriel Rukeyser (E)

3(II, III=picc).3(III=corA).3(III=bcl).2.dbn-4.3.3.0-harp-cel-perc(4):I=thunder
sheet/glsp/tgl/tuned gong;II=chimes;III=lg tam-t/hi susp.cym/xyl/crot;IV=lg.chinese
cym/susp.cym/tam-t(with superball)/tuned gongs-strings

World Premiere: 21 May 2004

Avery Fisher Hall, New York, New York, United States

Audra McDonald, soprano; New York Philharmonic

Conductor: John Adams

The Gospel According to the Other Mary

2011

2 hr

Oratorio for orchestra, chorus and soloists.

3(III=picc)2.corA.2.bcl.2.dbn-4.2.2.0-perc:SD/pedal dr/BD(low)/timbale/tom-t(low)/tuned
gongs/chimes/almglocken/glsp/3tam-t(large, medium, small)-cimb-pft-harp-bgtr-strings

World Premiere: 31 May 2012

Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Kelley O'Connor, mezzo-soprano / Tamara Mumford, contralto / Russell Thomas,
tenor/Daniel Bubeck, counter tenor / Brian Cummings, counter tenor / Nathan Medley,
counter tenor; Los Angeles Philharmonic / Los Angeles Master Chorale

Conductor: Gustavo Dudamel

Le Livre de Baudelaire

Claude Debussy, arranged by John Adams

1994

22 min

Four songs from Debussy's Cinq poemes de Baudelaire, arranged for
soprano and orchestra

Text: Charles Baudelaire (F)

3(III=picc).2.2.bcl.2-4.0.0.0-perc(1 or 2):timp/xyl/bell tree/
low susp.cym/tgl/tam-t-harp-cel-strings

World Premiere: 10 Mar 1994

Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, United States

Roberta Alexander, soprano; Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

Conductor: John Adams

Nixon in China

Arias from the opera
1987

24 min

for soprano, baritone and orchestra

Text: Alice Goodman

2(I,II=picc).2(II=corA).3(I=EbcI;II,III=bcl).4sax(S,2A,Bar).0-0.3.3.0-perc(1):BD/pedalBD/wdbl/susp.cym/SD/sandpaper blocks/tamb/hi-hat/TD/sizzle cym/glsp/slapping sound/tgl/sleigh bells-2pft-synth or sampler (Kurzweil K2000 or Yamaha HX-1 Electone)-strings(minimum:6.6.4.4.2)

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

The Nixon Tapes

version 1
1998

56 min

Scenes from Nixon in China for chorus, voices and orchestra

2 high baritone.1 lyric sop.1coloratura sop.1bass, SATB chorus

2.2.3.4sax.0-0.3.3.0-perc(1)-2pft-synth or sampler (Kurzweil K2000)-strings(minimum:6.6.4.4.2)

Selections:

Act 1 scene 1 - Overture, Chorus "Soldiers of Heaven", Landing of Air Force One."News has a kind of mystery".

Complete Act 1 Scene 3

Act 2 - "This is Prophetic" and "I am the wife of Mao Tse Tung"

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

World Premiere: 17 Jul 1998

Aspen, Colorado, United States
James Maddalena, John Duykers/Trudy Ellen Craney Elissa Johnston, Pat/William Sharp, Cho-en Lai; Aspen Chamber Orchestra
Conductor: John Adams

The Nixon Tapes

version 2
1998

49 min

Scenes from Nixon in China for chorus, voices and orchestra

2 high baritone.1 lyric sop.1coloratura sop.1bass, SATB chorus

2.2.3.4sax.0-0.3.3.0-perc(1)-2elec pft-strings (pref.8.8.6.6.4)

Selections:

Act 1 scene 1 - Overture, Chorus "Soldiers of Heaven", Landing of Air Force One", News has a kind of mystery"

Act 1 scene 3 complete

Act 2 - "This is Prophetic".

The Nixon Tapes

version 3
1998

51 min

Scenes from Nixon in China for solo voices and orchestra

2 high baritone.1 lyric sop.1coloratura sop.1bass (no chorus)

2.2.3.4sax.0-0.3.3.0-perc(1)-2pft-synth or sampler (Kurzweil K2000 or Yamaha HX-1 Electone)-strings(minimum:6.6.4.4.2, pref:8.8.6.6.4)

Selections:

Landing of the Spirit of '76, "News has a kind of mystery", "This is prophetic"

Act 3 complete.

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

The Wound-Dresser

1988-89

19 min

for baritone and chamber orchestra

Text: Walt Whitman (E)

2(I=picc).2.1.bcl.2-2.1(=picc tpt).0-0-timp-kbd sampler(Kurzweil K2000)
strings(minimum:6.6.4.4.2)

9790051211623 **Study Score - Hawkes Pocket Score 1162**

World Premiere: 24 Feb 1989

St Paul, Minnesota, United States
Sanford Sylvan, baritone; St Paul Chamber Orchestra
Conductor: John Adams

CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA

The Death of Klinghoffer

Choruses

1990

45 min

for chorus and orchestra

Text: Alice Goodman (E)

2(I,II=picc).2(II=corA).2(II=bcl).2(II=dbn)-2.2.2.0-perc(1):tmp-2kbd
samplers-strings(8.8.6.6.4)

For complete technical specifications go to:

mhgrey.wordpress.com

On the Transmigration of Souls

2002

27 min 30 sec

for orchestra, chorus, children's chorus and pre-recorded soundtrack

SATB Chorus; children's chorus;

3(III=picc).picc.3.2.bcl.dbcl.2.dbn-4.4.3.2-timp.perc(4);I=glsp; II=crot/hi tgl; III=chimes/2
hi tgl; IV=2 hi tgl/susp.cym/brake dr-2harp-pft-cel-kybd sampler(optional)*
-strings-pre-recorded tape-computer-controlled sound system

*acoustic piano tuned 1/4 tone lower. Transposed part (1/2 step higher) available with performance materials. A sampler may be used as an alternative.

9790051096732 (Vocal Score)

World Premiere: 19 Sep 2002

Avery Fisher Hall , New York, NY, USA

Brooklyn Youth Chorus and New York Choral Artists; New York Philharmonic

Conductor: Lorin Maazel

ENSEMBLE AND CHAMBER WITHOUT VOICE(S)

Fellow Traveler

2007 5 min

for string quartet
string quartet

John's Book of Alleged Dances

1994 35 min

for string quartet and pre-recorded CD
string quartet and pre-recorded performance CD

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

9790051106240 **String Quartet, CD**

9790051212859 **Study Score - Hawkes Pocket Score 1285**

World Premiere: 19 Nov 1994

California Center for the Arts, Escondido, United States
Kronos Quartet

Lollapalooza

John Adams, arranged by James Spinazzola

1995/2006 6 min

arrangement for wind ensemble

2(II=picc).picc.2.corA.3.Ebcl.bcl.cbcl.ssax.asax.tsax.bsax.3(III=dbn)
-4.3.2.btrbn.euphonium.1-timp.perc(4):SD/BD/sus.cym/sm.tam-t/lg.tam-t/3 lg roto
toms/pedal BD/maracas/tamb/claves/bongo/xyl/vib/mar-pft-db

9790051662098 **Band (full score only)**

9790051662104 **Band (score & parts)**

Scratchband

1996, rev.1997 12 min

for amplified ensemble

1(=picc).1.2(II=bcl).0-1.1.1.0-pft.sampler*-elec.gtr-5string bass
gtr-perc(1):pedalBD/4tom-t/2bongos/SD/tamb/hi-hat/cym/ride
cym/wdbl/cowbell/3tpl.bl/cast/claves/maracas/roto tom or timp(opt)* Kurzweil K2000 or
AKAI S1000

For complete technical specifications go to: mhgrey.wordpress.com

World Premiere: 13 Apr 1996

Penn State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, United States
Ensemble Modern
Conductor: John Adams

Short Ride in a Fast Machine

John Adams, arranged by Lawrence T Odom

1986, arr. 1991 4 min

arranged for concert band

2fl.2picc.2.corA.Ebcl.2solo Acl/3Bbcl/bcl.alcl.3bsn.sax(SATB)-
4hn.4crts.2tpt.4trb.baritones.4tba-celli-basses-perc(3):wdbl/SD/
glsp/crot/susp.cyms/BD/pedal BD/timp/sizzle cym/tamb/tgl/xyl/tam-t-
2synth(Casio 200 series or Yamaha 2X series with Harpsichord stop)-
cel

NB: harp part in full score to be omitted. Multiple celli optional.

9790051656820 **Symphonic Band (full score)**

9790051656813 **Symphonic Band (score & parts)**

World premiere of version: 26 Jun 1991

RNCM, Manchester, United Kingdom
Royal Northern College of Music Wind Orchestra
Conductor: Clark Rundell/Timothy Reynish

Son of Chamber Symphony

2007

23 min

for chamber ensemble

1(=picc).1.1.bcl.1-1.1.1.0-perc(2):chimes/kybd sampler(or high thunder sheet)/3
bongos/conga dr/clave/susp.cym/cowbell;kybd sampler/glsp/temple
bl/cast/3bongos/conga dr/clave/wdbl/hi-hat cym/susp.cym/cowbell/3 low tom-t/pedal
BD-pft(=cel or kybd sampler)-strings(1.1.1.1.1)

"This 25-minute opus bursts with technical prowess and cogent wit."
San Francisco Chronicle

"Son is as difficult as his original chamber symphony, if not more so. The first movement sets out to the accompaniment of a rhythmic motif lifted from the Scherzo of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, then nervously yet confidently scurries all over the place, changing meters all the time. Absorbing its interesting details will require many listenings. The last movement is one of those Adams bucking-bronco blastoffs, riveting and full of surprises."

Los Angeles Times

9790051097005 **Orchestra (full score)**

World Premiere: 30 Nov 2007

Dinkelspiel Auditorium, Stanford, CA, USA

Alarm Will Sound

Conductor: Alan Pierson

String Quartet

2008

28 min

for string quartet

World Premiere: 29 Jan 2009

Juilliard School, New York, NY, USA

St Lawrence String Quartet

PIANO(S)

American Berserk

2001

6 min

for solo piano

9790051246267 **Piano**

World Premiere: 25 Feb 2002

Carnegie Hall, New York, New York, United States

Garrick Ohlsson, piano;

Hallelujah Junction

1998

17 min

for two pianos

9790051277643 **2 Pianos, 4 Hands**

World Premiere: 03 Apr 1998

Getty Center, Los Angeles, California, USA

Gloria Cheng, piano / Grant Gershon, piano

INSTRUMENTAL

Postmark (from Fearful Symmetries)

John Adams, arranged by Marilyn Shrude

2009

2 min 30 sec

arranged for soprano saxophone and piano
soprano saxophone and piano

Road Movies

1995

16 min

for violin and piano

9790051351770 **Violin, Piano**

World Premiere: 23 Oct 1995

Kennedy Center, Washington, DC, USA

Robin Lorentz, violin/ Vicky Ray, piano;

VOCAL

Nixon in China

This is Prophetic! (Pat's Aria)

1987

for soprano and piano

Text: Alice Goodman

MISCELLANEOUS

Hoodoo Zephyr

1993

50 min

for tape

Work for midi keyboard for Nonesuch CD (no performance materials available)

Light Over Water

1983

44 min

two channel tape
