

Virgil Thomson

Complete Chamber Works

Monadnock Music
Gil Rose, Artistic Director

EVERBEST

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Music of Virgil Thomson



Virgil Thomson: Complete Chamber Works

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Disc 1

- 1 A Short Fanfare** (1981) 0:08
Terry Everson, Eric Berlin
and Richard Watson, trumpets
Robert Schulz and Nicholas Tolle, percussion

Five Ladies (1930-83)

- 2** I. Cynthia Kemper: A Fanfare 1:02
(1930, rev.1983)
- 3** II. Anne Miracle (1930) 1:11
- 4** III. Alice Toklas (1930) 2:49
- 5** IV. Yvonne de Casa Fuerte 1:41
(1930, rev.1940)
- 6** V. Mary Reynolds (1930) 1:21
Irina Muresanu, violin
Rob Auler, piano

- 7 Stabat Mater** (1931, rev. 1981) 5:20
Teresa Wakim, soprano
Charles Dimmick and Gabriela Diaz, violins
Noriko Futagami, viola
Rafael Popper-Keizer, cello

Family Portrait (1974)

- 8** I. A Fanfare: Robin Smith 0:40
- 9** II. At Fourteen: Annie Barnard 2:03
- 10** III. Digging: A Portrait of
Howard Rea 3:11
- 11** IV. A Scherzo: Priscilla Rea 2:15
- 12** V. Man of Iron: Willy Eisenhart 1:48
Terry Everson and Eric Berlin, trumpets
Whitacre Hill, French horn
Hans Bohn, trombone
Takatsugu Hagiwara, tuba

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1930)

- 13** I. Allegro 3:36
- 14** II. Andante Nobile 3:13
- 15** III. Tempo di Valzer 1:19
- 16** IV. Andante—Doppio movimento 4:56
Irina Muresanu, violin
Rob Auler, piano

Sonata da Chiesa (1926)

- 17** I. Chorale 7:19
- 18** II. Tango 3:48
- 19** III. Fugue 5:20
Gary Gorczyca, clarinet
Whitacre Hill, French horn
Terry Everson, trumpet
Hans Bohn, trombone
Noriko Futagami, viola

20 Lili Hastings (1983) 1:12
Irina Muresanu, violin
Rob Auler, piano

21 At the Beach: Concert waltz for trumpet and piano (arr. from Le Bains-bar) (1949) 4:39
Terry Everson, trumpet
Linda Osborn, piano

22 Le Bains-bar: Waltz for violin and piano (1929) 3:53
Irina Muresanu, violin
Rob Auler, piano

String Quartet No. 1
(1931, rev.1957)

23 I. Allegro moderato 4:04
24 II. Adagio 4:13
25 III. Tempo di valzer 3:15
26 IV. Lento—Presto 6:43
Gabriela Diaz and Charles Dimmick, violins
Wenting Kang, viola
Rafael Popper-Keizer, cello

Total 1:20:59

Disc 2

1 Stockton Fanfare (1985) 0:40
Terry Everson, Eric Berlin
and Richard Watson, trumpets
Robert Schulz and Nicholas Tolle, percussion

Sonata for Flute Alone (1943)

2 I. Adagio—Allegro 3:01
3 II. Adagio 3:44
4 III. Vivace 2:23
Sarah Brady, flute

Jay Rozen: Portrait and Fugue
(1983-85)

5 Portrait 1:34
6 Fugue 1:27
Kenneth Amis, tuba
Linda Osborn, piano

Portraits for Violin Alone (1928-40)

7 Georges Hugnet, Poet and Man of Letters (1928) 1:11
8 Señorita Juanita de Medina Accompanied by her Mother (1928) 1:56
9 Ruth Smallens (1940) 3:17
10 Miss Gertrude Stein as a Young Girl (1928) 1:25
11 Cliquet-Pleyel in F (1928) 1:44
12 Madame Marthe-Marthine (1928) 1:49
13 Mrs. C[hester] W[hitin] L[asell] (1928) 1:28
14 Sauguet, from Life (1928) 1:01
Charles Dimmick, violin

A Portrait of Two (Joell Amar & Dr. Benjamin Zifkin) (1984)

- 15 I. Tempo comodo 1:59
16 II. Andante 1:38
17 III. Alert 2:36

Jennifer Slowik, oboe
Adrian Morejon, bassoon
Linda Osborn, piano

Four Songs to Poems of Thomas Campion (1951)

- 18 I. Follow Your Saint 2:00
19 II. There is a Garden in Her Face 1:51
20 III. Rose-Cheek'd Laura, Come 2:29
21 IV. Follow Thy Fair Sun 2:06

Krista River, mezzo-soprano
Amy Advocat, clarinet
Noriko Futagami, viola
Amanda Romano, harp

Five Portraits for Four Clarinets (1929)

- 22 I. Portrait of Ladies: 2:14
A Conversation
23 II. Portrait of a Young Man in 2:05
Good Health: Maurice Grosser
with a Cold
24 III. Christian Bérard: Prisoner 1:54
25 IV. Christian Bérard as a Soldier 0:45
26 V. Christian Bérard in Person 0:59

Jan Halloran, Michael Norsworthy,
Rane Moore and Gary Gorczyca, clarinets

27 **Etude for Cello and Piano:** 2:11
A Portrait of Frederic James (1966)

Rafael Popper-Keizer, cello
Linda Osborn, piano

Serenade for Flute and Violin (1931)

- 28 I. March: Allegro militaire 1:16
29 II. Aria: Lento ma non troppo 1:26
30 III. Fanfare: Vivo 0:19
31 IV. Flourish: Presto possibile 0:26
32 V. Hymn: Lento 1:21

Sarah Brady, flute
Charles Dimmick, violin

33 **Barcarolle for Woodwinds** 1:51
(Georges Hugnet) (1940, arr. 1944)

Sarah Brady, flute
Jennifer Slowik, oboe
Laura Pardee Schaefer, English horn
Jan Halloran, clarinet
Gary Gorczyca, bass clarinet
Adrian Morejon, bassoon

String Quartet No. 2 (1931, rev. 1957)

- 34 I. Allegro moderato 6:03
35 II. Tempo di valzer 3:48
36 III. Adagio sostenuto 4:41
37 IV. Allegretto 6:53

Gabriela Diaz and Charles Dimmick, violins
Wenting Kang, viola
Rafael Popper-Keizer, cello

Total 1:19:33



**Virgil Thomson, Walter Piston, Herbert Elwell and
Aaron Copland at Nadia Boulanger's Paris home, 1925**

Notes

Virgil Thomson (1896-1989) was a musician who gloried not only in his art, but in the challenges and contradictions of existing as a musician in society. His substantial body of musical compositions and his writings on music—along with his unique, unforgettable personality—established his place in the annals of 20th-century music. The contemporary music world is small, as Thomson would be the first to point out. (The motif of the new music community as “our island home” pervades his influential 1939 analysis of the workings of the contemporary professional music scene, *The State of Music*.) Thomson moved about this island with a vociferous, opinionated, all-encompassing voice, leaving indelible memories in the minds of everyone who knew him. Whether they enjoyed his personal confidence, his legendary hospitality at New York City’s Chelsea Hotel, his approval, or the tip of his famously barbed reviewer’s tongue, every musician who made his or her way to the thick of the scene has a Thomson anecdote.

Growing up in Missouri, Thomson’s entrée to music, to Harvard, and to the early stages of self-sufficiency as a working musician was through playing the piano and organ and directing church music. He first traveled to France in 1921 on tour with the Harvard Glee Club. Already primed to modern French music, and particularly admiring that of Erik Satie, it did not take much for him to fall under Paris’s spell. Thomson remained there for a year on a fellowship from Harvard, and in 1925, after finishing his degree, returned to Paris to join the bohemian circles of that epicenter of modern artistic thought, bent on pursuing composition wholeheartedly. “Organ playing, teaching, and conducting I had practiced successfully; but I did not want to go on doing any of them...I set for all time my precedent, incorrigibly to be followed in later life, of walking out on success every time it occurred” he remarked with typically blithe immodesty in his 1966 autobiography. His first stop on the way to mature craftsmanship was the influential composition teacher, Nadia Boulanger, already well on her way to doyenne status at age 34 and beloved by a number of young

Americans including Aaron Copland.

Thomson continued to build his portfolio as a writer and critic, however, writing for a while for *Vanity Fair* and *The Boston Transcript* and sending regular dispatches back to friends and colleagues. When in 1940 the outbreak of World War II pushed him back over the Atlantic to New York City for good, he landed the job that would make him famous and infamous, and which he held until 1954, as music critic for *The New York Herald Tribune*. Critics of the critic pointed out that Thomson's jack-of-all-trades career led to blatant conflicts of interest—for instance, when he critiqued the same orchestras that played his music. This might have bothered a more sensitive man, or one less bent on sharing his opinions and ideas via the two mediums at which he excelled: music and words. He believed deeply in both; departing from the norm of the day, he focused his critiques of contemporary music mainly on the composition rather than the performance, believing that this process of review and valuation was essential to music's ongoing development. He even published a critical article, "The State

of Music Criticism", in which he wrote: "Composition, contemporary composition, is where reviewing comes to life. Complaining about interpreters [performers] or rooting for them, however legitimate, is just fidgeting. Criticism joins the history of its art only when it joins battle with the music of its time."

As a young man in Paris, Thomson's eyes were opened to all that a passionate circle of colleagues had to offer: intellectual and aesthetic debate, cross-disciplinary collaboration and inspiration, intrigue. He became fast friends with self-described "bad boy of music" and fellow American, George Antheil, got to know the leading French composer clique, *Les Six*, began his lifelong professional and personal relationship with the painter Maurice Grosser, avoided Ezra Pound (whom he found domineering), and navigated a respectful rivalry between James Joyce and Gertrude Stein. The latter became one of his greatest friends and his collaborator in two of his most ambitious and best-known works, the operas *Four Saints in Three Acts* and *The Mother of Us All*. Stein's poetry, with its unique focus on word sounds over meaning, cemented a lifelong

fascination with text-setting that began in Thomson's hymn-infused youth. Much later, in 1989, his final book would be a treatise on setting English poetry and prose, *Music with Words*.

Although Thomson engaged in many distinguished, original projects on large canvasses—his operas, the score to the Depression documentary *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning score to the oil-drilling-promotion film *Louisiana Story*—it is in his chamber music that one can see his personality play out via the intimate sparks that animated his beloved musicians' island. This chamber music compilation offers the special charm of several collections of his musical "portraits." Thomson composed more than 150 such portraits over the course of his career, of friends, colleagues, and benefactors, the vast majority done "from life." (Stein's influence shows itself again here; she too employed a method of still-life literary portraiture.) Thomson and his subject would sit in silence, the composer absorbing the subject's presence and sketching on staff

paper. Later, he would touch up the piece at the piano. His portraits were deeply subjective and abstract, aiming not to reflect the subject's looks or accomplishments or even presentation, but rather his own personal interpretation of their essential qualities through music.

Thomson's **Portraits for Violin Alone** mostly consists of early examples of this practice. Gertrude Stein is there "as a young girl" [2|10], in a sort of photo-album image that reconstructs the free-spirited origins of what would become a towering artistic personality. Mrs. Chester Whitin Lasell [2|13], whose portrait is eloquent but with a stiff backbone of double-stops, was a matriarch of a New England factory town near Worcester, Massachusetts, and a patron of the young composer. Georges Hugnet [2|7], as his descriptor suggests, was a French poet and one of Thomson's early Parisian bohemian friends; Henri Sauguet [2|14] was a fellow composer. Other Parisian associates included the married musician couple Henri Cliquet-Pleyel [2|11] and Marthe-Marthine [2|12]. Thomson's written description of them is no less colorful: "Cliquet was a

pianist of unusual facility, a sight reader of renown, and a composer of willful banality. His music was a tender parody, his life a slavery to pot-boiling jobs.... His wife was plumpish, blond, the classical soubrette, alert and sex-minded, also a singer of remarkable musicianship." Of more proper but no less animated character are Señorita Juanita de Medina and her mother [2|8]—the violin-playing Spanish girl's walk caught Thomson's attention in the garden of a small French hotel. Ruth Smallens [2|9] was another violinist and composer, wife of the Russian-born American conductor Alexander Smallens.

Thomson extended his portraiture activities into mediums beyond solo sketches. A commission from Boston Symphony Orchestra clarinetist Gaston Hamelin expanded into **Five Portraits for Four Clarinets** (clarinet quartet consisting of two standard clarinets, one alto, and one bass). "Portrait of Ladies: A Conversation" [2|22] gently skewers four New Yorker friends of Thomson's acquaintance who tended to talk over each other when they got excited. It's tempting to hear the ironically titled "Portrait

of a Young Man in Good Health: Maurice Grosser with a Cold" [2|23] as a slightly melancholy vignette of the expat artist life. The three remaining brief movements depict Thomson's friend, the fashionable painter and designer Christian Bérard, known as Bébé, who himself painted a (visual) portrait of Thomson. Thomson composed the first [2|24] reciprocally and in real time, as he sat for said portrait. "As a soldier" [2|25] sardonically refers to Bérard's month in the military reserves, where one can surmise he didn't quite fit in, while "in person" [2|26] is a more sanguine continuation.

The **Five Ladies** grouped together in a suite for violin and piano were a mix of American, Parisian, and adopted Parisian friends and acquaintances. Their proximity offers the pleasure of hearing a cheerful cosmopolitan blend of nationalist threads. Thomson's all-American strain—open spacing; clean, angular motives; snippets of what sound like folk tunes and spirituals—runs through Cynthia Kemper [1|2], Alice Toklas [1|4] (whose representation has thorny passages along with humor and grace; Thomson had been slow to gain her affection), and

Mary Reynolds [1|6]. Anne Miracle [1|3] has the coquettish opening of a classic Frenchwoman, though subsequent swoops and ruminations round her out. And Yvonne de Casa Fuerte [1|5] has a delightful habanera flavor running through the accompaniment. Thomson summed up the ladies in his note accompanying the 1983 score thus:

Cynthia Kemper: A FANFARE. From Kansas City, Missouri, a mother, a hostess and something of a *grande dame*. Anne Miracle. French, beautiful and sweet. Alice Toklas. Writer, secretary, hostess and for forty years devoted companion to Gertrude Stein. Yvonne [Giraud Alvarez de Toledo, Marquesa] De Casa Fuerte. Violinist, Marseillaise by birth, Spanish by marriage, Franco-American by long musical experience. Mary Reynolds. From Minneapolis, friend of artists, and a bookbinder, inveterately Parisian—to avoid wartime arrest she walked across the Pyrenees.

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Church music, its study, performance, and direction, had been instrumental in setting Thomson, as a youth in Missouri and later at Harvard, on his professional path. This influence surfaced in one of his debut works, submitted to Nadia Boulanger as a capstone piece in his studies and programmed by her on a special concert of the Société musicale indépendante (founded by Fauré in 1909) devoted to young American composers. The **Sonata da Chiesa** is a strange and compelling mash-up of disparate elements: traditional and modern forms, medieval musical language and jarring dissonance, an unusual instrumental grouping. The Chorale [1|17] begins with the viola alone, as if initiating a responsory; the responding parallel movement from the brass gives the chorale harmonies an archaic sound. When the instruments converge, the piercing tone of the E-flat clarinet drifts above in clarion fashion. The Tango [1|18] brings us back to the smoky cafés of Paris, the instruments miraculously arranging themselves into a colorful dance band, with the husky and soulful melodies of viola, horn, and muted trumpet surrounded by pointillist

accompaniment. Every good student must demonstrate adeptness at fugal writing, and Thomson's Fugue [1|19] excels with a theme contrasting leaps, syncopations, smooth lines, and a Baroquely trilled cadence. Thomson gave his own review of the concert in a private letter: "The most impressive work (by number of players engaged, novelty of form, and strangeness of noises produced) was the *Sonate d'eglise* by V. Thomson."

A distinctly New England topic—the nuances of Episcopal doctrine and its technical breaks with Unitarianism, and the musical applications thereof—was familiar to Thomson from his time as organist and choirmaster at Boston's historic King's Chapel. His **Stabat Mater** [1|7], a work composed in 1931, was performed three years later. It uses a very different language than the Sonata da Chiesa: emotive, romantic, in keeping with the tradition of humanizing the Passion story by conveying Mary's grief. Thomson set not the Latin text of the Stabat Mater, but poetry by Max Jacob depicting an exchange at the cross between a desolate Mary, her son, an angel, and St. John (all of whom are

sung by the soprano). Jacob was another Parisian associate, a colorful and tortured figure who had renounced his Jewish heritage and converted to Catholicism after having a vision of Christ. An important man in contemporary literary currents, he was nevertheless persona non grata at Gertrude Stein's salons due to his louche ways. Thomson admired Jacob greatly and called him "mean and generous, envious and kind, malicious and great-hearted. Most important of all, he could speak straightforwardly."

A number of other chamber works date from Thomson's European days. He wrote the charming waltz **Le Bains-bar** [1|22] for violin and piano in 1929. An observer and studier of vernacular elements, he analyzed the rhythmic elements of popular dance in one of his first published articles, "Jazz," appearing in 1924 in *The American Mercury*. ("The Viennese waltz is practically extinct in America," he lamented.) *Le Bains-bar* is Strauss Jr. updated with edge and wit. Thomson arranged the piece for trumpet and piano in 1949 and gave it the title **At the Beach** [1|21].

Thomson was always a stylistic maverick; he attempted neither to echo the past nor conform to any of the 20th-century aesthetic philosophies bent on shattering traditional conceptions of music theory. His 1930 **Sonata for Violin and Piano** is in four movements, fast-slow-dance-fast, and revels in contrapuntal interplay between the voices. There, however, the formal similarities to Classical and Romantic sonata form end. There are no recapitulations or rondos; each short movement is through-composed and shaped by changes in character, texture and dynamics. Harmonies can be thorny, but there are moments that bloom, unexpectedly, with the neat cadences of the hymnbook. The opening Allegro [1|13] begins with an intensely lyrical violin line over a steady, rhythmic accompaniment. A climax near the middle of the movement leads to the return of the opening lyricism, this time shaded with pianistic ripples. The texture and shape of the Andante nobile, [1|14] though calmer, mirrors the first movement. Everything is spaced more widely, the piano often reduced to a single marching line, the violin building its melodies deliberately. The

third movement [1|15] is a short, bouncing waltz, and it does make the traditional shift to a coy trio section midway through. The violin starts the last movement [1|16] alone, with a somber Andante introduction into which the piano creeps gently. The transition to Doppio movimento (double time) is made very subtly, but then unfolds with Brahmsian passion, full of swirling figures in the piano and soaring leaps in the violin.

In contrast to the Sonata's display of romantic spirit, the **Serenade for Flute and Violin**, composed the following year, is a lighthearted suite à la Mozart or Beethoven. Brevity and wit define the five spirited miniatures: a gentle March [2|28] with playful rhythms; an eloquent Aria [2|29] that dissolves in fluttering trills; a wry and self-important Fanfare [2|30]; the Flourish [2|31], with its offhand showmanship, and the wistful harmonies and stoic motives of the Hymn [2|32].

The **Sonata for Flute Alone** inevitably brings to mind another titan of solo instrumental literature: J.S. Bach. Like Bach, Thomson demands a lot of the lone performer

undertaking a multi-movement form: full responsibility for pacing, melodic and harmonic shape, colors and characters. Especially Bachian is the energetic *moto perpetuo*, seemingly everywhere at once, which springs to life in the first movement [2|2] after a brief introductory soliloquy. Of Baroque origin too are the various turns and embellishments that grace the meditative Adagio [2|3], although they eventually gain momentum and overtake the melody in the middle of the movement. Unlike the Violin Sonata, the movements of the Flute Sonata reflect classical structures: the opening of the Adagio reappears to complete an ABA form. The cheerful Vivace [2|4] whirls through scales, sequences, and transpositions, returning several times to pipe up with the opening motive in a loose rondo fashion.

The **Barcarolle for Woodwinds** [2|33] is a highly individual and rather strange vignette, although its slow rocking motion shows a distant affinity for the Venetian gondoliers conjured up by the title. It is another portrait of French artist and poet Georges Hugnet (previously depicted in solo violin form). Hugnet was a leading exponent of the Dada

movement, still in its heyday when Thomson arrived in Paris. (He found its relentlessly anti-establishment ideals “congenial to my natural rebelliousness.”) The Barcarolle is built like a set of puzzle pieces, featuring two main motives in near-constant repetition and modulation: the oboe’s opening singsong melody, and a rising arpeggio figure first heard in the clarinet. Near the end, the English horn chants the first melody in half-time beneath blithe reiterations above.

The only other example in this collection of Thomson’s individualist text-setting are the **Four Songs to the Poems of Thomas Campion**, delicately but effectively scored for mezzo-soprano, clarinet, viola, and harp. Like Thomson himself, Campion (1567–1620) was a polymath: physician, poet, composer, author of musical treatises. Thomson’s settings match the unique charm of these Elizabethan love poems: the stylized archaic language paired with lush imagery and ardent sentiments, sensuous and spiritual yearning entwined. The accompaniment to “Follow Your Saint” [2|18] and to “Follow Thy Fair Sun” [2|21] features pizzicato viola

in addition to the harp, a nod to Campion's prolific lute repertoire. The clarinet often assumes a flirtatious back-and-forth with the soprano, especially echoing the suggestive "cherry ripe" figure in "There is a Garden in Her Face" [2|19]. The viola takes on the role of duet partner in the idealistic, rapt "Rose-Cheek'd Laura, Come" [2|20].

Thomson continued to compose musical portraits throughout his career. Their popularity is easy to understand on both ends: who doesn't enjoy seeing (or hearing) their reflection, and what other form can offer the same combination of total abstract freedom and pithiness? Thomson composed **A Portrait of Frederic James** [2|27] for cello and piano in 1966, while the painter and fellow Kansas City, Missouri, native was visiting him in New York City. James was known for his watercolor landscapes of the American Midwest, often in muted shades of brown and grey. His musical rendering is dense, beginning and ending with double stops in the cello's murky low register, though the cello also ascends to the raw, plangent upper end of its range.

The **Family Portrait** for brass quintet was the result of a commission from the American Brass Quintet in 1974. Thomson assembled and orchestrated five portraits he had sketched two years previously: four at Aspen, Colorado, and the last in New York. He described the models for these five quirkily illustrated pieces—encompassing characters in the midst of youthful exuberance, shy adolescence, and voluble adulthood—for Anthony Tommasini's book *Virgil Thomson's Musical Portraits*:

Priscilla Rea [1|11] is the daughter of a childhood playmate of mine from Kansas City. Her third husband is the one who is depicted there, named Howard Rea [1|10]. There are also two daughters of Priscilla's first two husbands: Robin Smith [1|8] was a child of her first husband, from Houston; Annie Barnard, [1|9] a child of her second. I thought I needed another one and I had Willy's portrait [Willy Eisenhart, Manhattan-based writer on art] [1|12] there and I thought I might just put him in among them as if he were visiting.

The nostalgic, floating strains of the violin-piano duet **Lili Hastings** [1|20] depict the French-born music lover and costume designer Louise L. Hastings, who entered Thomson's orbit via her conductor/critic husband and later posed for him at the Chelsea Hotel. "She's one of those really nice French women who is so direct and so straight-forward you can't believe it," said Thomson. Lili's first reaction was of surprise, "yet several friends thought they recognized at least two of my qualities—steadfastness and decision, along with an ability to move quickly, on inspiration or need."

Jay Rozen: Portrait and Fugue, which wears its unusual instrumentation of tuba and piano lightly, came about through the efforts of tuba player Jay Rozen, who, backed by Yale University and prefiguring the days of digital crowdsourcing, engineered a joint commission by soliciting 250 tubists worldwide. The **Portrait** [2|5] was such a hit among tubists that Thomson followed up with a miniature fugue [2|6].

Replacing the typical violin and cello of the piano trio with double-reed counterparts,

A Portrait of Two (Joell Amar & Dr. Benjamin Zifkin) comprises three flowing movements: a steady *Tempo comodo* [2|15], a pastoral but equally contrapuntal *Andante* [2|16], and a dense closing movement [2|17] fractured by ripples in the piano and the oboe's soaring melodies. The piece was commissioned by two residents of Brookline, Massachusetts, bassoonist Joell Amar and her neurologist husband, for her ensemble. The first movement is Ms. Amar's representation; the second depicts Dr. Zifkin, and the third is a portrait of the couple together.

In Thomson's hands, the tradition of reinterpreting old forms for contemporary times often takes a droll turn. There's no better opportunity for a quick clever word than a fanfare, a genre that has popped up in royal courts and at the Olympics and has great potential for pomp. Two modern curtain-raisers for a chamber-sized group of trumpets and percussion open these discs: **A Short Fanfare** [1|1]—which, unpublished, survives in a scrawled manuscript and lives up to its title—and **Stockton Fanfare**

[2|1], a tuneful, canonic, lilting miniature commissioned by the Stockton (California) Arts Commission.

The string quartet, on the other hand, is a genre that compels gravity. Living up to the pedigree of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and countless distinguished Romantic and modern works calls for a balance of profundity and spontaneity to capture that elusive feeling of being privy to a brilliant conversation. Both of Thomson's string quartets are early works that he revised decades later, and as such they capture an impetuous, romantic, youthful spirit as well as the exacting standards of maturity. By string quartet standards, the movements are short, emblematic of the succinct clarity and concentration that was so central to Thomson's aesthetic.

The **String Quartet No. 1** clearly acknowledges the composer's roots in American hymnody and vernacular music, and his tacit assertion that this material can distinguish itself as part of a modern language within the formal canon of concert music. The opening Allegro moderato [1|23] is

jump-started by the cello's dramatic flourish, a motive that is repeated several times by the four voices in unison. Amid a bustle of layering and counterpoint, a mid-movement coalescence for a brief fanfare provides a glimmer of reconstructed tunefulness. The Adagio [1|24] weaves together eloquent cantabile lines in all four voices, tying off winding phrases with gentle cadences and clearing occasionally for intimate duets. There's a waltz movement [1|25], evoking the nostalgic elegance of the style Thomson loved, but instead of neat phrases and a trio it is through-composed and continuously evolving. The fourth movement [1|26] begins with a measured, contemplative Lento that builds and metamorphoses with the introduction of contrapuntal lines, eventually blossoming into a spry dance that is a cross between a Mendelssohnian scherzo and a hoe-down. Its simple ingredients—scales and arpeggios, simple chorales—alternate and combine with both cleverness and a straightforward, Midwestern charm.

The **String Quartet No. 2** is overtly Romantic in its bold gestures and lush harmonies. The opening Allegro moderato [2|34] is set in a

rocking compound meter that juxtaposes duple and triple rhythms and is repeatedly drawn to obsessive ostinato figures in the cello and viola. This movement is formally tight, even reminiscent of classical structures. The opening unfolds in two sections: a harmonically ambiguous, turbulent first theme that leans minor and resolves on a very explicit cadence, and a bucolic second theme immediately following. Midway through, a recapitulation is very subtly launched, and variations of the opening theme branch into new permutations of harmony and counterpoint. Another waltz blossoms in the second movement, [2|35] with a firm rhythmic foundation and an unruly strophic pattern made up of phrases that become steadily more ornate and tangle exuberantly before petering out. The Adagio sostenuto [2|36] begins with a unison recitative that veers into dissonance before the violins launch a plaintive lament, echoed by the viola; the final section brings back the opening recitative in a strict imitative pattern. The Allegretto [2|37] begins with a carefree theme that spins itself into an extended melodic line. Even as a profusion

of imitative entrances and the addition of tongue-twisting motives lead to chaotic jubilation, Thomson's love of tuneful lyricism is never far.

—Zoe Kemmerling

Zoe Kemmerling is a Boston-based violist, Baroque violinist, writer, and editor. She is a frequent program annotator for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, among other ensembles, and was manager and editor of the BMOP/sound CD label from 2013 to 2017. She will earn her J.D. from Harvard Law School in May 2020.

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Texts

[1|7] Stabat Mater (1931, rev. 1981)
French text by Max Jacob (1876–1944)
trans. Thomson

Angel

Ne pleurez pas, Madame.
Si votre fils est condamné,
il ressuscitera par miracle
après l'enterrement.

Mary

Comment ne pas pleurer un tel fils?

Angel

Ne pleurez pas si vous pouvez vous empêcher.

Mary

Laissez-moi passer.
Je veux aller près de lui.
Je veux mourir avec mon fils.

Angel

Vous mourrez à votre heure, Madame,
et vous ressusciterez pour l'Assomption.

Jesus

Ne pleurez pas, ma mère, disait le fils unique.
Je sais ce que j'ai à faire.
Gardez mon sang. C'est un trésor.
On ne l'aura que par ma mort.

Mary

Quelle mère s'arrêterait de pleurer
en perdant un fils de trente ans.

O, lady, do not cry.
Although your son must die today,
by a miracle he will arise
from the sepulcher.

How could I not mourn such a son?

Hold back your tears if you can.

Let me go by.
I want to stand beside him.
I want to die with my son.

You shall die in your own time, lady;
and you yourself will arise for Assumption Day.

O Mother, do not cry (said the only son).
I do what I have to do.
Preserve my blood. It is a treasure.
It cannot be had excepting through my death.

What mother could hold back her tears
to behold her son of thirty dying?

Jesus

Croyez en moi, ma mère.

O Mother, believe in me.

Mary

Vous êtes Dieu sur terre.

Obéissez à votre père.

Je resterai sous le poteau à pleurer.

You are God on earth.

Do what your father bids you do.

I shall stay by the cross and mourn.

Jesus

Consolez ma mère, Saint Jean.

Comfort her despair, Saint John.

Saint John

Et qui me consolera, Seigneur?

And who, my Lord, shall comfort me?

Jesus

Je vous consolerais avec les Sacrements.

I shall console you with the Sacraments.

Four Songs to Poems of Thomas Campion (1567–1620)

[2|18] I. Follow Your Saint

Follow your saint, follow with accents sweet;

Haste you, sad notes, fall at her flying feet.

There, wrapp'd in cloud of sorrow, pity move,

And tell the ravisher of my soul I perish for her love:

But if she scorns my never-ceasing pain,

Then burst with sighing in her sight and ne'er return again.

All that I sung still to her praise did tend,

Still she was first; still she my songs did end;

Yet she my love and music both doth fly,

The music that her echo is and beauty's sympathy.

Then let my notes pursue her scornful flight:

It shall suffice that they were breath'd and died for her delight.

[2|19] II. There is a Garden in Her Face

There is a garden in her face
Where roses and white lilies grow;
A heav'nly paradise is that place
Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow.
There cherries grow which none may buy,
Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry.

Those cherries fairly do enclose
Of orient pearl a double row,
Which when her lovely laughter shows,
They look like rose-buds fill'd with snow;
Yet them nor peer nor prince can buy,
Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry.

Her eyes like angels watch them still,
Her brows like bended bows do stand,
Threat'ning with piercing frowns to kill
All that attempt with eye or hand
Those sacred cherries to come nigh,
Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry.

[2|20] III. Rose-Cheek'd Laura, Come

Rose-cheek'd Laura, come,
Sing thou smoothly with thy beauty's
Silent music, either other
Sweetly gracing.

Lovely forms do flow
From concert divinely framed;
Heav'n is music, and thy beauty's
Birth is heavenly.

These dull notes we sing
Discords need for helps to grace them;
Only beauty purely loving
Knows no discord,

But still moves delight,
Like clear springs renew'd by flowing,
Ever perfect, ever in them-
Selves eternal.

[2|21] IV. Follow Thy Fair Sun

Follow thy fair sun, unhappy shadow,
Though thou be black as night
And she made all of light,
Yet follow thy fair sun unhappy shadow.

Follow her whose light thy light depriveth,
Though here thou liv'st disgraced,
And she in heaven is placed,
Yet follow her whose light the world reviveth.

Follow those pure beams whose beauty burneth,
That so have scorched thee,
As thou still black must be,
Till Her kind beams thy black to brightness turneth.

Follow her while yet her glory shineth,
There comes a luckless night,
That will dim all her light,
And this the black unhappy shade divineth.

Follow still since so thy fates ordained,
The Sun must have his shade,
Till both at once do fade,
The Sun still proved, the shadow still disdained.

Monadnock Music

Monadnock Music makes exceptional music accessible to all in intimate and informal settings in the towns and villages of New Hampshire's Monadnock region. Through a commitment to varied and imaginative performances and teaching, Monadnock Music keeps a sense of musical daring and discovery alive.

Monadnock Music was founded in 1966, when James Bolle brought musicians from the big cities to make recordings and play a few concerts in the quiet Nelson Meeting House. A strong commitment to the performance of contemporary music, particularly by young American composers, has been met with ever-increasing enthusiasm. Composers Aaron Copland, Frederic Rzewski, Tobias Picker, Sheree Clement, Joan Tower, John Adams, Roger Sessions, Marilyn Ziffrin, Louise Talma, Elliott Carter, and Charles Wuorinen are among those who have been on hand to hear, play, coach and/or conduct their works.

Monadnock Music also runs Monadnock Music in the Schools, an innovative project of bringing chamber music to young people. A pilot program, funded in part by the Putnam Foundation and the Merrill Foundation, was the first stage in a plan to bring small ensembles of brass, string and woodwind players to as many schools in the region as possible. Monadnock Music continues to develop and expand its artistic and educational programs in keeping with its dedication to the region and the many communities that it serves. Currently under the leadership of Artistic Director Gil Rose, Monadnock Music has remained firmly attached to its original goal of combining music of the highest quality with community service.

Gil Rose

Gil Rose, Artistic Director, is a conductor helping to shape the future of classical music. His dynamic performances and many recordings have garnered international critical praise. In 1996, Mr. Rose founded the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), whose unique programming and high performance standards have earned the orchestra fourteen ASCAP awards for adventurous programming, the John S. Edwards Award, and Musical America's 2016 Ensemble of the Year Award. An active recording artist, he serves as the executive producer of the BMOP/sound label, which has received widespread praise for its contemporary and 20th-century catalog of over 70 releases. He has led the longstanding Monadnock Music Festival in historic Peterborough, NH since 2012.

Over the past decade, Mr. Rose has also built a reputation as one of the country's most inventive and versatile opera conductors. He is the founder of Odyssey Opera, a highly acclaimed new company dedicated to eclectic and overlooked operatic repertoire. Mr. Rose led Opera Boston as its Music Director starting in 2003, and in 2010 was appointed the company's first Artistic Director. With Opera Boston and the contemporary festival Opera Unlimited, he conducted multiple New England, American, and world premieres. He is also a frequent guest conductor, appearing most recently in his 2016 New York City Opera debut at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and in his 2015 Japanese debut substituting for Seiji Ozawa at the Matsumoto Festival. Mr. Rose's accolades include Columbia University's prestigious Ditson Award, an ASCAP Concert Music Award for exemplary commitment to new American music, and a 2020 Grammy Award.



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Gil Rose: portrait by Liz Linder

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