GRACE

The Music of

Michael Tilson Thomas

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PENTATONE

“There are two key times in an artist’s life. The first is inventing yourself. The second, the harder part, is going the distance. How do you sustain the vision, make it grow, and share it? To be an artist means to have the courage for rebirth and growth. It’s never ending.”

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An American Composer by Larry Rothe
10

The Real Maverick by John Adams
14

Composer Notes by Michael Tilson Thomas
20

Settings and Texts
66

Biographical Timeline
82

Credits
104

◄ © Constantin Manos

Disc 1

1	**Agnegram**	7. 06
2	**Not Everyone Thinks That I'm Beautiful**	3. 08
	Street Song	
3	Street Song I	4. 18
4	Street Song II	5. 09
5	Street Song III	8. 54
	From the Diary of Anne Frank	
6	Part 1 - Instrumental Intro	2. 04
7	Part 1 - "I hope I shall be able to confide..."	1. 54
8	Part 1 - "It's an odd idea..."	1. 49
9	Part 1 - "There is a saying..."	4. 54
10	Part 2 - "Dear Kitty. So much has happened..."	4. 44
11	Part 2 - "Daddy began to tell us..."	4. 16
12	Part 2 - "I feel wicked sleeping in a warm bed..."	3. 42
13	Part 2 - Instrumental	6. 01
14	Part 3 - "Dear Kitty!!!..."	2. 34
15	Part 3 - "I believe that it's spring..."	3. 58
16	Part 3 - "Do you gather a bit of what I mean..."	1. 28
17	Part 4 - "I want to go on living..."	4. 30
	Total playing time:	70. 32

Disc 2

1	**Sentimental Again**	6. 34
	Whitman Songs	
2	I. Who Goes There?	4. 15
3	II. At Ship's Helm	6. 06
4	III. We Two Boys Together Clinging	5. 49
	Poems of Emily Dickinson	
5	I. Down Time's Quaint Stream	1. 05
6	II. The Bible	4. 28
7	III. Of God We Ask One Favor	3. 08
8	IV. Fame	1. 42
9	V. The Earth Has Many Keys	2. 45
10	VI. Nature Studies	5. 51
11	VII. Take All Away From Me	3. 45
12	**I'm Nobody! Who Are You?**	2. 43
13	**Urban Legend**	17. 40
14	**Symphony Cowgirl**	4. 54
	Total playing time:	70. 49

Disc 3

1	**Notturno**	14.10
	Island Music	
2	Introduction: Long Familiar Refrains	3.52
3	Part One: Thoughts on the Dance Floor	6.11
4	Part Two: In the Clearing	13.51
5	Part Three: Ride Outs	6.54
6	**Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind**	30.25
	Total playing time:	75.24

Disc 4

	Meditations on Rilke	
1	Herbtsttag	8. 42
2	Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen	3. 16
3	Das Lied des Trinkers	4. 49
4	Immer wieder	7. 21
5	Imaginärer Lebenslauf	5. 46
6	Herbst	9. 11
7	**Snappy Patter**	3. 08
	Upon Further Reflection	
8	Bygone Beguine	6. 18
9	Soliloquy	13. 13
10	You Come Here Often?	4. 38
11	**Lope**	9. 31
12	**Grace**	5. 22
	Total playing time:	81. 17

An American Composer

by Larry Rothe

The Real Maverick

by John Adams

An American Composer

If you were asked to describe Michael Tilson Thomas in a few words, *musical omnivore* would cover a lot of territory. *Omnivore* says something about his appetite for life, and about his personality as an American musician, his eagerness to cross boundaries, because discoveries lie beyond borders.

MTT came of age during a time and in a place that molded his musical personality. Los Angeles in the 1950s and 60s still bore the imprint of the remarkable influx of artists who had fled Europe as the Nazi regime ravaged the continent, giants such as Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Otto Klemperer, Bruno Walter. As a student, serving as accompanist for master classes by cellist Gregor Piatigorsky and violinist Jascha Heifetz, MTT absorbed as much about performance style and interpretive technique as the fledgling musicians tutored by those great artists. The German émigré composer Ingolf Dahl, one of his most influential teachers at the University of Southern California, opened new ways of thinking

With his father Ted Thomas
© Robert Millard

MTT's music lies rooted in those moments he shared at the piano with his father

about form and expression. This led to work with Pierre Boulez, Luciano Berio, John Cage, and Lou Harrison at the famed Monday Evening Concerts, today the world's longest running series devoted to contemporary music. On the East Coast, at Tanglewood

and in New York, MTT met a different cadre of musicians who even then were shaping American music, including Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein. And in his many years on the podiums of the world's orchestras, MTT immersed himself in the music of the Western concert canon, conducting Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Mahler, Stravinsky, and absorbing their compositional and expressive strategies. He explored path breaking American masters such as Charles Ives and Carl Ruggles, whose work expanded what music was capable of saying. Along with his classical training he found much to learn from R&B legend James Brown, he accompanied jazz singer Sarah Vaughan, he shared the stage with members of The Grateful Dead, he loved the Beach Boys.

Since the earliest days of his career, Michael Tilson Thomas exhibited a work ethic that matched the intensity of his musical ventures. Consider his many roles: conductor (with posts in Boston, Buffalo, Los Angeles, London, San Francisco), virtuoso pianist (with recordings of Stravinsky, Gershwin, Mahler), educator (host of the New York Philharmonic Young People's Concerts on CBS-TV; co-founder and director of the New World Symphony, America's Orchestral Academy; creator and host of the *Keeping Score* video series). In every exchange with listeners, he found an ever-surer capacity to offer them ever deeper musical experiences. And as he developed his gift for recreating and communicating the music of others, his desire to create his own music grew more urgent. So in 1988, when his song "Grace" and brass quintet *Street Song* were first heard, and then in 1990 with the premiere of his first large-scale work for orchestra, *From the Diary of Anne Frank*, he emerged as a composer. Those works and the reception that greeted them unleashed the stream of compositions collected here, a body of work fueled by the belief at the core of MTT's every artistic move: the conviction that music can define what it means to be alive.

MTT had been composing long before "Grace." Thank his father for that. Ted Thomas loved to improvise at the family piano, and he invited his young son to join him at the keyboard, spinning tunes inspired by Broadway and Yiddish music and jazz. From Ted, MTT learned that *making music* means not just playing the notes, but inventing them. Yet MTT came to prominence as a performer in the 1960s and 70s world of new music, which had little use for tunes. "I truly believed then that [the avant-garde] musical language was the only valid direction for the future. As my own musical impulses were melodic and expressive, I left my own writing behind." That doesn't mean he stopped composing. Friends were familiar with his songs and piano pieces and wanted to hear more. Their encouragement triggered an assurance and an aspiration: it triggered the compulsion to share his music.

With "Grace," *Street Song*, and *From the Diary of Anne Frank*, MTT obeyed that compulsion and went public. Those early pieces speak with a distinctive voice, and with the confidence of an artist immersed in the ways and means of instrumental ensembles large and small, how they function and sound and what they can accomplish. Over the years, the compositions grow increasingly adventurous, and although their language is unmistakably that of the time in which they were written, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, they always adhere to the melodic ideal that formed their composer's musical sensibility. From the tunefulness of "Grace," which lends its title to this collection, you will go on to hear the more pungent harmonies MTT brings to his Whitman and

Dickinson settings, and to *Urban Legend*. In his *Meditations on Rilke* he returns to a more direct melodic style, bringing all he has mastered as a composer to music that makes no secret of aiming for the heart.

For all its sophisticated construction and expressive polish, MTT's music lies rooted in those moments he shared at the piano with his father. "My music will always be tuneful and will always be written for performers who can handle melody." He connects with an audience through melody—and also through the words his melodies deliver. Often, as in the song "Sentimental Again," the words are his own:

> Never you mind
> If your sunny morning starts going gray
> It's much too early to be singing a sorry tune
> A hazy afternoon
> Can end a wonderful day.

With a gentle touch, lyrics such as those convey a deep-seated part of who he is, his optimism and determination to move forward. If you know his music, you will know something about Michael Tilson Thomas, because it embodies his own balance of *gravitas* and whimsy. Consider *Urban Legend*, for example, a concerto written originally for contrabassoon, of all things. Has anyone ever treated that instrument with such respect, or imagined it as anything but a source of dark color and sonic shadows? Take *Island Music*, a virtuoso piece for marimba, and inspired by Balinese gamelan. Listen to how playful an orchestra can sound in *Agnegram*. And then turn to more serious compositions such as the four sets of songs, one each on texts of Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Carl Sandburg, and Rainer Maria Rilke, all of them poets who, like MTT, push in new directions while inviting their audience to join in their pursuit.

The music collected here has been born of a lifetime embracing so much and such varied sources, for MTT's palate ranges from Monteverdi to Motown. "There are so many things I love in music. I love Schubert songs, I love gamelan music, I love rhythm and blues, I love Bulgarian music, I love cowboy songs." Listen as he puts it all together, *E pluribus unum*: American music by Michael Tilson Thomas, American composer.

Larry Rothe

© Julian Broad ►

The Real Maverick

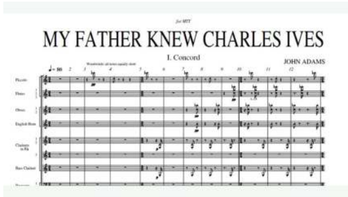
I first heard the name Michael Tilson Thomas when I was a grad student at Harvard in the early seventies. "MTT," as he was soon to be known throughout the music world, was across the Charles River doing vibrant and provocative performances as assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In his mid-twenties, youthful, charismatic, articulate, he provided a vivid contrast to the old-world sobriety of that orchestra's previous music directors. Needless to say, his programs were the only ones that might attract us fire-breathing wannabe avant-garde composers who, with the supreme intolerance only youth can summon, would casually dismiss Mahler and Brahms in favor of Stockhausen and Xenakis. Little did I imagine that Michael's and my life would become entwined in strikingly creative ways over the following five decades.

Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas leads the San Francisco Symphony in Mahler's Symphony No. 5 on September 28, 2012.
© Kristen Loken

He had won the coveted Koussevitzky Prize at Tanglewood and from there went to Boston. It was not the best of times for the BSO. Its aging music director, William Steinberg, often was out sick, and Michael's presence provided a much-needed jolt of electricity. Not surprisingly, he wasted no time in rousing—and razzing—the staid Symphony Hall subscribers. One of his party pieces was Carl Ruggles's *Sun-Treader,* a mighty, in-your-face-dissonant piece of Americana that even today retains its power to shock and awe. I was amused by the thought that a young conductor born in Los Angeles into a family of famous Russian-Jewish theater personalities would make his first impact with the music of a couple of gnarly WASP New Englanders like Ruggles and Charles Ives, whose *Three Places in New England* he soon recorded along with *Sun-Treader* for DGG.

I missed Michael's most talked-about BSO *scandale*, his performance in Boston and later in New York of Steve Reich's *Four Organs*. That piece, probably the most procedurally stubborn of Steve's early works, was in those days a tough listen for the uninitiated, and when Michael brought it to New York, it drove some listeners up the wall, not just for its slowly evolving form, but also for its use of amplification. Hard to believe that at the same time Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton were soaring at maximum decibels, classical music audiences remained almost universally hostile to the incorporation of technology in performance. It is a testament to Michael's foresightedness that even as early as 1971 he would identify the then barely known Steve Reich as one of America's great composers.

Michael Tilson Thomas (left) and John Adams, in a photo taken by Betty Freeman in 1999-2000 during the San Francisco Symphony's first American Mavericks festival, which focused on music by twentieth-century American composers working outside the mainstream.



MY FATHER KNEW CHARLES IVES

I. Concord

JOHN ADAMS

Over the years, John Adams dedicated several compositions to his friend and colleague Michael Tilson Thomas, among them "My Father Knew Charles Ives" from 2003. All scores on this and the following pages are courtesy of Boosey & Hawkes. Copyright by Hendon Music, Inc. a Boosey & Hawkes company.

To this day Michael has never lost his curiosity and almost childlike enthusiasm for new music, and the list of composers that he has championed, to name just a few, includes Meredith Monk, Lou Harrison, Henry Cowell, David Del Tredici, Charles Wuorinen, Steven Mackey, Morton Feldman, Mason Bates, and Samuel Carl Adams—a remarkably "big tent" variety of voices. How many music directors world-famous for their performances of Mahler and Beethoven would be found presenting a video analysis of a John Cage piece online, and then invite the Grateful Dead to join with the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra for Cage's Renga with *Apartment House 1776* in a festival devoted to American music? And with what other conductor would the Grateful Dead agree to do it?

We first met when he conducted *Shaker Loops* with the American Composers Orchestra in 1983. I'd originally written it for seven solo strings but made this version for full string orchestra just for that concert. A lot of new pieces have difficult childhoods. It takes time not only for performers but also for the composers to understand what the essential nature of a piece is. The performance was tentative. Michael was clearly groping to find that "essence," and I honestly wasn't entirely sure myself what I'd wanted. We met for breakfast the following morning and what ensued was a conversation that made me realize how in taking up a new work, whether a classic or something never before performed, Michael is always on a search for the piece's DNA, that critical element that generates the work's uniqueness. That may seem like a no-brainer, but how few conductors actually ask those questions of a piece and not simply try to imitate whatever favorite recording they have of it? In later years we'd have conversations about Mahler or Stravinsky or Brahms, and I'd listen as he'd marvel at some phrase or harmonic modulation, always looking for the special skeleton key that would unlock the secret of a piece, what I came to call "the great reveal."

The *Shaker Loops* performance was the first of many of my pieces that he conducted. One day in 1985 when I was just beginning work on *Nixon in China*, he called and asked

The San Francisco Symphony announced Michael Tilson Thomas's inaugural season as music director with billboards dotting the city.
© Russ Langford

for "a short fanfare" for the opening of a new festival in Massachusetts. I groaned at the thought of having to break off important work to extrude yet another of those obligatory ditties that we composers are so often asked for. But it was Michael, and how could I decline? The result was *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, and I never regretted that I'd complied to write that particular ditty. Later he premiered *My Father Knew Charles Ives*, *Absolute Jest*, and *I Still Dance*, the piece I wrote to celebrate his and his husband Joshua Robison's lifelong partnership. He took to heart my *Harmonielehre*, winning

John Adams takes a bow at San Francisco Symphony's September 19, 2019 world premiere performance of his "I Still Dance" with the musicians and conductor Michael Tilson Thomas. Also on the program were Schumann's Symphony No. 3 and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 4 with Daniil Trifonov.
© Grittani Creative

a Grammy in 2013 for Best Orchestral Performance with the San Francisco Symphony.

His history with the San Francisco Symphony spans an astonishing fifty years. I first saw him conduct them in the mid-seventies, and, as expected, there was Ives on the program. There is no comparison between the orchestra of those days and the world-class ensemble it is today. And, unlike many music directors who, once their weeks are concluded, are out the door on their way to the airport, Michael long ago made San Francisco his home and became a familiar and beloved figure whose face seemed to be everywhere, a source of immense local pride. It's not surprising that with his kind of curiosity, coupled with his capacity for identifying so strongly the emotional content of the music, he would become one of our great Mahler interpreters. Over the years I have been lucky enough to hear his performances with the San Francisco Symphony and witness the gradual evolution of both his and the orchestra's way with those enormous, complex, and at times formally frustrating symphonies. By the end of his long tenure as music director the communication between him and the players

Michael Tilson Thomas (in white shirt) backstage with John Adams and his family: son Samuel Adams and wife Deborah O'Grady.
© Kristen Loken

was at a level of confidence and subtlety that can only be attained when musicians have known and trusted each other for a very long time. One thinks of Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra or von Karajan and Berlin. And he is humble in the presence of a great work. He recently confessed to me, almost in a whisper, "Now and then I will have an inspiration and decide to override Mahler's indications. I always ended up regretting it."

His career has been so full of wildly different experiences that it's impossible to even begin acknowledging them all: his life as a composer of thoughtful, sometimes witty, sometimes quietly reflective pieces; his revelatory *Keeping Score* videos that explore his favorite repertoire; his long and fruitful partnerships with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the London Symphony Orchestra; the staggering number of recordings. The genes passed down from his Thomashefsky theatrical family tree most certainly contributed to his stage savvy. Glam? You want glam? He could do it, as when he celebrated his 70th birthday with a performance of Liszt's Hexameron for six grand pianos and orchestra followed by an apparition of *Beach Blanket Babylon* (a San Francisco tradition) doing the mambo down the aisles of Davies Hall. His *West Side Story* was consummate pizzazz. Only in the opera pit has his presence been unfortunately absent. His has always been too restless and quicksilver a mind to endure the kind of long-haul grind that opera conducting requires. Of the many qualities he shares with Leonard Bernstein, a one-time mentor, the most important is his devotion to young musicians. While Bernstein had an inestimable impact on American culture through his televised *Young People's Concerts*, Michael, perhaps in a less sensational but every bit as important a way, has mentored generation after generation of our finest American orchestra players. One of his life's greatest inspirations was the creation of the New World Symphony. And where would that be located? In Miami Beach of course! It would be typically Michael to envision an orchestra of brilliant twenty-somethings playing Stravinsky and Mozart and Berlioz in a Frank Gehry-designed concert hall while outside a thousand sunscreen-slathered tourists stroll the streets and head for the beach in flip flops and tank tops. But what else would you expect from the original American Maverick?

John Adams

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Composer Notes

by Michael Tilson Thomas

COMPOSED
1998. Revised 2016, 2022

WORLD PREMIERE
May 15, 1998. Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the San Francisco Symphony

THIS RECORDING
2016. Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the San Francisco Symphony

Agnegram

Agnegram was written in 1998 to celebrate the 90th birthday of Agnes Albert and is a portrait of her sophisticated and joyous spirit. For half a century she was the San Francisco Symphony's friend, mentor, patroness, and muse. Agnes and Nancy Bechtle were responsible for me coming to San Francisco. She grew up performing music and mingling with musicians of all ages. She appeared as a soloist with Pierre Monteux in 1952 on his last concerts as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony. She loved young people, and one of her enduring legacies is the SFS Youth Orchestra.

The piece is composed of themes derived from the spelling of Agnes's name: AGNES ALBERT. A—G—E are obviously the notes that they name. B is B-flat (as this note is called in German). S is E-flat, also a German musical term. T is used to represent one note, B-natural, the "ti" of the solfège scale. From these arcane but not unprecedented manipulations (Bach, Schumann, and Brahms, among others, enjoyed this game), a basic scale of eight unusually arranged notes emerges, from which all the themes are drawn. The piece itself is a march for large orchestra.

The first 6/8 march is a mini-concerto for orchestra, giving brief sound-bite opportunities for the different sections and settling into a jazzy and hyper-rangy tune. The middle section of the march, or trio, is in 2/4 and settles into a sly circusy atmosphere. Different groups of instruments in different keys make their appearance in an aural procession. First, the winds in C play a new march tune saying "Agnes Albert." Then, the instruments in F are heard playing the same tune. But as these instruments are transposing instruments, although the notes they play *read* A—G—N—E—S etc., the notes *heard* are different. They are followed by instruments in E-flat and B-flat, building to a cacophony punctuated by elegant and goofball percussion entrances. The section recalls many famous tunes that amused Agnes. There are surreal references to Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Verdi, and Irish lullabies, but they appear only to the degree that the notes they have in common with her name will allow. The jazzy 6/8 tune reappears now in canon, and the piece progresses to a jubilant and noisy ending.

MTT with Agnes Albert, 1995
© Courtesy SFS Archives

COMPOSED
c. 1985

WORLD PREMIERE
1998. Frederica von Stade, vocals; Douglas Fisher, piano

THIS RECORDING
2024. Sasha Cooke, vocals; Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano

Not Everyone Thinks That I'm Beautiful

While living in a loft in New York in the 1980s I wrote some songs with no one particular in mind. I was so pleased when, in a series of recitals beginning in 1998, Frederica von Stade included "Not Everyone Thinks That I'm Beautiful." It delights me that Sasha Cooke has made this song a part of her repertoire and that Jean-Yves Thibaudet could join her for this recording.

With Sasha Cooke
© MTT Collection

With Frederica von Stade working on the premiere in 1998
© MTT Collection

With Jean-Yves Thibeaudet
© MTT Collection

Not Everyone Thinks That I'm Beautiful

Not everyone thinks that I'm beautiful
Only just a special few
Headed up by fools like you
It takes one to know one, ooh,
You lucky fools

Not everything works like I hoped it would
Just when I start wanting to stay
I see it's time that I was on my way,
Tomorrow gone, here today
Dear lucky fools

Well I don't have a fortune to give
All I have are leftover dreams that are far out of fashion
Once I wore my heart on my sleeve
Now I try and not call attention
To things that I treasure
'Cause I found out
not everyone thinks what I think is beautiful

So, when I see you see it too
I think we might just make it me and you
So here's to the tried and true
Dear, lucky fools,
Oh, lucky fools,
Dear, lucky fools ...

Lyrics by Michael Tilson Thomas

COMPOSED
1988

WORLD PREMIERE QUINTET VERSION
1988. Empire Brass

WORLD PREMIERE OF THE SYMPHONIC BRASS VERSION
1996. LSO Brass

THIS RECORDING
2007. Bay Brass

Street Song

Symphonic Brass version

The founding members of the Empire Brass Quintet were some of my oldest musical friends. Our meeting dates back to student days at Tanglewood in the early 1970s when we discovered that we had reverence for good notes, good tunes, and good licks, whether from organum, serialism, or bopshoowop. They commissioned Street Song. I composed it in 1988 and the Empire Brass premiered it that year. They also made the first recording.

Empire Brass
© Tom Zimberoff

On the occasion of a concert with the London Symphony brass, I created a larger version, expanding the group to twelve players and introducing one new instrument: the flugelhorn. I am indebted to Eric Crees for making this larger version possible. Members of the London Symphony Orchestra introduced it in 1996. This is the version heard here, which I recorded with the Bay Brass in 2007.
Street Song is in three continuous parts—an interweaving of three "songs." The first song opens with a jagged downward scale suspending in the air a sweetly dissonant harmony that very slowly resolves. This moment of resolution is followed by responses of various kinds. The harmonies move between the world of the middle ages and the present, between East and West, and always, of course, from the perspective of twentieth-century America. Overall the movement is about starting and stopping, the moments of suspension always leading somewhere else.

Bay Brass at the recording session for Street Song at Skywalker Sound
© Courtesy Bay Brass

The second "song" is introduced by a singsong horn solo. It is followed by a simple trumpet duet which I first wrote around 1972. It is folklike in character and also cadences with suspended moments of slowly resolving dissonance.

The third song is really more of a dance. It begins when the trombone slides a step higher, bringing the work into the key of F-sharp and into a jazzier swing. The harmonies here are the stacked-up moments of suspension from the first two parts of the piece. These "dissonant" sounds actually begin to sound "consonant." There is a resolution, suggesting the world of a musician who, after many after-hour gigs, greets the dawn. Finally, the three songs are brought together and the work moves toward a quiet close.

Street Song is dedicated to my father, Ted, who was and still is the central musical influence on my life.

COMPOSED
1989. The work was commissioned by UNICEF for Audrey Hepburn

WORLD PREMIERE
March 19, 1990. Academy of Music in Philadelphia. Audrey Hepburn, narrator; Michael TIlson Thomas conducting the New World Symphony

THIS RECORDING
November 2018. Isabel Leonard, narrator, Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the San Francisco Symphony

Texts can be found on page 66

From the Diary of Anne Frank

This melodrama in the form of symphonic variations was written for Audrey Hepburn, who had grown up in occupied Holland, was the same age as Anne Frank, and strongly identified with her and with the suffering of all children. The work was commissioned by UNICEF as a vehicle for Audrey in her role as a UNICEF ambassador. I sketched it in the late summer of 1989 and completed it in the last weeks of that December. Audrey Hepburn and I introduced it in Philadelphia on March 19, 1990, with the New World Symphony. Performances followed in Chicago and Houston, culminating in a performance at the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. In May 1991, the revised version was first performed by Audrey Hepburn with the London Symphony Orchestra.

From the Diary of Anne Frank takes its shape primarily from the diary passages that Audrey and I selected and read together.

MTT with Isabel Leonard
© Isabel Leonard

While some of the words concern tragic events, many of them reflect the youthful, optimistic, inquisitive, and compassionate spirit of their author. We wanted these qualities to come through in the piece. I derived the themes from turns of phrases in traditional Jewish music, especially the hymn to life, *Kaddish*.

The work is in four sections. The first opens with a flourish (outlining the words "according to His will" in the Kaddish) and then introduces Anne's first theme. This is developed as a dance which leads to the narrator's first words, Anne's dedication on the first page of her diary. A hopeful lullaby follows, leading to Anne's explanation for writing a diary. Simpler and simpler harmonies lead to a new theme, that of her imaginary friend Kitty, to whom the diary is addressed. A wistful dance brings the section to a close.

MTT and Isabel Leonard at the first SF Symphony Performance
© Kristen Loken

The second section opens with opposing major and minor harmonies that entrap the themes within a twelve-tone game. Playful at first, the games become increasingly menacing, until the whole orchestra is raging. The tumult subsides as the family goes into hiding. The lullaby returns now, first as an elegiac bass trombone solo, then as a tragic procession. The movement ends with a soliloquy for Anne in the quiet night.

The third section takes up Anne's love of nature and her discovery of love. It is a series of up-tempo variations on Anne's and Kitty's themes, finally uniting them.

The fourth section serves as an epilogue to the diary. We hear Anne's vision for her future, and the world's. At the last moment the work turns in a new direction, concluding with a somber but hopeful cast.

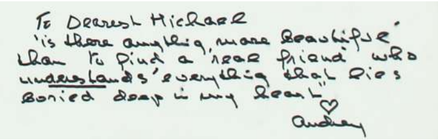
I appreciate that so much of this work is a reflection not only of Anne Frank, but of Audrey Hepburn. Audrey's simplicity, her deeply caring nature, the ingenuous sing-song of her voice are all present in the phrase shapes of the orchestra. The work would never have existed without her, and it is dedicated to her.

▲
With Audrey Hepburn at rehearsals with NWS for the premiere at Lincoln Theater
© Todd Levy

◄ With Audrey Hepburn at the premiere
© New World Symphony

Poster for the New World Symphony premiere ►
© New World Symphony

Close-up of autograph ▼


To Dearest Michael
"is there anything more beautiful
than to find a 'real friend' who
understands everything that lies
buried deep in my heart"
Audrey

THE U.S. COMMITTEE FOR UNICEF PRESENTS
AUDREY HEPBURN · MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS
THE NEW WORLD SYMPHONY
"FROM THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK"
To Dearest Michael
"is there anything more beautiful
than to find a 'real friend' who
understands everything that lies
buried deep in my heart"
Audrey
MARCH 21 AT ORCHESTRA HALL 8:30 P.M.
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THE ORCHESTRA HALL BOX OFFICE OR CALL 312-435-6666

COMPOSED
1985

WORLD PREMIERE AND THIS RECORDING
1999. Audra McDonald, vocals; Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the San Francisco Symphony

Orchestration by MTT/Larry Moore

Sentimental Again

From 1975 until her passing in 1990 I had the joy of performing and recording with the great Sarah Vaughan. "Sentimental Again" was inspired by and is dedicated to Sarah. Audra McDonald made it her own with San Francisco Symphony on December 31, 1999, in this New Year's Eve performance celebrating the start of the new millennium.

With Audra McDonald
© Kristen Loken

With Audra McDonald and the SF Symphony
© Kristen Loken

Sentimental Again

Think that you're clever
'Til all your very best laid plans go awry
And then you realize that nothing's forever
So what ya gonna do?
Invent a new and so disarming endeavor
To keep from wondrin' where the time's all gone
And why you're so tired
Or a-buzzing and wired
Yet still sometimes inspired

Never you mind
If your sunny morning starts going gray
It's much too early to be singing a sorry tune
A hazy afternoon
Can end a wonderful day.

Come by the fire
Let my loving take the sting from your tears
And don't go thinking that your life was a one-way door
Good things are still in store
No matter what you may fear

Shame and sorrow
Every night it seems as if they're here to stay
Comes tomorrow,
All at once it's a brand new day,
And you think that maybe all's not lost

MTT with Sarah Vaughan - Hollywood Bowl 1974
© David Weiss

And perhaps you just might stray back
To the way that you felt so strong in fond days of yore.
You tell yourself the art of living is what you choose
Everyone wins and loses
And they still beg for more.

Hollow laughter
Oh so many melancholy might-have-beens
Morning after
Not a hell of a lot to do
But go pursue that someone
You never know who
Might be true as an old flame
Who makes sure to check in on now and then

There's nothing sweeter than the voice of a veteran friend
Someone to call on when you're getting
Sentimental again

Sentimental...Getting sentimental
I'm getting sentimental again
Sentimental again, getting sentimental again
I'm getting sentimental again
No use to pretend
Every now and then I get so sentimental again

Lyrics by Michael Tilson Thomas

COMPOSED
1993/94

WORLD PREMIERE PIANO/ VOCAL VERSION
Amsterdam, Concertgebouw, May 1998. Thomas Hampson, baritone; Michael Tilson Thomas, piano

WORLD PREMIERE OF THE ORCHESTRAL VERSION
San Francisco, September 1999. Thomas Hampson, baritone; Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the San Francisco Symphony

THIS RECORDING
2023/24. Revised version: Thomas Hampson, baritone; Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the New World Symphony.

Texts can be found on page 70

Whitman Songs

In my early-thirties I began reading Walt Whitman, starting with *Leaves of Grass*. The encounter, particularly with *Song of Myself*, was transforming. Whitman's life work is revolutionary, and it helped me deal with the big question of "Who am I?" One of the answers Whitman gave me was, "I am an American."

As a young man I was involved primarily in the music of the European-based avant-garde. For a long time I measured the degree of respectability of a work by the amount and the intensity of the dissonance it contained. This conflicted with the more consonant music I intuitively wanted to compose. The "strongly American" language of the *Whitman Songs* are a blend of several American styles, including folk song, rock and roll ballads, and lyrical Broadway. This breadth of reference poses a considerable challenge to the singer. The songs need "big singing" by a fearless baritone with an easy top and who, in addition to being good at lieder and opera, needs to feel comfortable with popular music. It requires a big singing actor to create the sense of exhortation, tenderness, and danger that is in the words. Thomas Hampson was a part of this project from the beginning. I wrote the first version of "We Two Boys Together Clinging" for his recording of Walt Whitman settings. Writing these songs for him has been an essential part of the joy and urgency that I hope they convey. I began composing them in 1993 and finished the set the following year. Thomas Hampson and I presented the premiere of the piano/vocal version at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam in 1998. He was soloist in the first performances of the orchestral version, with the San Francisco Symphony, in 1999. I revised the work in 2023 and that year conducted the New World Symphony in this final version, again with Thomas Hampson.

I see the sequence of these songs as a journey from dissonance to consonance. "Who Goes There?" (from *Song of Myself*) is the toughest of the three songs, the one with the most hard-edged harmonies and the most jagged vocal line. "At Ship's Helm" (from *Sea Drift*) comes across as a more lyric interlude in a slower tempo. "We Two Boys Together Clinging" (from *Calamus*) is a march, even though it's in three-four time. Its harmonies are firmly triadic. The opening lines, "We two boys together clinging,/ One the other never leaving," suggests a sentimental genre, but in fact the poem is a crescendo of determination and strength, culminating in the military image of "fulfilling our foray."

With Thomas Hampson at SF Symphony
© Kristen Loken

With Thomas Hampson at the SFCM recording session
© Matthew Washburn/SFCM

With Thomas Hampson
© MTT Collection

COMPOSED
2000

WORLD PREMIERE AND THIS RECORDING
February 27, 2002. Renée Fleming, soprano; Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the San Francisco Symphony

Texts can be found on page 72

Poems of Emily Dickinson

In late 2000 soprano Renée Fleming told me about a project she was developing with the actress Claire Bloom and the director Charles Nelson Reilly, including settings by various composers of letters and poems by Emily Dickinson. In the next few days I composed two songs on Dickinson texts and sent them to Renée. "Fame" and "Of God We Ask One Favor" got their premieres a few weeks later. I then began the process of setting the other poems for their 2002 premiere, which I conducted with the San Francisco Symphony. The soloist was Renée Fleming, who inspired these songs and for whom I wrote them.

I selected shorter poems that have an acerbic or wry cast. I appreciate the range of Dickinson's poetry. Many of her poems have sardonic, ironic, and cutting observations and social criticisms. The poems also express a profound appreciation for being alive. Somehow her isolation gave her an essential distance to see clearly, to perceive reality and the essential nature of things. Such qualities are truly enduring.

In "Nature Studies," the three poems "To make a Prairie," "How Happy is the Little Stone," and "The Spider Holds a Silver Ball" all flow together as a continuous song. At the end, the first poem is recapitulated with strands of music that come from the other two. This movement is also a play on words, with "Nature Studies" inviting a musical interpretation of the word "studies," as in "études." Each is based on a famous technical study relating to some instrument. The first is based on Dohnányi's piano étude for extended arpeggios, the second on numerous Czerny or Hanon piano studies involving substitute finger passages. The third refers to a trombone étude involving extended range by Robert Marsteller, the principal trombonist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic when I was growing up. You can hear this particular étude still played backstage by brass players to this day. In my setting it is played by diverse instruments. I imagined that for the first song the poet was in a boat. In the second, she whispers to herself a wry commentary on a pedantic Sunday School teacher. In the third she's in church, listening to a hymn. In the fourth, she is in her own space. In the fifth, she is outside, watching a sunset. In the sixth, the "étude" piece, she's practicing. In the seventh I picture her by herself, outside, at a distance, being very certain of who she is.

With Renée Fleming and the SF Symphony
© Kristen Loken

Each song relates to a musical genre that has to do with each of those places. The first song, in a boat, is something like a sea chantey. The second—teaching a class—has an odd children's flavor, maybe reminiscent of Stravinsky or Mussorgsky, especially of Mussorgsky's *The Nursery*. The third is very specifically inspired by organ music played by a small New England organ, wheezing and in such poor shape that some of the notes don't sound. From Dickinson's perspective, the fourth would be a futurist setting because it's rather jazzy. Let's call it "Emily Dickinson Reincarnated as a Hat-Check Girl in a 1930s Supper Club." The fifth depicts nature, and so the sound-world is that of a tree being felled in the forest. You could consider that she is offering a larger commentary on what nature is. The sixth involves the sounds of practicing, as when you are practicing studies at an instrument and your mind often goes to the most amazing places while your fingers are involved in note repetition. The seventh is an ardent hymn of her own creation.

◄ With Renée Fleming
© Abdiel Thorne

▲ With Renée Fleming after the premiere of Dickinson Songs
© Kristen Loken

COMPOSED
2020

WORLD PREMIERE AND THIS RECORDING
2020. Measha Brueggergosman-Lee, soprano, Carrie VanSlyke, viola, Jeremy VanSlyke, piano

I'm Nobody! Who Are You?

"I'm Nobody! Who are You?," another setting of Emily Dickinson, was composed in 2019 for voice, piano, and viola, and it was first performed in 2020 by soprano Measha Brueggergosman-Lee with pianist Jeremy VanSlyke and violist Carrie VanSlyke in a remote recording session made during the pandemic for broadcast on MTT25: An American Icon, a television special celebrating my 25 years at the San Francisco Symphony.

Measha Brueggergosman-Lee performing I'm Nobody! Who are You?
© SF Symphony

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—too?
Then there's a pair of us!

Don't tell! They'd advertise—you know!
How dreary—to be—Somebody!
How public—like a Frog—
To tell one's name—the livelong June—
To an admiring Bog!

Text by Emily Dickinson

Measha Brueggergosman-Lee and violist Carry VanSlyke
© SF Symphony

COMPOSED
2001/2002

WORLD PREMIERE
October 2, 2002. Steven Braunstein, contrabassoon; Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the San Francisco Symphony

WORLD PREMIERE SAXOPHONE VERSION AND THIS RECORDING
March 11-12, 2024. Pat Posey, baritone sax; Edwin Outwater conducting members of the San Francisco Symphony and musical community

Urban Legend

In 2001 Steven Braunstein, the legendary contrabassoon player of the San Francisco Symphony, approached the orchestra about commissioning a work to spotlight his instrument. In the process of talking to other composers, I realized how fond I am of bass-clef instruments and instruments that flirt with extremes of register. The opportunity to compose for a virtuoso like Steve Braunstein was a great enticement. He was soloist in the world premiere, in 2002 with the San Francisco Symphony. The remarkable saxophonist Pat Posey believed *Urban Legend* was perfect for the baritone sax. His devotion and performance made me a true believer and I am delighted that he and Edwin Outwater have recorded it for this collection.

Jean Sibelius's *The Swan of Tuonela*, which features solo English horn against an orchestra of strings, served as a point of departure. I decided the work should be a kind of tone poem. My soloist is backed by an ensemble of percussion, piano, electric bass guitar, and strings. This was an opportunity to use the unique voice of a dark-hued instrument not just to establish a moody picture, but also to display how agile it can be. My pieces tend to display a certain degree of fun and irony, in a way intended to delight the performer as well as the listener. I started in a rather ironic vein. But *Urban Legend*, which began as something of a lark, ended up quite serious.

I began to consider what could be the modern equivalent of the *Swan of Tuonela*, which in Finnish legend swims around the island of the dead. I thought of the island of Manhattan and the packs of creatures, other than human, that inhabit it. Legends have sprung up around such creatures, and I imagined how, in the future, these animals might develop into mythic beasts, roaming the cities with their own habits and ranges.

The animals that exist in our cities are wily and stealthy, but also confident, and even aggressive. What is their perspective on humans and our civilizations? Much must be the noise we produce; car horns, sirens, industrial sounds, talking, singing, partying. The noise-scape of our civilization does quiet down for some period during the night, which is when these animals tend to be most active. *Urban Legend* is the nocturne of such a night. I wanted the solo instrument to be the composite voice of the "wild" creatures, both real and imagined—a voice that, when provoked, emits cries of warning and, in its solitude, laments the vanished primeval environment.

There are two "musical levels" in the piece: strings and percussion evoke the noise and bustle of the cityscape at the beginning, then the frenetic dance groove quiets down and by accident we stumble across the baritone sax, which sings its lyric lament. The music

SF Symphony contrabassoon Steven Braunstein rehearsing the 2002 world premiere
© SF Symphony Archives

goes through a fair amount of development and dialogue between the protagonists. A couple of times the sax makes itself scarce, but ultimately it meets the situation where it won't scurry away anymore. It confronts the cityscape and its denizens, and that leads to the central section, in which the conflict is joined between these forces. The solo part becomes much more animated and aggressive, while the string orchestra takes on the anguished lament (the protagonists thereby trading places). Two-thirds of the way through the piece, we witness an enormous confrontation and then an uneasy resolution, and finally there is a coda where, between their two languages, the opposing parties settle on a dance groove which wryly and slyly brings the piece to an end. I suppose humans and creatures manage to coexist in these urban environments because we have crafty survival skills in common.

Harmonically, *Urban Legend* inhabits a region between the tonal and the atonal. The material is in a continuous process of transformation, moving about in terms of musical language, incorporating musical ideas that are influenced by Latin music, street noise, and the harmonic vocabulary of expressionism. The basic musical material can be found in the first sixteen bars.

▲
Edwin Outwater conducting the recording session of Urban Legend at SFCM
© Matthew Washburn / San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Pat Posey in recording session for Urban Legend ►
© Matthew Washburn / SFCM

◄ With Pat Posey and Edwin Outwater rehearsing Urban Legend
© Matthew Washburn / SFCM

COMPOSED
2001

WORLD PREMIERE AND THIS RECORDING
December 3, 2001. Lisa Vroman, vocals; Michael Tilson Thomas, backup vocals, members of the San Francisco Symphony

Symphony Cowgirl

I wrote "Symphony Cowgirl" in 2001 for Nancy Bechtle, for a concert honoring her as she stepped down from her post as president of the San Francisco Symphony after a 13-year tenure, during which the orchestra had come into its own. I will forever be indebted to Nancy for bringing me to San Francisco. All of San Francisco recognized Nancy as a brilliant and devoted civic mainstay who worked tirelessly on behalf of the city she loved. She was also tremendous fun, loved Country and Western music and brought joy to everyone who had the great fortune to be in her orbit.

With Nancy Bechtle at her SF Symphony Farewell concert
© SF Symphony Archives

Symphony Cowgirl
(For Nancy)

Gosh it's hard to be a cowgirl
When you're the Prez'dent of the Symphony
All day you're schmoozin' on the telephone
and
You never have an evenin' free
Ya gotta charm, cajole, flatter and flirt
With everyone you see
Dang, it's hard to be a cowgirl
When you're the Prez'dent of the Symphony

Pacifyin' all those maestros
There's a job that's dusk 'till dawn
They like to stay up all night a-braggin' 'bout
Who's got the biggest baton!

I'd like to go home to my buckaroo and
Frilly pink boudoir
Instead of jabberin' 'bout our latest plan
Expandin' standard repertoire

BRIDGE
Cause it's the music
Beautiful music
That lets my spirit soar free
Yes it's the music
Symphony music
That makes it all worthwhile for me

Them artists sure are temperamental and
You gotta make 'em feel at home
You gotta say "Bonjour!"
Or "Guten tag!" "Konichiwa!" or "Shalom!"

And if the critics trash 'em, then my dear
For sure you must apologize
And stage a shoppin' spree for all
Their girlfriends, boyfriends, moms and wives

BRIDGE
Cause it's the music
Beautiful music
That lets my spirit soar free
Yes it's the music
Symphony music
That makes it all worthwhile for me

When Symph'ny Gala time comes rollin'
'round
Your every hour gets tense and tough
You gotta think up spankin' new fun things
And pray that they'll be enough
You gotta corral all them caterers
And decorate a fancy room
And then a-worry yourself half to death
'Bout who's sittin' next to whom

BRIDGE
'Cause it's music
Beautiful music
By Bach, Mozart and Tchaikovsky
Yes it's the music
Symphony music
That makes it all worthwhile for me

Now raisin' all that money every year's
A scary kinda task
You call on best friends, total strangers and
Ladies in your exercise class

Sometimes your tongue gets numb from
sashayin' 'round
The things you know you gotta say
But they all know that if they don't give big
You're never gonna go away

BRIDGE X 2
'Cause it's music
Beautiful music
That let's my spirit soar free
Yes it's the music
Symphony music
That makes it all worthwhile for me

'Cause it's music
Beautiful music
That let's my spirit soar free
Yes it's music
Symphony music
And we thank you so much, dear Nancy

CODA:
'Cause it's hard to be a cowgirl
When you're Prez'dent of the Symphony!

Lyrics by Michael Tilson Thomas

Nancy Bechtle conducting the SF Symphony
© SF Symphony Archives

Nancy and Joachim Bechtle
© Joachim Bechtle

COMPOSED
2004

WORLD PREMIERE
2005. Lincoln Theater. Paula Robison, flute; Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the New World Symphony;
2005 @Carnegie 'Perspectives Series' Piano/Flute version

THIS RECORDING
2015. Paula Robison, flute; Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the New World Symphony

Notturno

Notturno evokes the lyrical world of Italian music. Its shape recalls concert arias, "études de concert" and salon pieces—creations of a bygone world that I still hold in great esteem. I remember the great care and attention that cellist Gregor Piatigorsky and violinist Jascha Heifetz lavished on such pieces, and some of the seemingly effortless charm of that genre has found its way into this work.

The piece has a subtext. It's about the role music plays in the life of a musician and the role we musicians play (must play?) in life. It's about musicians first discovering the wonder of music and their own unique voice. Then, of course, there's the profession: the concerts, gigs, the routine, and the wear and tear that can lead you to ask, "Why am I carrying on with all this trilling and arpeggiating?" But we play what we must play with excellence and commitment, even if it drives us nearly over the edge. The great part is, if we have the chance to take a little breath, we discover that the wonder never goes away.

Notturno was written for the American flutist Paula Robison, who introduced it with members of the New World Symphony in 2005. I composed it in tribute to Paul Renzi, who was for fifty years principal flutist of the San Francisco Symphony.

With Paula Robison
© Henry Grossman

COMPOSED
2003

WORLD PREMIERE:
2003. Nancy Zeltsman and Jack Van Geem, marimbas; members of the New World Symphony percussion section

THIS RECORDING
2004. Nancy Zeltsman and Jack Van Geem, marimbas; members of the San Francisco Symphony percussion section

Island Music

Island Music began on my first trip to Bali, in 2003. Lying around our house in the village of Sian were wooden instruments belonging to the local gamelan. I couldn't resist the opportunity of improvising on them and soon evolved a bouncy little tune which became the main theme of *Island Music*. Everything in the piece comes from the development of this tune.

The musical language of the piece "drifts" back and forth between the islands of Indonesia and the Caribbean, stopping along the way in the United States.

The piece is in the form of a rondo—ABACADAE, etc. The A theme is the perky little vacation tune, and the BCD etc. music represents distracting or vexing thoughts of day-to-day problems that one tries to get rid of while on vacation. Gradually, these distracting thoughts begin to affect the happy vacation tune, eventually completely changing and stopping it. Then the decision is made to work back to the tune and recover its energy and optimism.

With Jack Van Geem and Nancy Zeltsman rehearsing the world premiere
© MTT Collection

The introduction, "Long Familiar Refrains," presents a meditative improvisation for the soloists on a melancholy reflection of the main tune, which bears a resemblance to the kind of half-heard melodies my father used to hum.

Part I, which is called "Thoughts on the Dance Floor," introduces the main theme and its dialogues within the contrasting materials. The title of this section recalls my house in Bali (which was also a dance pavilion) and also the kind of wandering thoughts that I have always found are part of the dance club experience.

Part II, "In the Clearing," imagines a break in the dancing. The music gradually becomes more moody as it remembers, praises, and laments the spirits of those who are sadly no longer with us on the dance floor. The music becomes more and more lyrical until it dissolves into arabesques.

Part III, "Ride Outs," encourages the soloists to lead the ensemble back to the original happy form of the tune with which it began. There then follows a coda, very much indebted to both Beethoven and James Brown, which brings the piece to a jubilant conclusion.

With Nancy Zeltsman, Jack van Geem, and Island Music percussionists

© SF Symphony Archives

The piece, originally conceived as a small solo, grew into its present shape with the encouragement of Nancy Zeltsman. Her beautiful marimba playing, especially in the low part of the instrument, was an inspiration. Jack Van Geem, then principal percussionist of the San Francisco Symphony, possessed a virtuosic stamina that pushed me on toward creating this piece. It is definitely a tour de force.

COMPOSED
2015/16

WORLD PREMIERE
April 30, 2016. Measha Brueggergosman-Lee, soprano; New World Symphony. Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the New World Symphony

THIS RECORDING
April 2019. Measha Brueggergosman-Lee, soprano. New World Symphony. Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the New World Symphony

Texts can be found on page 74

Four Preludes On Playthings Of The Wind

In my early college years, I began to explore American poets that had been introduced to us in high school. It was exciting, and even shocking, to discover the range, power, and real messages of these writers. Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson were the most life-changing. But William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, e.e. cummings, and Carl Sandburg were not far behind.

In Carl Sandburg's collection *Smoke and Steel*, the images of speed, power, and outcry have a powerful effect. One of the poems, "Four Preludes On Playthings of the Wind," was especially riveting. It seemed like a kind of honky-tonk "Ozymandias"—a mixture of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Vachel Lindsay.

In 1976 I did a rough piano version. The mixture of musical styles was there from the beginning. In 2003, spending the summer in Santa Fe, I brought the sketches into a more continuous form. In 2015-16 I expanded it into a piece for solo soprano, backup singers, bar band, and chamber orchestra. Vocally, the piece is inspired by Sarah Vaughan, Leontyne Price, James Brown, and Igor Stravinsky—all artists I had the pleasure of knowing. I realized that the piece would be perfect for Measha and she became my collaborator in bringing it to life. I am also indebted to Bruce Coughlin for aiding me in realizing the score.

Rehearsing with Measha Brueggergosman-Lee
© Stefan Cohen

Playthings verges back and forth in time and in style. The same materials are taken up by a chamber orchestra and a bar band, both developing the material in their own ways. The chamber orchestra is around twenty-strong, the bar band consists of two saxes, lead guitar, rhythm guitar, bass, trumpet, trombone, synthesizer, and drums.

The piece opens with a bluesy clarinet solo accompanied by the chamber orchestra, which gradually introduces the main motives of the piece. The voice enters, half-speaking Sandburg's introductory line, "The past is a bucket of ashes," punctuated by the sound of a cash register. The bar band comes crashing in, playing the same music that the chamber orchestra played but in the style of late 1950's rockabilly. From there on the music swerves, following the text between various lyrical, pop, and modernist styles. Gradually, the two instrumental ensembles become more enmeshed and mournfully intense. A final post-apocalyptic party scene careens into a breakdown before the lyrical mood of the opening returns.

Measha Brueggergosman-Lee, Kristen Toedtman, and Kara Dugan performing in Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind
© Stefan Cohen

COMPOSED
2019

WORLD PREMIERE AND THIS RECORDING
January 9, 2020. Sasha Cooke, mezzo-soprano; Ryan McKinny, bass-baritone; Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the San Francisco Symphony

Texts can be found on page 76

Meditations On Rilke

In 1917, in a bar just outside of Oatman, Arizona, sat an old piano. Behind it there sat a seemingly older pianist. He'd been there since forever. No one could remember when he wasn't. He played for tips and for drinks and was happy to provide whatever music anyone wanted to hear. Occasionally he channeled the spirits of Schubert, Mahler, and Berg. Everyone had gotten kind of used to his musical meanderings over the years and his music had led them to unexpected places. Oh yes, he talked kinda' funny and it was said he was Jewish. But I guess you suspected that.

This story is based on a story my father told me. In the early 1930s, as a young man, he and a few other WPA-lefty-artist friends drove across the country in an old jalopy. They arrived in Oatman, Arizona—a last chance, nearly abandoned mining town. It's still there. They had run out of money and needed to get cash to buy food, gas and, most of all, to get out of Oatman. In the café/bar there was a sign saying "Dance, Saturday Night—Pianist Wanted." My Dad, who could play any Gershwin, Berlin, swing, rhumba, whatever number, asked for the job. "Just so long as you can play our music,'' said the guy behind the counter. Teddy signed on with total confidence. Imagine how startled he was on Saturday when they asked him to play the "Bear Fat Fling." Of course, he figured out how to play it. Amusingly, it was this same "Bear Fat Fling" that was one of the tunes I later learned when I began performing Charles Ives's music.

For my father, grandfather, and even great grandfather, music was a lifelong journal, a confessional companion, into which new entries were always being added. It is much the same for me, and in composing these Meditations on Rilke, whose poems are so varied in mood and character, my own lifelong "musical journal" was a lens through which to view and express this poetry. My wish is that all people would have this kind of relationship to music—music spontaneously popping into their minds—perhaps in recollection and perhaps in anticipation of places within their spirits.

The *Meditations on Rilke* are based on motives that recur, recombine, and morph differently in each song. The opening piano solo in "*Herbsttag*" ("Autumn Day") musically describes the opening paragraph of these notes. "*Herbsttag*" was the first song to be written, and has existed for solo voice, solo trombone, solo cello, and now this orchestral version. It introduces most of the motives that are heard in the rest of the cycle. (Note that, while translator Robert Bly renders the title "*Herbsttag*" as "October Day" in the texts that follow, the literal English translation is "Autumn Day.")
The fourth song, "Immer wieder" ("Again, Again!"), is like a Schubert "cowboy song."

With Sasha Cooke and Ryan McKinny at the premiere of Meditations on Rilke
© Kristen Loken

My father often pointed out the similarity between songs like "Red River Valley" to many of Schubert's songs. The fifth song, "*Imaginärer Lebenslauf*" ("Imaginary Biography), is a duet and was inspired by the wonderful opportunity of collaborating with Sasha Cooke and Ryan McKinny, who premiered the piece. The sixth song returns to the subject of "*Herbst*") It opens with a flute solo that connects the motives from the earlier songs into one long melody.

The musical language in these songs is quite traditional. There are melodies, harmonies, bass lines, and invertible counterpoint. My greatest concern has always been about what remains with the listener when the music ends. It is my hope that these musical reflections of many years may stick with you.

COMPOSED
2007

WORLD PREMIERE AND THIS RECORDING
2023. Ian Bousfield, trombone

Snappy Patter

Note by **Ian Bousfield**

My life changed forever in June of 1987 when I met Michael at the LSO. I was astonished by his brilliance, his glamor, and his humanity. He almost immediately befriended me and took me under his wing, guiding and supporting me to this day. So, I guess I was a pre-NWS fellow! Regardless of Michael's artistic prowess, he stands out as being, without question, the finest educator I have ever experienced. Snappy Patter was written in 1997 - it's an incredibly involved, twisting and turning "short ride" for trombone.

The title probably relates to many things but for sure one aspect is that I never stopped excitedly talking in LSO rehearsals - I think we shared a bit of a mischievous streak! The atmosphere back then was not just about great music but about fun and the love of life. Michael never assumed the role of "boss" and to this day remains the most respectful Chief Conductor I have ever

MTT with Ian Bousfield in Vienna
© MTT Collection

experienced. If memory serves, Snappy Patter with its modern poppy, jazzy dance style was also written for Joshua to tap dance to - something we actually never did. Maybe it's not too late!

It took me many years to work my way around the technical aspects of Snappy. The constant jumping around the registers presented me with many issues to deal with

Ian Bousfield
© Barbara Hess

and the relentless intensity and complexity have made it a winner with audiences. I definitely had to become a better player in order to perform it - it's almost as if Michael knew what I needed to improve..... I wonder. I realize that with Michael having been almost ever present in my life for 37 years that I don't actually have many photos of us together but what I do have is this most wonderful post card memory that will always be with me and for generations of trombonists to come.

COMPOSED
1973-2021

WORLD PREMIERE
Bygone Beguine, John Wilson, piano, 2018
Sunset Soliloquy, John Wilson, piano, 2018
You Come Here Often, Yuja Wang, piano 2018

THIS RECORDING
June 2021. John Wilson, piano

Upon Further Reflection

"Bygone Beguine"

In the early 1970s, I was falling in love for the first time, experiencing those radiant, achy, free-fall, out-of-control feelings. The emotional streams resolved themselves into music. I could play it for some time before I could imagine how it might be written down.

This piece was originally a simple little song, but one that reflected all of my inescapable influences, including ragas, gamelan, bossa-nova, the piano music of Schumann and Debussy, as well as the musical language of Monteverdi and Berg and Peggy Lee's inimitable rendition of the song *Alley Cat*. All of these flowed together in a way that seemed completely natural—to me, anyway. The ensemble under my fingers consists of a free-floating treble melody, a rhythm section riff, a baritone horn or trombone line, and a bass line. I sometimes played this piece in restaurants, spelling some of my pianist

With John Wilson rehearsing the premiere of Upon Further Reflection
© MTT Collection

friends. I also played it on some first dates, most importantly the one with the man who became my husband.

One memorable Sunday afternoon I drove up to Danbury, Connecticut to play it for Laura Nyro, whose music and spirit have been an enduring part of my life. It was a laid-back sunny day. Laura and her friends were lounging poolside listening to old R&B. The piece is dedicated to her.

"Sunset Soliloquy," Whitsett Avenue, 1963

In the late afternoon the sun poured through the Venetian blinds in bands of shimmering light. It was a time for me to be alone with the piano in my parent's darkened living room. As my father and his father before him, I was seeking, through improvisation, some kind of understanding of who I was. I was already aware of the many "me's" whose spirits seemed to inhabit one or another of my hands. My left hand was the home of a reflective spirit that arched in lyrical phrases like a cello solo. My right hand was ruled by a scampering spirit that zanily darted about in fits and starts like fractured village music full of caprices and clashes. Now and again, there was much gentler music—a duet played by both hands, one tentative finger at a time. Eventually my hands found a way to make all of this music simultaneous and independent, gradually uniting in a shared cry after which they quietly and somewhat nonchalantly faded away. The piece is a record of that process. The beginning, the duet, and the ending are much as they were when the piece first came into focus some fifty years ago. The right-hand music was tougher to resolve. It seemed it had other urges, and meandered its way toward the more thoughtful and lyrical world of its partner.

"You Come Here Often?"

Picture a private club in a downtown loft on a Saturday night. Bits of music can be heard from the street as you approach, and, as you pass the front door and snake your way upstairs, it gets louder and louder until you're enveloped in the joyous and throbbing throng. In this scene, two people with some history unexpectedly run into one another. To

With John Wilson rehearsing the premiere of Upon Further Reflection
© MTT Collection

their great surprise, they have something left to say to one another. During the gaps in the music they try to get in a few casual, defiant, and some tender words before the exultant cacophony overwhelms it all.

This virtuoso piano piece depicting this scene is inspired by and dedicated to a great artist and friend, Yuja Wang.

COMPOSED
2017

WORLD PREMIERE AND THIS RECORDING
February 2, 2018. Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the New World Symphony

Lope

Lope was inspired by a lifetime of living with dogs. They always sense when it's time to go for a walk. They start paying close attention the moment I get up from my desk or my piano. As I walk around gathering layers of clothes, shoes, leashes and poop bags they give out little yips and yelps of mounting excitement. The dogs think, "Why can't the humans just leave the house? But no, they always have to put on something else and go back and find something. And what are all these odd cold objects they're always carrying around, anyway?"

At last we're all outside. From now on the experience is one for the humans and a very different one for the dogs. From the moment we're out the door the dogs are in a world of smells and sounds and textures and eddies, worlds which the people mostly don't get. Our common stride or lope moves us all along. Together fleeting impressions come and go. In people's minds are bits of songs, dances, memories. The dogs hear exciting perky bursts of sounds and then completely lose themselves in the profound pungencies that are at every turn.

Somewhere along the way there is a bench or log to sit on to feel the air, admire the view and ponder as, off leash, the pups quietly cruise the mysteries of the immediate territory. It's time for joyous sprinting and fetching, enjoying the rushing apart and coming back together.

Just when it's really getting to be fun, wouldn't you know it. The humans remember something they have to do, or study, or practice and it's time to head home, still with plenty of mystery to revel in before the last bark.

With his dog Nissei in Buffalo
© Betty Walsh

With Sheyna at Crissy Field in San Francisco
© MTT Collection

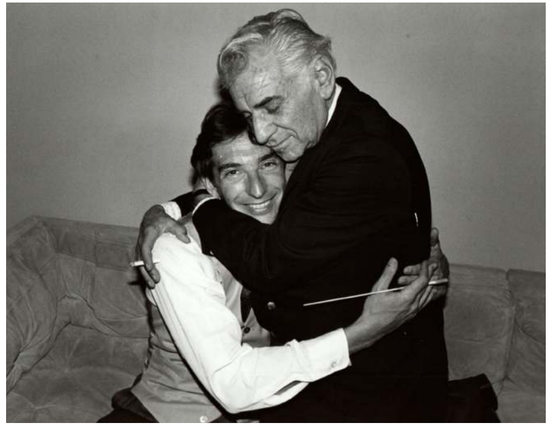
COMPOSED
1988. For the Leonard Bernstein 70th birthday celebration at Tanglewood

WORLD PREMIERE
August 24, 1988. Roberta Alexander, vocals; Michael Tilson Thomas, piano

THIS RECORDING
October 2023. Sasha Cooke, vocals; Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano

Grace

"Grace" was written in 1988 for Leonard Bernstein's 70th birthday celebration at Tanglewood. Soprano Roberta Alexander was the soloist and I accompanied her in the first performance, on August 24. It was part of a marathon concert of music written especially for the occasion. It meant a lot to me that Lenny loved it and asked that we sing it before meals and gatherings during that final period of his life.



With Leonard Bernstein
© MTT Collection

Grace

Thanks to whoever is there
For this tasty plate of herring!
Thanks to whoever may care
For this tasty plate of herring.

Yesterday, swimming swift in a salty sea
And today, silver offerings made to me
So, if you please, won't you pass me whatever's still left
Of this tasty treat we're sharing
'Cause the truth is, it tastes good.
Um um um.

Thanks to whoever is there
For the sacred joy of music
(and thank you fiddlers and flutists and divas and rock and roll drummers)
Thanks to whoever has dared
Give us brave new sounds of music
(thank you composers, professors, and casual off-the-cuff hummers)

So commend
Singers down through the centuries
Cherished friends Wolfgang, Gustav, George, dear Lenny

It seems to me that we all feel so close to the truth
In the notes our souls declaring
And the truth is it feels good.
Um um um.

So many people calling out to one another,
Help us to hear them,
Teach us that all men are brothers,
So many people,
So many stories,
So many questions,
So many blessings

Make us grateful whatever comes next
In this life on earth we're sharing
For the truth is life is good

So many memories...

Ah-ah-ah Amen

Lyrics by Michael Tilson Thomas

Settings and Texts

From the Diary of Anne Frank

Part One

I hope I shall be able to confide in you completely, as I have never been able to do in anyone before....

And I hope you will be a great support and comfort to me.

It's an odd idea for someone like me to keep a diary, not only because I have never done so, but because it seems to me, that neither I—nor for that matter anyone else—will be interested in the unbosomings of a thirteen year-old school girl.

Still, what does that matter? I want to write—but more than that, I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart.

There is a saying that paper is more patient than man—it came back to me on one of my melancholy days. Yes, there is no doubt that paper is patient and I don't intend to show this notebook bearing the proud name of diary to anyone...unless I find a real friend.

And now I come to the root of the matter, the reason for my starting a diary is—that I have no such real friend.

Let me put it more clearly, since no one will believe that a girl of thirteen feels herself quite alone in the world—nor is it so.

...I have darling parents, a sister of sixteen—I know about thirty people whom one might call friends. I have strings of boyfriends anxious to catch a glimpse of me and, who, failing that, peep at me through mirrors in class. I have relations, aunts and uncles who are darlings too—a good home. No—I don't seem to lack anything. But it is the same with all my friends—just fun and games—nothing more.

Hence, this diary. I want this diary itself to be the friend for whom I've waited so long and I shall call my friend, Kitty..."Dear Kitty"

Part Two

Dear Kitty. So much has happened, it's just as if the whole world has turned upside-down.

We are all balancing on the edge of an abyss....

No one knows what may happen to him from one day to another.

Jews must wear a yellow star.... Jews must give up their bicycles.... Jews must be indoors by eight o'clock and can't even sit in their own garden after that hour.... Jews are forbidden to visit cinemas, theaters, swimming pools, sports grounds.... Jews may not visit Christians.... You're scared to do anything...because it may be forbidden.

Daddy began to tell us about going into hiding...hiding. Where would we go? In a town or the country? In a house or a cottage? Where? How? When? These were the questions I was not allowed to ask!

I only know we must disappear of our own accord and not wait until they come to fetch us.

We put on heaps of clothes as if we were going to the North Pole. No one in our situation would have dared to go out with a suitcase. I had on two vests, two pairs of socks, three pairs of knickers, a dress, a jacket, a coat, a wooly scarf, and still more....

We didn't care about impressions.... We only wanted to escape—to escape and arrive safely. To escape—only this... Nothing else mattered.

Dear Kitty...Years seem to have passed since then. I expect you will be interested to hear what it feels like to disappear. I can't tell you how oppressive it is never to be able to go outside. We have to whisper and tread lightly, otherwise someone might hear us. We might be discovered and shot....

We are quiet, quiet as mice.

Who, three months ago, would have guessed that quick-silver Anne would have to sit still for hours...and what is more...could! But I am alive Kitty, I am alive—and that's the main thing!

I feel wicked sleeping in a warm bed while my dearest friends have been knocked down or have fallen into the gutter somewhere out in the cold night.

No one is spared—old people, babies, expectant mothers, the sick—each and all join in the march of death.

It is terrible outside—day and night, more of those poor, miserable people are being dragged off. Families are torn apart. Children, coming home from school, find that their parents have disappeared. Women return from shopping to find their homes shut up and their families gone....

And every night hundreds of planes fly over Holland and go to German towns where the earth is plowed up by their bombs, and every hour hundreds and thousands of people are killed in Russia and Africa. No one is able to keep out of it. The whole globe is waging war and the end is not yet in sight.

I could write forever about all the suffering the war has brought but then I would only make myself more dejected. There is nothing we can do, but wait as calmly as we can until the misery comes to an end. Jews wait—Christians wait—the whole earth waits. And there are many who wait for death.

What, oh what is the use of war? Why can't people live peacefully together, why all this destruction? Why do some people starve, while there are surpluses rotting in other parts of the world? Oh, why are people so crazy!

Until all mankind, without exception, undergoes a great change, wars will be waged, everything that has been built up, cultivated and grown will be destroyed, after which mankind will have to begin all over again.

A voice cries within me—but I don't feel a response anymore. I go and lie on the sofa and sleep, to make time pass more quickly...and the stillness...and the terrible fear....

Part Three

Dear Kitty!!!

I wonder if it's because I haven't been able to poke my nose outdoors for so long that I've become so crazy for everything to do with nature! I can perfectly well remember when the sky, birds, moonlight, flowers, could never have kept me spellbound.... That's changed since I've been here. Nearly every morning I go to the attic where Peter works, to blow the stuffy air from my lungs.

From my favorite spot on the floor, I look up at the blue sky and the bare chestnut tree on whose branches little raindrops glisten like silver...and at the seagulls as they glide on the wind.

As long as this exists...and may live to see it...this sunshine...these cloudless skies, while this lasts, I cannot be unhappy.

The sun is shining, the sky is a deep blue...there is a lovely breeze and I'm longing, so longing for everything.

To talk, for freedom, for friends...to be alone...and I do so long to cry. I feel as if I/m going to burst...and I know it would get better with crying, but I can't. I'm restless, I go from one room to the other, breathe through the crack of a closed window, feel my heart beating, as if it is saying, "Can't you satisfy my longings at last?"

I believe that it's spring within me. I feel it in my whole body and soul.

It is an effort to behave normally...I feel utterly confused...don't know what to read, what to write, what to do. I only know that I'm longing.... We are having a lovely spring after our long winter. Our chestnut tree is already quite greenish and you can even see little blossoms here and there.... Our chestnut tree is in full bloom, fully covered with leaves and more beautiful than last year.

Is there anything more beautiful in the world than to sit before an open window and enjoy nature...to listen to the birds singing, feel the sun on your cheek...to be held...to be kissed for the first time.

The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely, or unhappy, is to go outside somewhere where they can be quiet—alone with the heavens... nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be...and that God wishes to see people happy amidst the simple beauty of nature.

As long as this exists...and it certainly always will...I know there will always be comfort for every sorrow.

And I firmly believe that nature brings solace in all troubles. Mother Nature makes me humble and prepared to face every blow courageously. Nature is just the one thing that really must be pure.

Do you gather a bit of what I mean? Or have I been skipping too much from one subject to another? I can't help it—they haven't given me the name "Little Bundle of Contradictions" for nothing. I've already told you that I have, as it were, a dual personality. The first is the ordinary—not giving in easily, always having the last word. All the unpleasant qualities for which I'm renowned. The second, that's my secret. I'm awfully scared that everyone who knows me as I always am will discover that I have another side—a finer and better side. I'm afraid that they'll laugh at me and think I'm sentimental and not take me seriously. I believe if I stay here much longer I shall grow into a dried-up old beanstalk. And I did so want to grow into a real young woman. I've made up my mind now to lead a different life from other girls... and later different from ordinary housewives. I am young and possess many buried qualities. Every day I feel I'm developing inwardly and that the liberation is drawing nearer. Why then should I despair?

Part Four

I want to go on living even after my death

...and I am grateful to God for giving me this gift of writing—of expressing all that is in me.

I can shake off everything when I write—my sorrows disappear. I can recapture everything.

Perhaps I shall never finish anything...it may all end up in the wastepaper basket...or burned in the fire. But I go on with fresh courage.

I think I shall succeed.

It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals

...because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation of confusion, misery and death. I see the world being turned into a wilderness. I hear the ever-approaching thunder which will destroy us too. I can feel the suffering of millions.

...and yet...if I look up into the heavens, I think it will all come right, that this cruelty will end... And that peace and tranquility will return again.

In the meantime, I must uphold my ideals, for perhaps the time will come when I shall be able to carry them out.

For in spite of everything, I still believe people are really good at heart.

Dear Kitty...

Courtesy: Anne Frank Foundation

Whitman Songs

1. Who Goes There?

Who goes there? Hankering, gross, mystical, nude?
How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?

What is a man anyhow? What am I? What are you?

All I mark as my own you shall offset it with your own,
Else it were time lost listening to me.

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,
That months are vacuums and the ground but wallow
  and filth.

That life is a stuck and a sell and nothing remains at the end
  but threadbare crepe and tears.

Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for invalids,
  conformity goes to the fourth-removed.
I cock my hat as I please inside or out.

Why should I pray? Why should I venerate and
  be ceremonious?

Having pried through the strata, analyzed to a hair,
  cousel'd with doctors and calculated close
I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.

In all people I see myself none more and not one a
  barleycorn less.

And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

I know I am solid and sound.
To me the converging objects of the universe
  perpetually flow,
All, all are written to me and I must get what the
  writing means.

—from *Song of Myself*

2. At Ship's Helm

Aboard at ship's helm
A young steersman steering with care.

Through the fog on a sea beach dolefully ringing,
An ocean bell—Oh a warning bell rock'd by the waves.

Oh you give good counsel indeed, you bell by the sea
  reefs [coast] ringing
Ringing, ringing, to warn the ship of its wreck-place.

For as on the alert, O seaman, you mind the loud
  admonition,
The bows turn, the freighted ship tacking speeds away under
  grey sails,
The beautiful and noble ship with all her precious wealth
  speeds away gaily and safe.
But O the ship, the immortal ship! O ship aboard the ship!
Ship of the body, ship of the soul, voyaging, voyaging,
  voyaging.

—from *Sea Drift*

3. We Two Boys Together Clinging

We two boys together clinging,
One the other never leaving,
Up and down the roads going, North and South
  excursions making.
Power enjoying, elbows stretching, fingers clutching,
Arm'd and fearless, eating, drinking, sleeping, loving,
No law less than ourselves owning, sailing, soldiering,
  thieving, threatening,
Misers, menials, priests alarming, air breathing, water drinking
  on the turf or the sea-beach dancing.
Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statues mocking,
  feebleness chasing,
Fulfilling our foray.

—from *Calamus*

Poems of Emily Dickinson

1. Down Time's Quaint Stream

Down Time's quaint stream
Without an oar
We are enforced to sail
Our Port a secret
Our Perchance a Gale
What Skipper would
Incur the Risk
What Buccaneer would ride
Without a surety from the Wind
Or schedule of the Tide—

2. The Bible

The Bible is an antique Volume —
Written by faded men
At the suggestion of Holy Spectres —
Subjects — Bethlehem —
Eden — the ancient Homestead —
Satan — the Brigadier —
Judas — the Great Defaulter —
David — the Troubadour—
Sin — a distinguished Precipice
Others must resist —
Others must resist,
Others.....must resist.

Boys that "believe" are very lonesome —
Other Boys are "lost" —
Had but the Tale a warbling Teller —
All the Boys would come —
Orpheus' Sermon captivated —
It did not condemn —

3. Of God we ask one favor

Of God we ask one favor,
That we may be forgiven—
For what, he is presumed to know—
The Crime, from us, is hidden—
Immured the whole of Life
Within a magic Prison
We reprimand the Happiness
That too competes with Heaven.

4. Fame

Fame is a fickle food
Upon a shifting plate
Whose table once a
Guest but not
The second time is set.
Whose crumbs the crows inspect
And with ironic caw
Flap past it to the Farmer's Corn—
Men eat of it and die.

5. The Earth Has Many Keys

The Earth has many keys—
Where Melody is not
Is the Unknown Peninsula—
Beauty—is Nature's Fact—

But Witness for Her Land—
And Witness for Her Sea—
The Cricket is Her utmost
Of Elegy, to Me—

6. Nature Studies

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover, and a bee.
And revery.
The revery alone will do,
If bees are few.

The spider holds a Silver Ball
In unperceived Hands—
And dancing softly to Himself
His Yarn of Pearl—unwinds—

He plies from Nought to Nought—
In unsubstantial Trade—
Supplants our Tapestries with His—
In half the period—

An Hour to rear supreme
His Continents of Light—
Then dangle from the Housewife's Broom—
His Boundaries—forgot—

7. Take all away from me

Take all away from me, but leave me Ecstasy,
And I am richer then than all my Fellow Men—
Ill it becometh me to dwell so wealthily
When at my very Door are those possessing more,
In abject poverty—

Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind

The past is a bucket of ashes.

1

The woman named Tomorrow
sits with a hairpin in her teeth
and takes her time
and does her hair the way she wants it
and fastens at last the last braid and coil
and puts the hairpin where it belongs
and turns and drawls: Well, what of it?
My grandmother, Yesterday, is gone.
What of it? Let the dead be dead.

2

The doors were cedar
and the panels strips of gold
and the girls were golden girls
and the panels read and the girls chanted:
We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation:
nothing like us ever was.
The doors are twisted on broken hinges.
Sheets of rain swish through on the wind
where the golden girls ran and the panels read:
We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation,
nothing like us ever was.

3

It has happened before.
Strong men put up a city and got
a nation together,
And paid singers to sing and women
to warble: We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation,
nothing like us ever was.
And while the singers sang
and the strong men listened
and paid the singers well
and felt good about it all,
there were rats and lizards who listened
... and the only listeners left now
... are ... the rats ... and the lizards.
And there are black crows
crying, "Caw, caw,"
bringing mud and sticks
building a nest
over the words carved
on the doors where the panels were cedar
and the strips on the panels were gold
and the golden girls came singing:
We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation:
nothing like us ever was.
The only singers now are crows crying, "Caw, caw,"
And the sheets of rain whine in the wind and doorways.
And the only listeners now are ... the rats ... and the lizards.

4

The feet of the rats
scribble on the door sills;
the hieroglyphs of the rat footprints
chatter the pedigrees of the rats
and babble of the blood
and gabble of the breed
of the grandfathers and the great-grandfathers
of the rats.
And the wind shifts
and the dust on a door sill shifts
and even the writing of the rat footprints
tells us nothing, nothing at all
about the greatest city, the greatest nation
where the strong men listened
and the women warbled: Nothing like us ever was.

—Carl Sandburg, from *Smoke and Steel* (1922)

Meditations on Rilke

Herbsttag

Herr, es ist Zeit. Der Sommer war sehr gross.
Leg deinen Schatten auf die Sonnenuhren,
und auf den Fluren lass die Winde los.

Befiehl den letzten Früchten voll zu sein;
gib ihnen noch zwei südlichere Tage,
dränge sie zur Vollendung hin und jage
die letzte Süsse in den schweren Wein.

Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr.
Wer jetzt allein ist, wird es lange bleiben,
wird wachen, lesen, lange Briefe schreiben
und wird in den Alleen hin und her
unruhig wandern, wenn die Blätter treiben.

Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen

Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen,
die sich über die Dinge ziehn.
Ich werde den letzten vielleicht nicht vollbringen,
aber versuchen will ich ihn.

Ich kreise um Gott, um den uralten Turm,
und ich kreise jahrtausendelang;
und ich weiss noch nicht: bin ich ein Falke, ein Sturm
oder ein grosser Gesang.

October Day

Oh Lord, it's time, it's time. It was a great summer.
Lay your shadow now on the sundials,
and on the open fields let the winds go!

Give the tardy fruits the hint to fill;
give them two more Mediterranean days,
drive them on into their greatness, and press
the final sweetness into the heavy wine.

Whoever has no house by now will not build.
Whoever is alone now will remain alone,
will wait up, read, write long letters,
and walk along sidewalks under large trees,
not going home, as the leaves fall and blow away.

I Live My Life in Growing Orbits

I live my life in growing orbits
which move out over the things of the world.
Perhaps I can never achieve the last,
but that will be my attempt.

I am circling around God, around the ancient tower,
and I have been circling for a thousand years,
and I still don't know if I am a falcon, or a storm,
or a great song.

Das Lied des Trinkers

Es war nicht in mir. Es ging aus und ein.
Da wollt ich es halten. Da hielt es der Wein.
(Ich weiss nicht mehr, was es war.)
Dann hielt er mir jenes und hielt mir dies,
bis ich mich ganz auf ihn verliess.
Ich Narr.
Jetzt bin ich in seinem Spiel, und er streut
mich verächtlich herum und verliert mich noch heut
an dieses Vieh, an den Tod.
Wenn der mich, schmutzige Karte, gewinnt,
so kratzt er mit mir seinen grauen Grind
und wirft mich fort in den Kot.

Immer wieder

Immer wieder, ob wir der Liebe Landschaft auch kennen
und den kleinen Kirchhof mit seinen klagenden Namen
und die furchtbar verschweigende Schlucht, in welcher die anderen
enden: immer wieder gehn wir zu zweien hinaus
unter die alten Bäume, lagern uns immer wieder
zwischen die Blumen, gegenüber dem Himmel.

Imaginärer Lebenslauf

Erst eine Kindheit, grenzenlos und ohne
Verzicht und Ziel. O unbewusste Lust.

The Song the Drunkard Sings

It wasn't really inside me. It came in and went again.
I wanted to hold it. But the wine was holding it.
(I've forgotten now exactly what it was.)
Then he held this out to me, and that out to me,
till I was completely dependent on him.
I'm an ass.

Now I'm playing his game, and he throws me here and there,
wherever he pleases, and maybe today he'll lose
me to that pig, death.
When death has won me, the smudged-up card,
he will scratch his old scabs with me
and toss me on the heap.

Again, Again!

Again, again, even if we know the countryside of love,
and the tiny churchyard with its names mourning,
and the chasm, more and more silent, terrifying, into which the others
dropped: we walk out together anyway
beneath the ancient trees, we lie down again,
again, among the flowers, and face the sky.

Imaginary Biography

First childhood, no limits, no renunciations,
no goals. Such unthinking joy.

Auf einmal Schrecken, Schranke, Schule, Frohne
und Absturz in Versuchung und Verlust.

Trotz. Der Gebogene wird selber Bieger
und rächt an anderen, dass er erlag.
Geliebt, gefürchtet, Retter, Ringer, Sieger
und Überwinder, Schlag auf Schlag.

Und dann allein im Weiten, Leichten, Kalten.
Doch tief in der errichteten Gestalt
ein Atemholen nach dem Ersten, Alten...

Da stürzte Gott aus seinem Hinterhalt.

Herbst

Die Blätter fallen, fallen wie von weit,
als welkten in den Himmeln ferne Gärten;
sie fallen mit verneinender Gebärde.

Und in den Nächten fällt die schwere Erde
aus allen Sternen in die Einsamkeit.

Wir alle fallen. Diese Hand da fällt.
Und sieh dir andre an: es ist in allen.

Und doch ist Einer, welcher dieses Fallen
unendlich sanft in seinen Händen hält.

Then abruptly terror, schoolrooms, boundaries, captivity,
and a plunge into temptation and deep loss.

Defiance. The one crushed will be the crusher now,
and he avenges his defeats on others.
Loved, feared, he rescues, wrestles, wins,
and overpowers others, slowly, act by act.

And then all alone in space, in lightness, in cold.
But deep in the shape he has made to stand erect
he takes a breath, as if reaching for the First, Primitive...

Then God explodes from his hiding place.

Autumn

The leaves are falling, falling as if from far up,
as if orchards were dying high in space.
Each leaf falls as if it were motioning “no.”

And tonight the heavy earth is falling
away from all the other stars in the loneliness.

We’re all falling. This hand here is falling.
And look at the other one.... It’s in them all.

And yet there is Someone, whose hands
infinitely calm, hold up all this falling.

Conducting the London
Symphony Orchestra in 2024
© Mark Allan

Biographical Timeline

1950

Six years old in Los Angeles

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1959

Conducting the Walter Reed Junior High School Orchestra

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1966

Assistant Conductor at the Bayreuth Festival

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1966

Ojai Festival

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1966

In Los Angeles studio of his piano mentor John Crown

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1968

With Ingolf Dahl

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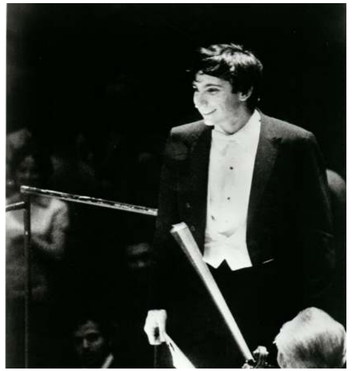

1969

Debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra

© MTT Collection

1970

Album cover of BSO Ives and Ruggles recording

1971

New York Times Magazine cover

© New York Times

1971

Debut with the London Symphony Orchestra

© MTT Collection

1972

Album cover of Cage and Reich recording

1973

As Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic

© Betty Walsh

1974

Rehearsing the Buffalo Philharmonic

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1974

With Leonard Bernstein at the Ives Centenary Celebration

© David Gahr

1974

In rehearsal at the Ives Centenary Celebration

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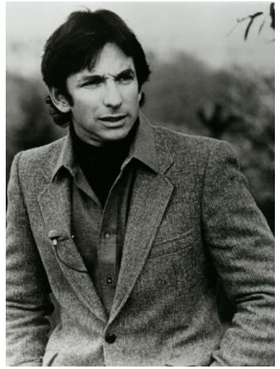
1975

With Sarah Vaughan at the Hollywood Bowl

© David Weiss



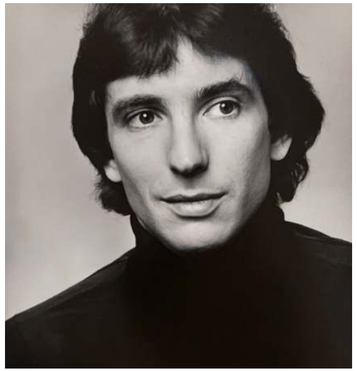
1979

Filming Carl Ruggles television documentary in Vermont

© MTT Collection

1980

Album cover of Beethoven's Symphony No. 6



1980

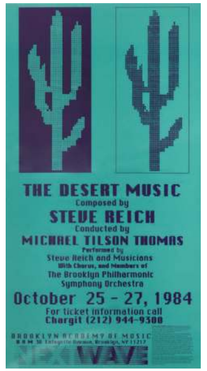
Portrait

© Jack Mitchell

1982

Composing

© MTT Collection



1984

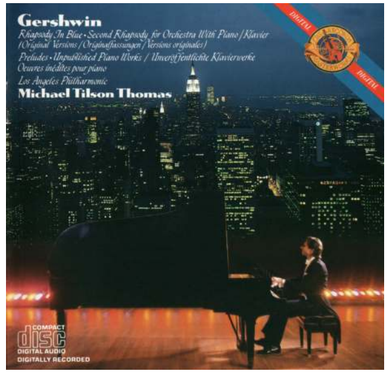
Poster for premiere of *Desert Music* at Brooklyn Academy of Music

© MTT Collection

1985

In Rome

© MTT Collection



1985

Album cover of Gershwin Rhapsodies recording

1986

With Aaron Copland in his studio in Peekskill, NY

© MTT Collection

1986

London Symphony Orchestra concert poster

© Courtesy London Symphony Orchestra

1987

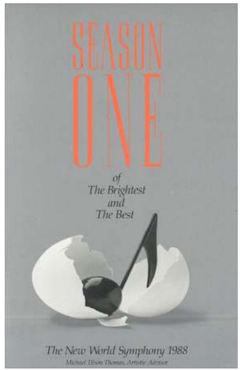
With Ted and Lin Arison, co-founders of the New World Symphony

© New World Symphony Archives

1988

Recording session for Strauss' Ein Heldenleben with the LSO

© MTT Collection



1988

Poster for the first season of the New World Symphony

© Courtesy New World Symphony

1989

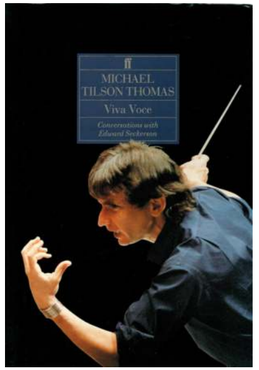
With Audrey Hepburn at the premiere of *From the Diary of Anne Frank*

© New World Symphony Archives

1989

With Audrey Hepburn in rehearsals for *From the Diary of Anne Frank*

© New World Symphony Archives



1994

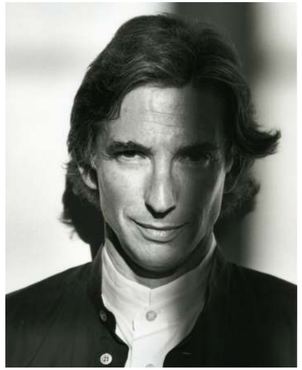
Viva Voce

© Lenny Cohen

1995

Press conference announcing MTT as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony

© SF Symphony Archives



1995

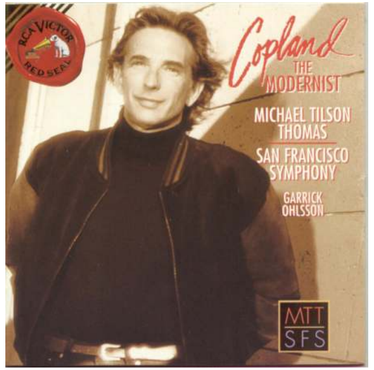
Photo for inaugural season as SF Music Director

©Nancy Ellison

1995

Golden Gate Bridge

© SF Symphony Archives



1996

Album cover for Copland - The Modernist

1996

Album cover of Villa Lobos recording

1997

SF Symphony Season Opening Gala

© Kristen Loken

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Thursday, 14 May 1998 at 8:00
Friday, 15 May 1998 at 8:00
Saturday, 16 May 1998 at 8:00

Sunday, 17 May 1998 at 2:00
Davies Symphony Hall

Inside Music talk by Ronald Gallman — Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 7:00; Sunday at 1:00

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS — conducting

KIRCHNER — Music for Orchestra
(First San Francisco Symphony performance(s))

SIBELIUS — Violin Concerto in D minor, Opus 47
Allegro moderato
Adagio di molto
Allegro ma non troppo
SARAH CHANG

Intermission

TILSON THOMAS — *Agnegram*
(First performance(s), dedicated to Agnes Albert in honor of her 90th birthday, 15 May 1998.)

BRAHMS-SCHOENBERG — Piano Quartet in G minor, Opus 25
Allegro
Intermezzo: Allegro ma non troppo; Trio: Animato
Andante con moto
Rondo alla Zingarese: Presto

Sarah Chang's appearance is supported by the Shenson Young Artist Fund.
Hear the San Francisco Symphony Tuesday evenings at 8pm on KDFC Classical 102.1 FM.
Please be sure the electronic signal on your watch or pager is switched off during the concert.

17

1998

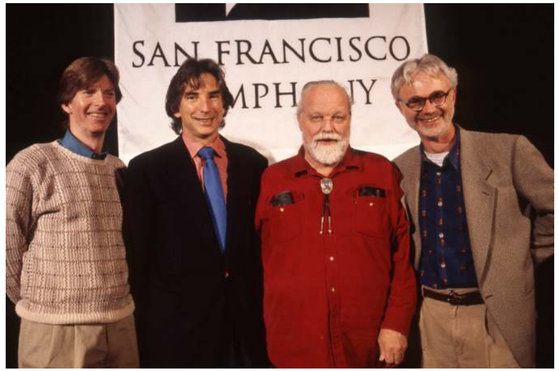
Program page for the premiere of Agnegram

© SF Symphony Archives

1998

Free community concert in San Francisco

© SF Symphony Archives



2000

With Phil Lesh, Lou Harrison, and John Adams at the SF Symphony American Mavericks Festival

© SF Symphony Archives

2000

Poster for SF Symphony American Mavericks Festival

© SF Symphony Archives

2002

With Sheyna

© MTT Collection

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

Michael Tilson Thomas
Music Director

Wednesday, February 27, 2002 at 8:00
Friday, March 1, 2002 at 8:00
Saturday, March 2, 2002 at 8:00
Davies Symphony Hall
Inside Music Talk by Charles Barber at 7:00

Michael Tilson Thomas conducting

Tchaikovsky *Romeo and Juliet*, Fantasy-Overture

Tilson Thomas Poems of Emily Dickinson
Divide Time's Quaint Stream
The Bible
Of God We Ask One Favor
Fame
The Earth has Many Keys
Nature Studies
Take All Away from Me
Renée Fleming soprano
Texts begin on page 29A.

Intermission

R. Strauss *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*, Opus 28

Four Last Songs
Frühling
September
Beim Schlafengehen
Im Abendrot
Renée Fleming soprano
Texts begin on page 30.

The artists and your fellow audience members appreciate silence during the performance. Please be sure that you have switched off cellular phones, watch alarms, and pager signals.

These concerts are made possible through the generosity of Barbara Brosjo-no-Schneider.
Hear the San Francisco Symphony Tuesday at 8pm on KDFC, Classical 102.1 FM. Sponsored by Visa.

23

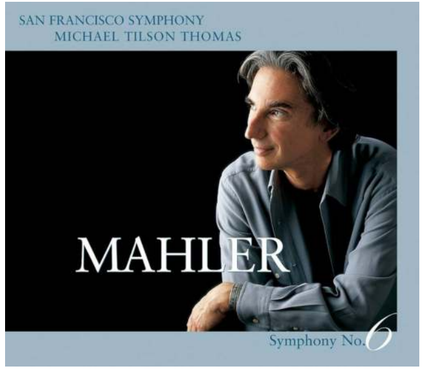
2002

Program page from the premiere of *Poems of Emily Dickinson*

2004

With Audra McDonald, Lisa Vroman, Tom Hampson, Renée Fleming, and Frederica von Stade at MTT's 60th Birthday Gala

© Kristen Loken



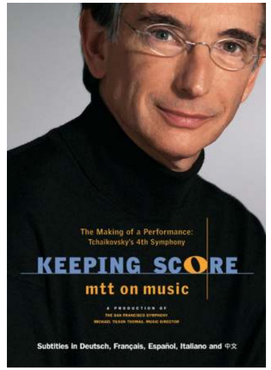
2004

Album cover of SFSMedia Mahler 6 recording

2004

Keeping Score filming at Aaron Copland's home

© Stefan Cohen



2004

Keeping Score - Tchaikovsky 4 cover

2006

James Brown interview for 'The MTT Files'

© Stefan Cohen

2008

With Frank Gehry in Miami Beach planning the New World Center

© Greg Hark/NWS

2009

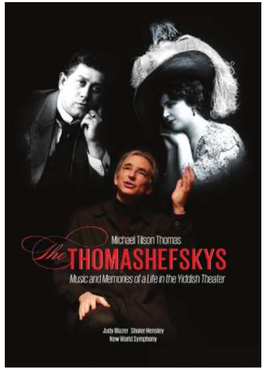
Receiving the National Medal of Arts from President Obama

© MTT Collection

2011

At the New World Center opening

© Todd Eberle/NWS



2012

The Thomashefskys Cover

2012

With Jessye Norman, Meredith Monk, and Joan LaBarbara performing John Cage's Songbooks

© SF Symphony Archives

2015

Performing the Mozart Piano Concerto with the New World Symphony

© New World Symphony Archives

2015

With Yuja Wang, Usher Hall, Edinburgh

© MTT Collection

2019

Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind

© MTT Collection

2019

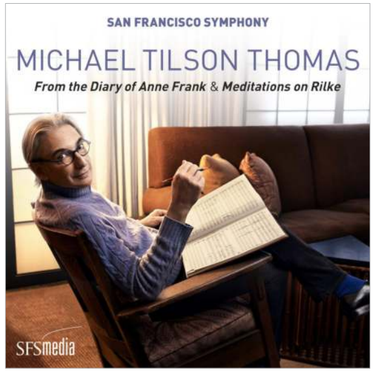
Awarded the Kennedy Center Honor with Linda Ronstadt, Sally Field, Sesame Street, and Earth, Wind and Fire.

© MTT Collection

2020

American Masters Profile, "Where NOW Is"

© MTT Collection



2020

Album cover of the Grammy Award-winning Diary of Anne Frank and Meditations on Rilke

2023

Portrait

© Brigitte Lacombe

2024

Conducting the London Symphony Orchestra in Mahler Symphony No. 3

© Mark Allan

Credits

CREDITS

Agnegram

Recorded November 2-4, 2016
Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco

Performance Credits
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
San Francisco Symphony

Technical Credits
Jack Vad, producer
Janet Grab, post-production
Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of San Francisco Symphony Archives

Street Song

Recorded: January 2004
Skywalker Sound, San Rafael

Performance Credits
Bay Brass
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor

Technical Credits
Jack Vad, producer
Shawn Murphy, engineer
Mark Wilder & Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of Bay Brass

Sentimental Again

Recorded: December 31, 1999
Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco

Performance Credits
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
Audra McDonald, soprano
San Francisco Symphony

Technical Credits
Jack Vad, producer
Janet Grab, post-production
Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of San Francisco Symphony Audio Archives

Not Everyone Thinks That I'm Beautiful

Recorded October 5-6, 2023
San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Performance Credits
Sasha Cooke, mezzo soprano
Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano

Technical Credits
Jack Vad, producer
Jason O'Connell, engineer
Mark Willsher, mastering

Jean-Yves Thibaudet appears courtesy of Decca Classics

From the Diary of Anne Frank

Recorded: November 15-18, 2018
Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco

Performance Credits
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
Isabel Leonard, narrator
San Francisco Symphony

Technical Credits
Jack Vad, producer
Jason O'Connell, engineer
Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of SFSMedia / San Francisco Symphony
Text reprint courtesy of the Anne Frank Foundation

Whitman Songs

Recorded: 2023 and 2024
New World Center and San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Performance Credits
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
Thomas Hampson, baritone
New World Symphony

Technical Credits
Jack Vad & India Hooi, producers
Roberto Toledo, India Hooi, Jason O'Connell, audio engineers
Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of New World Symphony Audio Archives

Poems of Emily Dickinson

Recorded February 27-March 2, 2002
Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco

Performance Credits
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
Renée Fleming, soprano
San Francisco Symphony

Technical Credits
Jack Vad, producer
Janet Grab, post-production
Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of San Francisco Symphony Audio Archives

Urban Legend

Recorded: March 10-12, 2024
San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Performance Credits
Edwin Outwater, conductor
Pat Posey, baritone saxophone
Members of the San Francisco Symphony and musical community

Technical Credits
Jeremy Tusz, producer
Jeremy Tusz & Jason O'Connell, engineers
Mark Willsher, mastering

Notturno

Recorded February 21-22, 2015
New World Center, Miami Beach, FL

Performance Credits
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
Paula Robison, flute
New World Symphony

Technical Credits
Jack Vad, producer
Roberto Toledo, engineer
Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of New World Symphony Audio Archives

I'm Nobody, Who are You?

Recorded June 2020
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Performance Credits
Measha Brueggergosman-Lee, soprano
Carrie VanSlyke, viola
Jeremy VanSlyke, piano

Technical Credits
Jeremy VanSlyke, recording producer/engineer
Cassandra Mann, audio editing
Janet Grab, post-production
Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of San Francisco Symphony Audio Archives

Symphony Cowgirl

Recorded December 3, 2001
Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco

Performance Credits
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
Lisa Vroman, soprano
Members of the San Francisco Symphony

Technical Credits
Jack Vad, producer
Janet Grab, post-production
Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of San Francisco Symphony Audio Archives

Island Music

Recorded: January 6-8, 2005
Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco

Performance Credits
Nancy Zeltsman and Jack Van Geem, marimbas
Members of the San Francisco Symphony
Percussion Section: Raymond Froehlich, James Lee Wyatt III, David Herbert, Tom Hemphill

Technical Credits
Jack Vad, producer
Steve Rodby, post-production
Joel Gordon & Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of Bridge Records

Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind

Recorded April 20, 2019
New World Center, Miami Beach, FL

Performance Credits
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
Measha Brueggergosman-Lee, soprano
Kara Dugan and Kristen Toedtman, vocals
New World Symphony

Technical Credits
Jack Vad & Jason O'Connell, producers
Roberto Toledo & Jason O'Connell, engineers
Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of New World Symphony Audio Archives

Snappy Patter

Recorded: August 30th, 2023
Valudden, Sweden

Performance Credits
Ian Bousfield, trombone

Technical Credits
Christian Lindberg, Producer/Engineer
Mark Willsher, mastering

Lope

Recorded 2018
New World Center, Miami Beach, FL

Performance Credits
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
New World Symphony

Technical Credits
Jason O'Connell, producer
Roberto Toledo, engineer
Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of New World Symphony Audio Archives

Meditations on Rilke

Recorded: January 9-12, 2020
Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco

Performance Credits
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
Ryan McKinny, bass baritone
Sasha Cooke, mezzo-soprano
San Francisco Symphony

Technical Credits
Jack Vad, producer
Jason O'Connell, engineer
Mark Willsher, mastering

Courtesy of SFSMedia / San Francisco Symphony

Upon Further Reflection

Recorded: June 22-23, 2021
The Conrad Prebys Performing Arts Center, La Jolla

Performance Credits
John Wilson, piano

Technical Credits
Elaine Martone, Sonarc Music, John Wilson, producers
Loren Stata, recording engineer
Loren Stata, Sergey Parfenov, editing & mixing engineers
Sergey Parfenov & Mark Willsher, mastering

Recording licensed courtesy of Avie Records

Grace

Recorded: October 5-6, 2023
San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Performance Credits
Sasha Cooke, vocals
Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano

Technical Credits
Jack Vad, producer
Jason O'Connell, engineer
Mark Willsher, mastering

Jean-Yves Thibaudet appears courtesy of Decca Classics

GRACE
The Music of Michael Tilson Thomas

Project Credits

All proceeds from sales of GRACE: The Music of Michael Tilson Thomas will be donated to brain cancer research at the University of San Francisco Brain Tumor Center.

Special thanks to the artists, orchestras, and music labels contributing to this project, all of whom have generously waived royalties from sales of the collection.

Album cover image courtesy of Vahan Stepanyan.

Michael Tilson Thomas' works are published by Kongcha Music and administered by G. Schirmer Inc/Wise Music, who have generously waived all fees for this project.

Thank you to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

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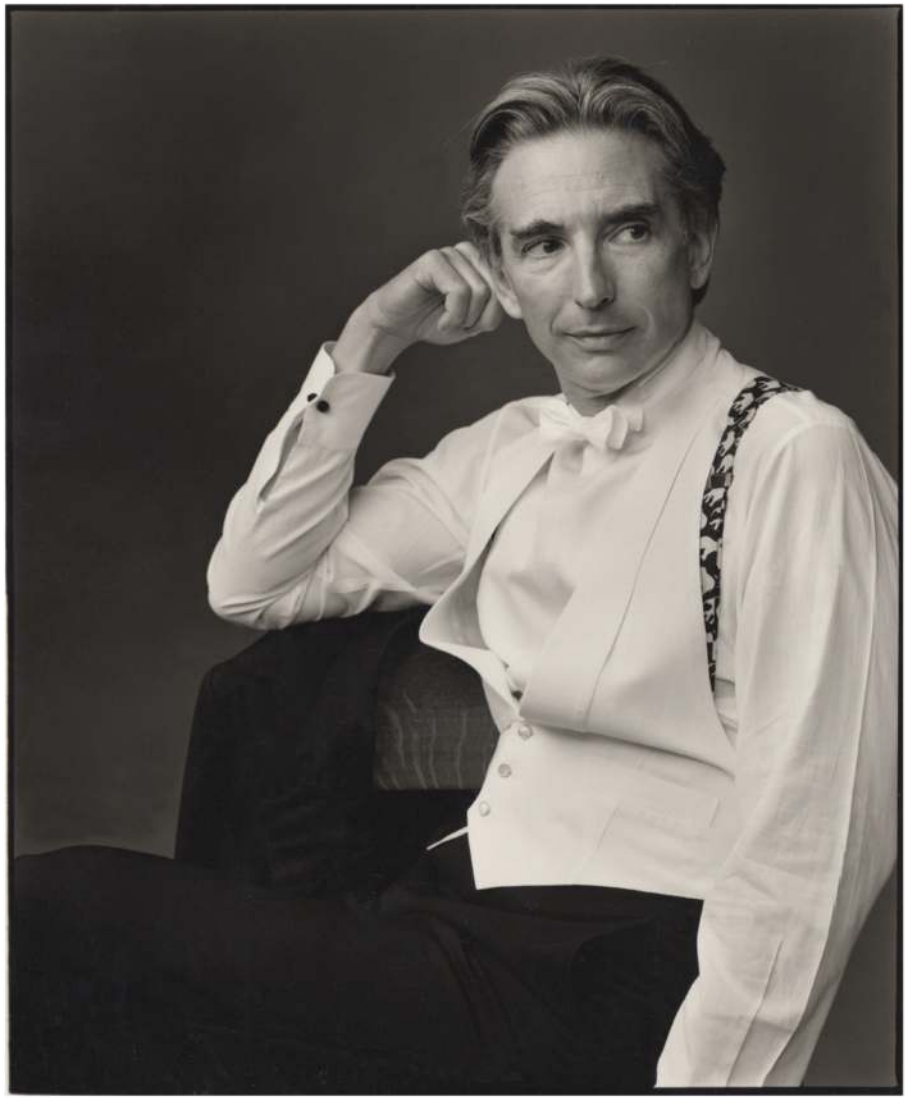
David Stull Executive Producer
Hank Mou Executive Producer
Jack Vad Audio Producer
Oliver Theil Managing Producer
Thomas Edler Coordinating Producer, Whistler
Peter Grunberg Music Advisor
Victoria Paarup SFCM Director of Artistic Operations
Sean Hickey Pentatone Managing Director
Kasper van Kooten Pentatone Head of Catalogue Product and Curation
Marjolein Coenrady Pentatone Graphic Designer

For more information about this collection and Michael Tilson Thomas, please visit his official web site www.michaeltilsonthomas.com



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GRACE: The Music of Michael Tilson Thomas is made possible through the generous support from the Arison Arts Foundation, Joachim and Nancy Hellman Bechtle, Matt and Pia Cohler, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc., Crankstart, Dagmar Dolby, Mary and Howard S. Frank, the Samuel Freeman Trust, Todd Gordon and Susan Feder, Sakurako and William Fisher, Gordon P. Getty, the John and Marcia Goldman Foundation, Rose Ellen Meyerhoff Greene, Mimi Haas, Bruce and Suzie Kovner, Nellie and Max Levchin, Barbro and Bernard Osher, Joanne Rosen, and Diane B. Wilsey.

GRACE

The Music of Michael Tilson Thomas

In celebration of his 80th birthday, this four-disc set spans more than five decades of Michael Tilson Thomas' compositional career. It features 18 works, from premiere recordings to remastered archival recordings available for the first time. The deluxe collection also includes an extensive booklet containing composer's notes, original essays, and a timeline of archival photos chronicling MTT's life as a pianist, conductor, composer, recording artist, and teacher. All proceeds from ***GRACE: The Music of Michael Tilson Thomas*** *will be donated to brain cancer research at the University of San Francisco Brain Tumor Center.*

Disc 1

Agnegram	7. 06
Not Everyone Thinks That I'm Beautiful	3. 08
Street Song	18. 21
From the Diary of Anne Frank	41. 54
Total playing time:	70. 32

Disc 2

Sentimental Again	6. 34
Whitman Songs	16. 10
Poems of Emily Dickinson	22. 44
I'm Nobody! Who are you?	2. 43
Urban Legend	17. 40
Symphony Cowgirl	4. 54
Total playing time:	70. 49

Disc 3

Notturno	14. 10
Island Music	30. 39
Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind	30. 25
Total playing time:	75. 24

Disc 4

Meditations on Rilke	39. 05
Snappy Patter	3. 08
Upon Further Reflection	24. 09
Lope	9. 31
Grace	5. 22
Total playing time:	81. 17

PENTATONE

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