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Philip Glass on *Satyagraha*

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA

[The below is part of a transcript of an interview with Philip Glass, broadcast by the Metropolitan Opera on April 19, 2008, caught in midstream.]

GLASS:If we can start talking about it. If it could become something that could be thought about again. And that happened in a very limited way. This happened much more this time.

METROPOLITAN: And once people leave the theatre, to go have a cup of coffee or a beer, what are you hoping they'll be talking about?

GLASS: About our government, and what we're doing in the world. Not that we're any worse than anyone else, because I don't think we are. I think we're just about the same, which is not very good. I think our policy has been more stupid than anyone else's policy. But there's not one leader of any country I have any respect for. And we've reached this amazing place where we can have operas and radio programs and all the stuff that we have, and yet we can lose it all. We can lose it all, because the most simple, basic virtues of empathy and compassion are not part of our lives anymore.

METROPOLITAN: You've said that it's up to each generation to put their own interpretation --

GLASS: Yes.

METROPOLITAN: --or use the milieu in which they're working --

GLASS: Yes.

METROPOLITAN: -- on works that came in the past -- your work from 30 years ago. But is it hard to sort of hand over your creation?

GLASS: No, it's easy. It's easy, because it's going to happen anyway. And when the conductor says, "What is the tempo here." I've said, "Look, I've turned this over to these interpreters. It's going to happen anyway; let's do it right now."

METROPOLITAN: This is very interesting. How much have the musicians actually turned to you for any advice?

GLASS: They've been requesting it; I've not answered them.

METROPOLITAN: They must be very frustrated that you're not answering them.

GLASS: No, no. They're liberated.

METROPOLITAN: Really?

GLASS: I've said, "No, this is your piece now." Why should I bring my old ideas to a new generation? And I've said this to everyone, "This opera belongs to you now. You're the interpreters." I believe that absolutely.

METROPOLITAN: Do you remember the first performance?

GLASS: Yes, I do.

METROPOLITAN: What was it like?

GLASS: It was scary. I remember turning to Bob Israel and then I said, "Well, what if people laugh?" But they never laughed. In fact, as soon as they walked onstage, the dignity and the eloquence of the images were very, very powerful.

METROPOLITAN: Now, I understand you wrote this opera pretty much straight through; you've said you wrote it with almost no re-writes.

GLASS: I just wrote it as if I were writing a letter.

METROPOLITAN: And yet it's not chronological. Did you start from the beginning?

GLASS: I knew that already. I wasn't interested in the story of Gandhi's life. I was interested in the quality of Gandhi, and the ideas of his life. I thought of it this way: if you looked at a book of photographs of, let's say, your family. And they might not be in chronological order. But you know who your Aunt Lucy is, and you know who your Cousin Phil is, and you know who your children might be, and the actualy chronology of the photographs is not important. What's important is the sum of them together becoming a family. In the same way, I thought the sum of the events that are portrayed become what I wanted to express of Gandhi's ideas. And by doing it chronologically, I thought it would be misleading. I wasn't really telling the story of his life; I was telling the history of an idea. Ideas are not chronological. They happen when they happen. They happen in a poetic and creative way, not necessarily chronologically.

METROPOLITAN: Is there any moment in *Satyagraha* that means the most to you?

GLASS: The ending is the one that most people remember. Where Gandhi is alone, and he sings. The words are from the Bagavad Gita, and Krishna -- Lord Krishna -- says, "I have lived many births -- many lives -- and so have you. I remember them all, but you do not. But my creative energy -- I consort with nature and come in time to live as a man among men. And where wickedness prevails, I set virtue on its seat again."

METROPOLITAN: Philip Glass, thanks for being with us, and thank you for writing *Satyagraha*.

Concert Review

Name That Memory

MARK ALBURGER

Aaron Copland once said something to the effect that music is pretty much about the melody, and, while this is way overdrawn, there is still much to be said about the notion.

The Marin Symphony's *Season of the Silver Screen* continued on March 30 with a program that was less cinematic but rather more anamnesic.

OK, I admit -- had to google that last word for dramatic effect: it means, according to dictionary.com, "the recollection or remembrance of the past; reminiscence" and it brings to mind the memorability factor in music.

I'm home now. I'm remembering the music of the concert. What do I remember, just off the top of my head, without referring to my notes, but rather, instead, just the notes of the concert that I can remember?

The Haydn *Cello Concerto*, with its opening thematic gambit of a demonstrative C, followed by dotted "long-short" rhythms B C D E F and the cadential (ending) phrase of F E D E F C B C.

Catchy tune, which I've seemed to know all my life, and indeed the piece was astoundingly only relatively recently rediscovered (1962) at just about the time I was tuning in.

Also memorable was Hai-Yi Ni's animated and elevated playing, bringing a still-youthful demeanor and freshness to the endeavor as well as the experience of a solo career that dates back to 1991.

Keeping on the Aaron Copland citations, this is an actual quote: "A melody is not merely something you can hum." And this definitely came to mind when recalling the sometimes-impressive efforts of Pierre Jalbert in *Fire and Ice*, a 20-minute work that comes with a resounding several concluding minutes of excitingly strident percussion that forced its way into the consciousness.

The proceeding *Ice* was an age of stilled strings and shimmering by-now-a-bit-over-used bowed vibraphone strokes that left its own glacial moraine in the mind.

And as for Antonin Dvorak's *Symphony No. 7*, here's the composer on the subject -- "Wherever I go, I have nothing else in my mind but my new symphony, which must be such as to make a stir in the world, God willing."

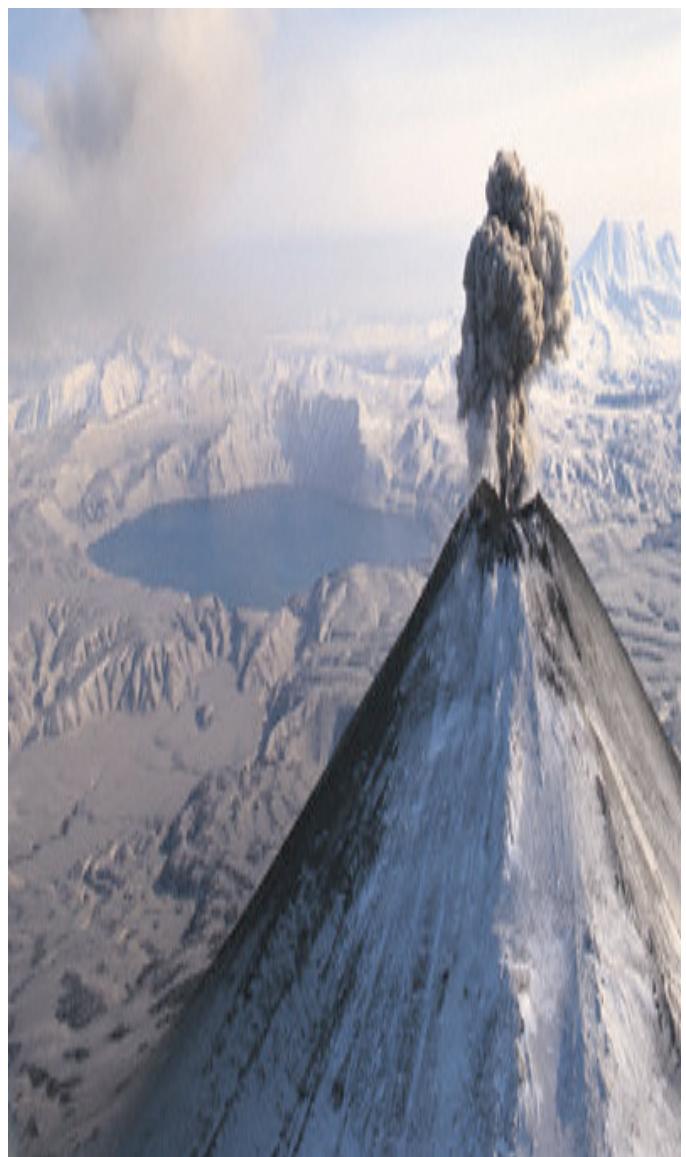
And here's the cinematic Herr Rosenberg in Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*... "A young man trying to impress.... Too many notes."

And, while this is unfair, and probably irrelevant, and Dvorak was not all that young at 44 when he completed this symphony, still we can hear the composer working hard to astound.

And the Marin Symphony gave it a gorgeous run, from the purely sonorous side of the street. And Dvorak provides symphonic solutions here that are not always the expected ones, and that go beyond some received norms.

Still, what remains? For that, his best symphonic workouts were next to come in his remaining two symphonies.

What lingers in the mind is that the composer had a ways to go. But that the Marin Symphony has come a long way, and continues of late to produce quality concerts on a par with the best.



Calendar

May 2

Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince* (after Antoine de Saint-Exupéry). San Francisco Opera, Zellerbach Auditorium, Berkeley, CA. Through May 4.



May 9

San Francisco Cabaret Opera, directed by Harriet March Page, presents *Horsewomen of the Apocalypse: The Black Horse, with a Touch of Gray*, including Mark Alburger's *San Rafael News: 10 Deathsongs*. St. Gregory of Nyssa, San Francisco, CA.



Chronicle

March 1

The New York Times reviews Alarm Will Sound (Gyorgy Ligeti's *Movimento preciso e meccanico*, Harrison Birtwistle's *Carmen Arcadiae Mechanicae Perpetuum*, Gavin Chuck's *Philosophy of the World*, Conlon Nancarrow player piano studies in chamber versions, John Adams's *Son of Chamber Symphony*, and Mochipet's *Dessert Search 4 Techno Baklava*, 2/27, Zankel Hall); Elliott Carter's *Piano Quintet*, (2/27 Weill Recital Hall); and Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* (2/28, Metropolitan Opera). NY.

75th-Birthday Tribute to Julian Bream, including Frederic Hand's *For Julian*, Toru Takemitsu's *All in Twilight*, Benjamin Britten's *Nocturnal*, Heitor Villa-Lobos's *Five Preludes*, Joaquin Rodrigo's *En los Trigales*, and works by Manuel de Falla. 92nd Street Y, New York, NY.

Ensemble Pi in *The Rest Is Silence*. John Harbison's *Abu Ghraib*, Frederic Rzewski's *Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier*, Kristin Norderval's *Far From Home*, Lou Harrison's *In Memory of Victor Jowers*, Philip Miller's *Nine Drawings for Projection*, and Dimitri Shostakovich's *Piano Trio No. 2*. Cooper Union, New York, NY.

Vienna Philharmonic in Sergei Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 2*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

March 2

William Bolcom's *Symphony No. 8* performed by the Boston Symphony, conducted by James Levine. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

Escher String Quartet in Alexander Zemlinsky's *String Quartet* and Maurice Ravel's *String Quartet*. New School, New York, NY.

March 3

Sequitur's cellist, Greg Hesselink, assisted at times by associates, in Harrison Birtwistle's *Nine Settings of Lorine Niedecker*, Harold Meltzer's *Silas Marner*, Bernard Rands's *Walcott Songs*, Warren Benson's *Moon Rain and Memory Jane*, Arlene Zallman's *Per Organa di Barberia*, and Morton Feldman's *Voices and Cello*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY.

March 4

The New York Times reviews the Vienna Philharmonic's 2/29 performance of Claude Debussy's *La Mer* at Carnegie Hall. New York, NY.

Gabriel Faure's *Requiem* performed by the Oratorio Society of New York. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

Death of Leonard Rosenman (b. 9/7/24, New York, NY), of a heart attack, at 83. Los Angeles, CA. "[He was] an Oscar-winning film composer who helped introduce avant-garde music to Hollywood movie scores. . . . Rosenman, who could also write lusty traditional film scores, composed the original music for dozens of well-known pictures. Among them were *East of Eden* (1955), *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), . . . [and] *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970) . . . He earned two Oscars for musical adaptation: for *Barry Lyndon* (1975), which drew on music by Handel, Schubert [Vivaldi, J.S. Bach, Frederick The Great, and Irish folk music, the latter in renditions by The Chieftains] and *Bound for Glory* (1976), based on Woody Guthrie songs. With the composers Bernard Herrmann and Alex North, Mr. Rosenman was widely credited with bringing film music -- long awash in . . . Romanticism -- squarely into the 20th century. For *The Cobweb* (1955), Mr. Rosenman wrote what is believed to be the first major Hollywood score to draw heavily on 12-tone techniques. . . . For *Fantastic Voyage* (1966), one of Mr. Rosenman's most highly regarded scores, he wrote urgent, atonal music that some listeners compared favorably to the work of Alan Berg. . . . He wrote music for *The Defenders*, *Combat!*, *Marcus Welby, M.D.* and many other shows. . . . [H]e earned a bachelor's degree in music from the University of California, Berkeley. He also studied composition with Schoenberg, Roger Sessions and Luigi Dallapiccola. Settling in New York, where he intended to make a career as a concert composer, Mr. Rosenman supported himself by teaching piano. One pupil was a young actor named James Dean. After Mr. Dean was cast in *East of Eden*, he introduced Mr. Rosenman to the film's director Elia Kazan. Mr. Kazan hired Mr. Rosenman to write the score. Mr. Rosenman was divorced twice and widowed once. He is survived by his fourth wife, Judie Gregg Rosenman; three children from his first marriage . . . and four grandchildren. Throughout his career, Mr. Rosenman continued to write concert music. Some of his work was performed by famous artists, including the violinist Elmar Oliveira, who in 1997 played the world premiere of Mr. Rosenman's *Violin Concerto No. 2* with the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. But Mr. Rosenman often expressed regret that his Hollywood work appeared to have cost him greater recognition in the concert hall. Where younger composers like John Corigliano and Philip Glass have been able to move seamlessly between film and concert music, those of Mr. Rosenman's generation faced a largely unbreachable wall. In an interview with The New York Times in 1982, Mr. Rosenman reflected on the difference between those two types of composition: 'With film one is given an a priori construct,' he said. 'It is a very sophisticated version of seeing an array of numbers from 1 to 100, connecting them and winding up with a picture of George Washington. The pot is to fill up space, and the work is dictated by literary considerations. With concert music -- even in opera, the most literary form -- the composer's task is

to shape the text into a fundamentally musical work" [Margalit Fox, The New York Times, 3/6/08].

Violinist Mayuko Kamio in Karol Szymanowski's *Fontaine d'Aretuse* from *Mythes*. Zankel Hall, New York, NY.

March 5

Alan Gilbert conducts the New York Philharmonic in Luciano Berio's *Folk Songs*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

March 6

Gabriela Montero in Alberto Ginastera's *Piano Sonata No. 1* and her own improvisatory variations. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. "She turned *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* into a neo-Baroque contrapuntal twister, before segueing into a moody minor section that might have been a Rachmaninoff evocation of Bach, with more biting and pungent harmonies. Using Beethoven's *Fur Elise* as a theme, she wisely steered clear of the Beethoven style in her improvisation, creating music that began like updated Albeniz, then evolved, with a sense of rightness, into something obsessive and jazzy, like John Coltrane's take on *My Favorite Things*" [Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times, 3/8/08].

March 7

Percussionist Martin Grubinger in Anders Koppel's *Marimba Concerto No. 3* and *Toccata*, Minoru Miki's Marimba Spiritual, Evelyn Glennie's *Little Prayer*, his own *Aus dem Leben einer Trommel*, and Iannis Xenakis's *Rebonds B*. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

March 8

San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra -- conducted by Mark Alburger, John Kendall Bailey, and Martha Stoddard -- in Erling Wold's *Mordake Suite No. 2*, Michael Cooke's *Sun and Moon*, Dan Reiter's *Toccata and Fugue*, Stoddard's *A Little Trip to Outer Space*, Alexis Alrich's *Fragile Forests*, Philip Freihofner's *The Bell Tree*, and Lisa Scola Prosek's *Chain Saw*. Old First Church, San Francisco, CA.

Brooklyn Philharmonic in John Adams's *The Dharma at Big Sur*, Bela Bartok's *Divertimento*, and Toru Takemitsu's *Three Film Scores*. Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, NY. "Sri Moonshine [is] the second movement of Mr. Adams's West Coast homage" [a reference to Terry Riley's Sri Moonshine Ranch outside of Nevada City, CA - ed.] [Vivien Schweitzer, The New York Times, 3/10/08].

Kent Nagano and the Montreal Symphony in Claude Debussy's *Martyre de St. Sebastien* and Unsuk Chin's *Rocana*. "Chin had tearfully called earlier to say that her plane was grounded by a blizzard in the Midwest. By intermission, alas, she had only just arrived at Kennedy Airport. . . . [T]he piece is a knockout. It begins with a gnarly, clattering, explosion; call it the Little Bang. Then comes a pattern of background harmonies, always simmering, eerily quiet and pervasive. But throughout the work, jolts of energy keep happening; leaping lines, ominous 12-tonish themes that pierced the tranquil background buzz, outbursts of wailing brasses and metallic strings that come at you like a musical flamethrower. The piece might be described as a response to Ives's *Unanswered Question*" [Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times, 3/10/08].

Soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian and her pianist-husband Seroug Kradjian in Francis Poulenc's *Banalities*, Jake Heggie's *Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia*, and Maurice Ravel's *Five Popular Greek Melodies*. Zankel Hall, New York, NY.

March 9

Garrick Ohlsson in Norman Dello Joio's *Piano Sonata* and Sergei Prokofiev's *Piano Sonata No. 2*. Town Hall, New York, NY.

New Amsterdam Singers in Ronald Perera's *Why I Wake Early* and Matthew Harris's *Love Songs* and *Innocence and Experience*. Church of the Holy Trinity, New York, NY.

March 10

Mark Alburger premieres the complete solo version of his *L.A. Stories* with hats and toys, on a program with poets Kenneth Goldsmith and Denise Newman. Boxcar Theatre, San Francisco, CA.

March 11

Pierre Laurent Aimard's recording of J.S. Bach's *Art of Fugue* goes to the top of the charts of both Billboard and iTunes, and is featured on the iTunes homepage along with Snoop Dogg and U2.

New York Festival of Song presents William Bolcom's *Lucrezia* and John Musto's *Bastianello*. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

Michael Tilson Thomas, The San Francisco Symphony, and Gil Shaham in William Schuman's *Violin Concerto*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

March 12

Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony in Jean Sibelius's *Symphony No. 7*. Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs*, and Samuel Barber's *Andromache's Farewell*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

March 13

The New York Times reports on the premiere of Jake Heggie's *Last Acts* at Houston Grand Opera (Houston, TX). New York, NY.

March 14

Bela Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin Suite*, Gustav Holst's *The Planets*, and Claude Debussy's *Three Nocturnes* performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

Deborah Voigt leaves the stage during Act II of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* because of a stomach ailment and is replaced by Janice Baird, in her Met debut. Gary Lehman makes his debut, replacing John Mac Master (due to allergies), who had himself been filling in for Ben Heppner (due to a viral infection). Metropolitan Opera, New York, NY.

Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar*. Perelman Theater, Philadelphia, PA.

March 18

Counter)induction presents Mauricio Kagel's *Atem* and *Der Schall*, Anthony Coleman's *Flat Narrative*, Douglas Boyce's *L'Homme Arme*, and Gyorgy Kurtág's *Hommage à R. Sch. Merkin* Concert Hall, New York, NY.

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, and guests, in various configurations, in a program including Igor Stravinsky's *Duo Concertante* and Richard Danielpour's *Book of Hours*. 92nd Street Y, New York, NY.

Spirit of Uganda. Joyce Theater, New York, NY.

Gary Lehman slides down the raked stage into the prompter's box during Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, stopping the show at the start of Act III, but soldiering on to the work's conclusion after a brief interval. Metropolitan Opera, New York, NY. "Tristan und Isolde has long been a magnet for trouble. Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, the first Tristan, died of a heart attack in Munich in 1885, at 29, within weeks of the premiere, leaving the first Isolde -- his wife, Malvina [!] a widow. In 1959, when each of three possible Tristans announced, one after another, that he was too ill to perform at the Met, Rudolf Bing, the opera's legendary general manager, persuaded each to sing one of the three acts. . . . Nor are the mishaps limited to *Tristan und Isolde*. The soprano Hildegard Behrens got bonked on the head by a foam rubber beam from the Immolation Scene in Wagner's *Gotterdamerung* at the

Met in 1990. Ms. Behrens, playing Brunnhilde, had just finished the last notes of the six-hour opera. She withdrew from the final performance and was replaced by Gudrun Volkert. And after singing the line 'You can only live so long' from a ladder minutes into the Met premiere of Janacek's *Makropulos Case* in 1996, Richard Versalle fell 10 feet to the stage, having suffered a fatal heart attack at 63. The show was canceled, and Mr. Versaille's replacement, Ronald Naldi, did not climb the ladder in future performances. 'Everybody went into shock,' said Joseph Volpe, then the Met's general manager. 'They thought it was part of the staging.' Asked to recount some of his run-ins with the tenor Luciano Pavarotti and his temperamental throat, as when Pavarotti failed to appear for his farewell performances at the Met, in [Giacomo Puccini's] *Tosca* in 2002, Mr. Vole said, 'I'm not going there.' There continues to be debate as to whether, during the Met's 2002 production of Prokofiev's *War and Peace*, a supernumerary portraying one of Napoleon's defeated soldiers fleeing Moscow (Simon Deonarian) fell or jumped into the pit. Mr. Vole -- who took the stage at the end to tell the audience that 'our retreating French grenadier lost his way in the snowstorm' but was unhurt -- said he jumped for publicity. Mr. Deonarian said he fell. In any case, the incident stopped the orchestra during the final scene for a delay of three minutes. When American Ballet Theater was performing [Prokofiev's] *Romeo and Juliet* on the Met Stage in 1998, the front of the Capulet mansion came down from the flies and never stopped. 'The set just kept grinding into the floor,' said Michael M. Kaiser, then the ballet's artistic director. 'No one's ever seen me run so fast as I did backstage.' As for conflagrations, the curtain came down in 2004 during Act II of Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri* because of a small fire above the stage that had to be extinguished. The Metropolitan Opera House has also had its brush with murder. In 1981 a Met stagehand, Craig Crimmins, was sentenced to 20 years to life in prison for hurling a violinist, Helen Hagnes Mintiks, to her death down an airshaft from the roof of the opera house. Ms. Mintiks had disappeared during an intermission of a Berlin Ballet performance" [Robin Pogrebin, The New York Times, 3/20/08]. "Mr. Lehman seldom faltered, even when the Met's stage machinery seemed out to get him. Act III begins with the wounded Tristan stretched out on a pallet propelled slowly from the back of the stage to the front. Things careered out of control at the end of this trip, sending Mr. Lehman, on his back and head first, crashing into the prompter's box. Stage managers rushed onstage; the curtain went down, but within 10 minutes Mr. Lehman was back singing Tristan's long and strenuous rant to brave effects" [Bernard Holland, The New York Times, 3/20/08].

March 19

Death of actor Paul Scofield, of leukemia, at 86. UK. "[He was a] darkly embittered Salieri in *Amadeus*" [Benedict Nightingale, The New York Times, 3/21/08].

Brentano String Quartet in Dmitri Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 15*. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

March 20

Pierre Laurent Aimard performs Arnold Schoenberg's *Five Pieces*, Op. 23. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

New Music Champions. Alice Shields's *The River of Memory*, Don Byon's *Seven Etudes*, Huang Ruo's *Written on the Wind*, Steven Burke's *Skin*, Michael Lowenstern's *Mash Up*, and Joan La Barbara's *ATMOS*. Symphony Space, New York, NY. Repeated 3/24, SUNY, Purchase (NY).

Joshua Redman. Village Vanguard, New York, NY.

March 21

Elliott Carter's *Oboe Concerto* presented by Musicians from Marlboro. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

March 22

Perlman Music Program, featuring Bela Bartok's *String Quartet No. 3*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.



Aretha Franklin. Radio City Music Hall, New York, NY.

March 25

Death of conductor and composer Gerhard Samuel (b. 1925, Bonn, Germany), at 83. Seattle, WA. "Samuel served as music director of both the Oakland Symphony (1959-70) and the San Francisco Ballet (1961-71) and was the first music director of the Cabrillo Music Festival. He also founded and led the Oakland Chamber Orchestra and made a few guest appearances with the San Francisco Opera. . . . Over the course of a decade, nearly one-third of the [Oakland] orchestra's repertoire consisted of music by 20th-century composers, and in some seasons nearly every program included at least one premiere. The stylistic range was broad enough to encompass . . . Lutoslawski and Stockhausen and . . . Terry Riley and Henry Brant. . . . Mr. Samuel's taste for contemporary music made him an obvious choice to lead the Cabrillo Festival, the 1961 brainchild of bassoonist-composer Robert Hughes -- who had played under Mr. Samuel in Oakland -- and composer Lou Harrison. . . . Samuel . . . moved to the United States with his family in 1939 to escape the Nazis. He studied conducting and violin at the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester, NY, then went on to study composition with Paul Hindemith at Yale and conducting with Serge Koussevitzky at the Tanglewood Music Festival in Massachusetts. After a brief stint conducting musicals on Broadway, he spent 10 years as violinist and associate conductor with the Minneapolis Symphony before coming to Oakland. On leaving Oakland in 1971, he joined the Los Angeles Philharmonic as associate conductor under Zubin Mehta. He joined the faculty of the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music in 1976 and became musical director of the Pacific Northwest Ballet in 1982. He retired in 1996. Among the rarities that Mr. Samuel recorded were Charles Ives' *Universe Symphony* . . . and Mahler's re-orchestration of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. His own music, written in a complex, expressionist style, includes several orchestral works, settings of Whitman and Hans Christian Andersen, and two string quartets. At his death he was at work on an operatic treatment of Thomas Mann's novella *The Blood of the Walsungs*" [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, 3/29/08].

March 26

An Evening with Stewart Copeland, including the premiere of his *Celeste*. Savannah Music Festival, GA.

Laurie Anderson's *Homeland*. Zankel Hall, New York, NY.

Paul Haas and Symphony in *Traces*, including Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*. Angel Orensanz Center, New York, NY.

March 27

The New York Times announces the discovery of a 10-second recording of the folk song *Au Clair de la Lune*, made on April 9, 1860, on a phonograph (a machine designed to record sounds visually but not to play them back) made by Edouard-Leon Scott de Martinville, which predates by 19 years Thomas Edison's spoken-word recording of *Mary Had a Little Lamb* (now playable due to technology developed at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Berkeley, CA). New York, NY.

March 28

Augustin Hadelich performs Bela Bartok's *Sonata for Solo Violin* and Bright Sheng's *Night at the Chinese Opera* (2006) (with Robert Kulek). Carnegie Hall, New York, NY. "Bartok's subtleties were pretty much lost in this big space. . . . Bright Sheng's . . . filled the room at least. Bright and shiny -- dare I say flashy? -- this collection of florid gestures and doctored Chinese pentatonic melody worked hard to entertain in cheerful show-business fashion" [Bernard Holland, The New York Times, 3/31/08].

Ornette Coleman. Town Hall, New York, NY.

March 29

Making Music: Thomas Adès, his *Five Eliot Landscapes*, *Chamber Symphony*, *Living Toys*, and *Court Studies*. Zankel Hall, New York, NY. "Talking with the moderator Ara Guzelimian about his upbringing, Mr. Adès said he began teaching himself the piano at an early age. In the house was a big box of recordings, all those 'classical great things,' as he put it, with 'odds and ends of folk music,' which he loved for the sounds of the earthy voices and 'twiney instruments.' A fascination with sound inspired the Eliot songs. His grandmother had a cassette recording of Alec Guinness reading Eliot; and though Mr. Adès was mystified by the poetry, he was hooked by the way this great actor spoke the elusive lines. . . . Though the lustrous soprano Valdine Anderson sang with allure, Mr. Adès has set the words in a way that made it impossible for her to sing them with clarity. Comprehension was obviously not a priority. The most striking song was the last, *Cape Ann*, a[n] homage to Messiaen that evokes wildly skittish bird calls. In this act of imitation, the young Mr. Adès found his own voice. The *Chamber Symphony*, arrestingly played by the top-notch Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, conducted by Mr. Adès, is the audacious work of a fledgling composer. One could trace the stylistic elements of this episodic 17-minute score, which begins with an elusive evocation of a queasy tango, then segues into a jazzy, frenetic episode featuring a slurpy solo basset horn (an alto clarinet). Mr. Adès creates impressively precise and transparent sonorities, especially during the pensive middle section of timeless and quivering music. The Birmingham players also gave an exciting account of another early work, *Living Toys* (1993), an impish score for which Mr. Adès wrote (after the fact) a fictitious scenario about a group

of Spanish men questioning a precocious child about his dreams and plans. I was the most intrigued by *Court Studies* (2005), scored for violin, cello, clarinet and piano" [Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times, 3/31/08].

Franco Zeffirelli's production Giacomo Puccini's *La Boheme* in its 347th performance, more than any other at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, NY.

March 30

The Boredoms. Terminal 5, New York, NY.

Kate Royal sings Joaquin Rodrigo's *Cuatro Madrigales Amatorios*, Enrique Granados's *Quejas, o la Maja el Ruisenor*, Claude Debussy's *Cinq Poemes de Baudelaire*. Frick Collection, New York, NY.

Gunther Schuller's *Grand Concerto for Percussion and Keyboards* performed by the Met Chamber Ensemble, conducted by James Levine. Zankel Hall, New York, NY. "Mr. Schuller's three-year-old piece crowded Zankel's limited stage with an encyclopedic collection of percussion instruments. Twelve musicians with barely room to turn around darted from one device to another. Musical works like this are also a theater for the eyes. Musicians dance as well as play them. The *Grand Concerto* tinkles, rasps, booms and flutters in every imaginable way. Snare drums rattle; keyboards create mellow, wow-wow vibrato. All this constituted a different kind of harmony and counterpoint, one that had little to do with Mozart's major-minor harmonies, crossing voices and bar lines. Some of Mr. Schuller's instruments were unpitched; they made noise, in other words, not melody. Others -- piano, harp, celesta and mallet percussion -- were tuned pretty much the way Mozart would have tuned his music. The *Grand Concerto* uses both types for the same purpose. Time and color are the elements, and the finesse and delicacy were noteworthy. Despite its potential to overwhelm by sheer numbers, this was music always open to the light. You could look inside it and pick out the play of castanets, maracas, cowbells and water gong, one against another" [Bernard Holland, The New York Times, 4/1/08].

March 31

The New York premiere of *A White House Cantata*, a concert adaptation of Leonard Bernstein's *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* (libretto by Alan Jay Lerner). Rose Theater, New York, NY. "[In the year of] the 90th anniversary of [Bernstein's] birth . . . there is increasing consensus that this prodigiously gifted musician may have been underrated as a composer during his lifetime. . . . At its 1976 premiere, the show was a colossal failure, closing after seven performances and demoralizing its creators. Those hoping that the Collegiate Chorale's presentation, directed by the actor Roger Rees, would uncover an overlooked treasure may have been disappointed. The original musical was an ill-conceived venture with a pretentious book offering a historic panorama of the White House occupants, from Washington to Theodore Roosevelt.

Woven through this narrative was a pontificating story about slavery. A *White House Cantata* is a pared-down, 90-minute version of the musical, and the score has some lively and effective music, including deft evocations of Dixieland, along with metrically fractured waltzes. But from the opening prelude, with its quizzical rumblings in the orchestra, rich with wandering chromatic harmonies and hints of hymn tunes, the music sounds as if it is straining to be serious. When a humming chorus joins it, atop an ominous pedal tone in the orchestra, the effect is hokey. The prologue segues into *Ten Square Miles by the Potomac River*, an intentionally crude march during which Washington and delegates from the 13 states have a feisty contrapuntal debate over where to locate the nation's capital. Though *Take Care of This House*, a wistful piece sung by Abigail Adams, may be a touch saccharine, it has won a place in the song-recital repertory. Bernstein certainly had a feeling for dance, as proved by a calypso-driven ensemble during the marriage of Lud and Seena, stand-ins for three generations of black servants in the White House. Still, as a theater composer Bernstein may have been at his best when he had nothing to prove and could use his great skills to get the job done, as in his charming, witty score for *Wonderful Town*, which he composed quickly under pressure. In *A White House Cantata* you sense his struggle to lift the genre of the musical to some higher musical plane, and the effort comes through. The baritone Dwayne Croft brought a robust voice and dramatic flair to portrayals of all the presidents. The soprano Emily Pulley, singing the first ladies, stopped the show with her tour-de-force *Duet for One*, in which she portrays both the incoming first lady, Lucy Hayes, on the Inauguration Day for Rutherford B. Hayes, all aflutter with excitement, and the outgoing one, Julia Grant, full of sniping complaints about her successor" [Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times, 4/2/08].



Comment

Item

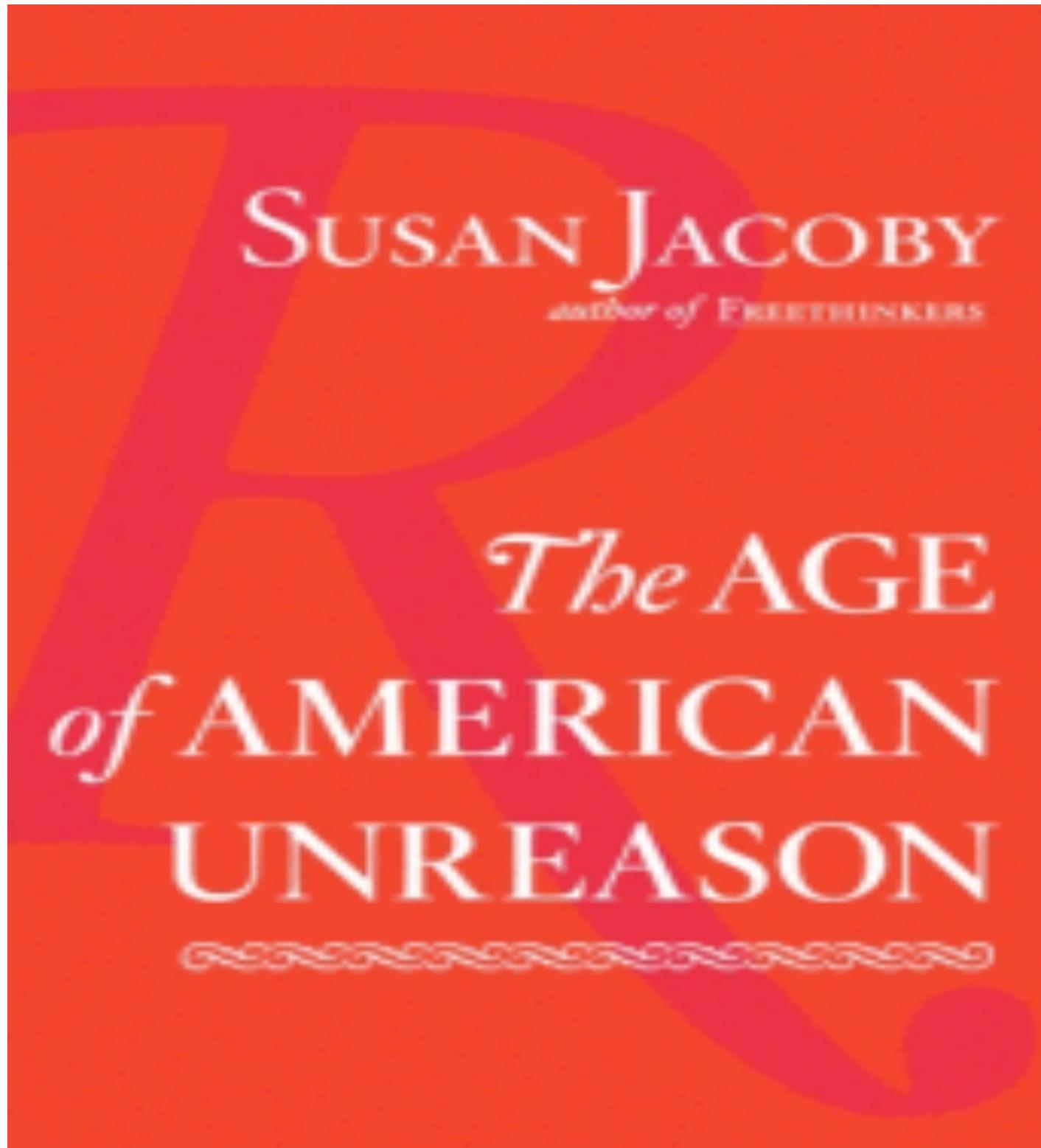
"[I]nformation cascade" . . . can lead people into serious error.

Robert G. Schiller
The New York Times, 5/2/08



Publications

Susan Jacoby. *The Age of American Unreason*. Pantheon.
"America is now ill with a powerful mutant strain of intertwined ignorance, anti-rationalism and anti-intellectualism" [Susan Jacoby].



Recordings

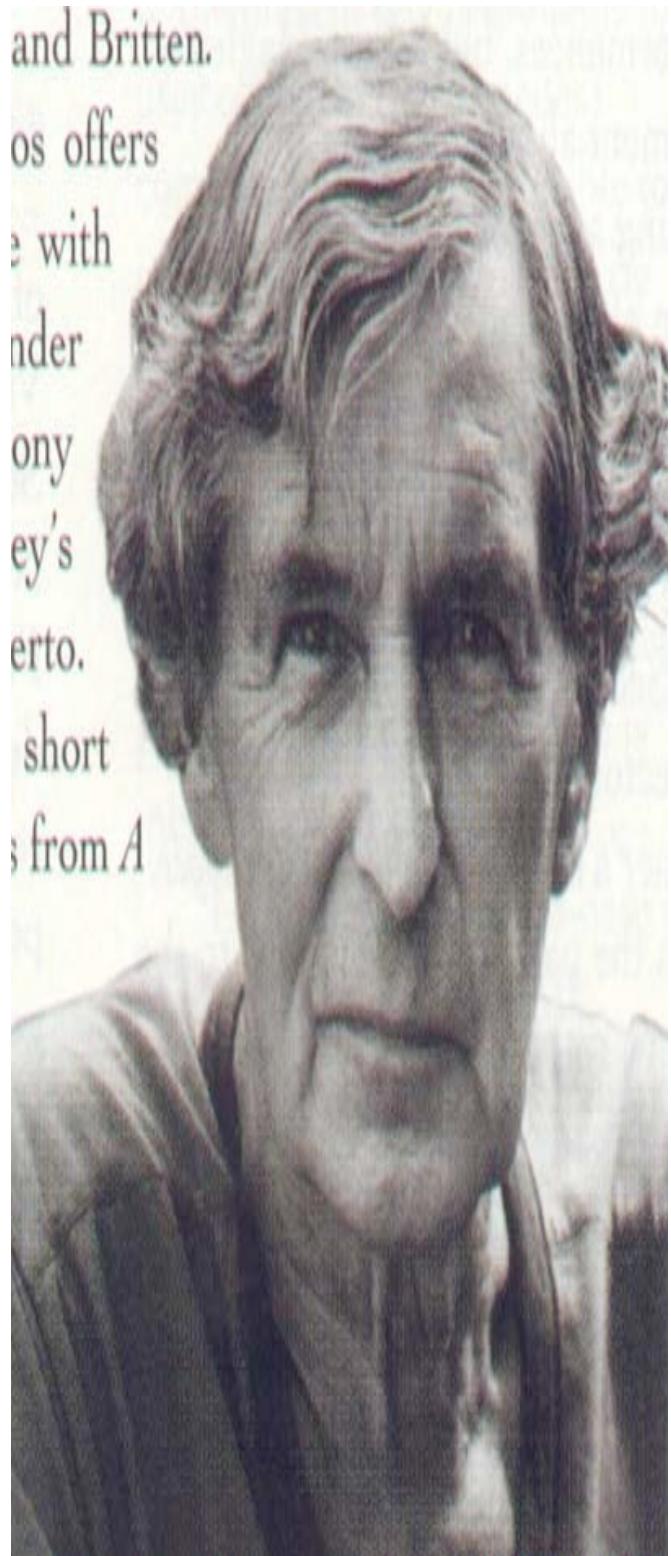


Gustav Mahler. *Symphony No. 9*. Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic. EMI Classics.



Nine Inch Nails. *Ghosts I-IV*. The Null Corporation. "*Ghosts I-IV*" is a 36 instrumental tracks (or near-instrumental, since human voices are among the sounds) and a coordinated set of elegantly eerie photographs. It's available as a high-fidelity, easily copied download for \$5, a two-CD set for \$16.99 (including shipping) and in deluxe versions from ghostsnin.com; in April there will be a retail four LP vinyl version for \$39. The opening nine tracks are also available free, from ghosts.nin.com. Instead of a standard copyright, [Trent] Reznor gave the music a Creative Commons license; it can be shared and reworked as long as music built on *Ghosts* is noncommercial and attributed to Nine Inch Nails" [The New York Times].

Michael Tippett. *Piano Concerto. Fantasia on a Theme of Handel. Piano Sonatas No. 1-4*. Steven Osborne and the Scottish Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Martyn Brabbins. Hyperion.





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