

Jacob Druckman and the “Terrible Power of the Orchestra” 80560-2

Few composers embodied the crisis of accessibility in music during the second half of the twentieth century as emphatically as Jacob Druckman, the Philadelphia-born composer who came of age after World War II and died in 1996. For not only did his own musical output mirror the shift in American music from esoteric complexity to approachability, but his activities in the 1980s as organizer of the New York Philharmonic’s Horizons series made a powerful and public case for the “new tonality” that was already being embraced by the public—if not immediately by critics or academics.

Yet even as he helped pave the way for this sea change in American concert music, in his own music Druckman remained a composer of complexity, even as he strove to weave points of contact into his music. If music at the beginning of the twenty-first century is more coherent, not to mention more “romantic,” than it was in 1950, it is partly because of Druckman’s ultimately influential belief that, in his words, “it was possible to use materials that refer to earlier music and yet to use them in a way that is fresh, a way that everybody can understand.”

Central to Druckman’s achievement was a mastery of what he himself called “the terrible power of the full orchestra.” This disc presents three of Druckman’s richest works spanning three decades, performed by the orchestra he grew up hearing as a youngster. Each makes a statement in an established genre—orchestral song, concerto, and dance suite—while moving beyond the formal or conceptual confines historically associated with those genres.

It was in Philadelphia, where Druckman was born on June 26, 1928, that the composer learned both the courage for honesty and the respect for sophisticated musical tradition that would characterize his life’s work. From its beginnings, Philadelphia has been the city where the old order was both well-entrenched and also systematically tossed aside from time to time—most sensationally when the signing of the American Constitution set into motion a transformation in the balance of world power.

“Philadelphia was an incredible place to grow up as a musician,” Druckman said in 1994. “There could not have been a better preparation.” From age ten he studied violin and composition with Philadelphia Orchestra violinist Louis Gesensway. “He gave me a wonderfully rigid, classical background of counterpoint,” Druckman said. “He wouldn’t let me *use* the word ‘triad’ until I had completed an entire mass in the style of Palestrina, in five voices. When we completed that he said okay, now we’ll talk harmony, and I started writing booksful of fugues in the style of Bach.” Druckman was also a pupil of Curtis Institute faculty member Renée Longy, and while he was in an amateur reading orchestra in Philadelphia he became acquainted with large amounts of orchestral repertoire—the classics and twentieth-century scores presented side by side.

Druckman’s passion for the orchestra and its possibilities would form a crucial thread throughout his life. “The exploration of timbre and instrumental color remained the hallmark of his style,” wrote *The New York Times* in its 1996 obituary of the composer, noting that Druckman thought of orchestra color as “intrinsic and structural” rather than “decorative.”

With solid groundwork from his Philadelphia years, Druckman went on to study with Peter Mennin, Bernard Wagenaar, and Vincent Persichetti at Juilliard and with Aaron Copland at Tanglewood (1949–50). After a Fulbright year in Paris (1954–55), and the first of two Guggenheim Awards (1957), he joined the Juilliard faculty. He also taught at Bard College and explored electronic techniques at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. From 1972 to 1976 he directed Brooklyn College's Electronic Studio, and in 1976 he was appointed professor at Yale, where he served as a member of the composition faculty until his death.

From 1972 to 1986 Druckman was one of the most visible of American composers, making a mark with such works as *Windows*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1972, *Aureole* for orchestra, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, and *Prism*, which won Second Prize at the Friedheim Competition in 1980. His oratorio *Vox Humana* for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, performed at the Kennedy Center in 1983, was praised for its synthesis of personal expressiveness and structural rigor.

Already in the 1970s Druckman had begun moving toward a more Romantic sensibility—largely associated with a renewed interest in music and musical styles of the past. “During the Sixties there was a feeling that it was necessary to reinvent the arts,” he said, “to start from scratch and have absolutely nothing to do with the past.”

This broke down in the 1970s, as the dogma of serialism began to give in to an emphasis on Romanticism, diatonic tonality, and personal expression. As Composer in Residence of the New York Philharmonic during the 1980s, Druckman organized the highly influential Horizons series, focusing on what was then already being called “The New Romanticism.” Later, however, he said the move toward a more accessible music had begun as early as the 1960s. “I don't think Horizons was the mark. It was the first loud statement to the effect that something had happened.”

During the 1980s Druckman's reputation began to reach outside the United States: In 1982 he was Resident-in-Music at the American Academy in Rome, and his works were beginning to be performed abroad. Throughout a career spanning a half-century he received nearly every major grant, as well as commissions from such major institutions as the Chicago Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera, and the Juilliard String Quartet, among many others.

Druckman's later style was marked by a deepening complexity which never flinched from dissonance, but always offered singable tunes and “beautiful” orchestral textures. Most notable among these works was *Counterpoise*, commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra for the soprano Dawn Upshaw, and first performed in Philadelphia on April 28, 1994, under Wolfgang Sawallisch's baton. The piece brings together several tendencies in Druckman's music, including a strong feel for poetry and vocalism and a penchant for the duality expressed by the Apollonian and Dionysian cults of ancient Greece.

Webster's defines counterpoise as "one weight acting against another; a weight used to counterbalance some other part of a scale; a state of balance; equilibrium." Druckman's *Counterpoise* explores the polarity created by the verses of two very different authors, in four songs juxtaposed so as to create a four-movement, quasi-symphonic structure. Ultimately it is the poetry, not any strict musical form, that articulates the structural details throughout.

"The musical development of *Counterpoise* is strongly focused on, and colored by, the great contrast between the two poets: Emily Dickinson and Guillaume Apollinaire," the composer wrote in his original program note. "The American poet's giddy spiritual ecstasy and the French poet's visions of sadness and dementia seem to pull in opposite directions at the ends of a single straight line. It is a strange symmetry indeed to have the Apollinaire poems from his early collection *Alcools* (strong drink) at one pole while at the other pole, Dickinson sings 'Inebriate of Air am I.' "

The notion of combining such dissimilar poets is quintessentially Druckman. The American Dickinson (1830–1886) was known for her sense of ecstatic economy; Apollinaire (1880–1918), born in Italy of Polish descent, is known as the author of one of the early classics of surrealist literature, the play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. At the heart of Apollinaire's poetic oeuvre was *Alcools*, a collection published in Paris in 1913. Druckman has ingeniously intertwined the two poets' images: of intoxication, of rapturous spring days, of flowers, of angels. "I think of Emily Dickinson as being totally 'airborne,' " the composer wrote, "and the Apollinaire is totally 'rooted in the earth,' almost subterranean." At the same time the composer acknowledged the dark side to what he calls Dickinson's "wonderful spiritual ecstasy"—an uneasiness that finds an echo in the Apollinaire as well.

Druckman asks his singer not to just declaim the text, but to convey its meaning with a full range of technical and dramatic means. The pitch vocabulary throughout makes ample use of all twelve tones, with occasional and telling references to tonal harmony. The first song, "Nature is what we see," receives a delicate, almost Debussian setting emphasizing the undulating figures in the woodwinds. "Salomé," the second song, contains what the composer called a "private reference" to the opening of Strauss's *Salome*—serving as a sort of historical orientation. "La Blanche Neige" is an excursion into melancholy, while the rhythmic force of "I taste a liquor never brewed" brings to bear the poet's intoxicated paean to nature, as Dickinson's crystal-clear images fuse in the mind with those of the previous poems.

The Viola Concerto is a product of an earlier stage of Druckman's career, and was written on commission from the New York Philharmonic for its principal at the time, Sol Greitzer, who premiered it with the Philharmonic conducted by James Levine on November 2, 1978. Although the concerto for viola was not a prevalent genre of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, by the mid-twentieth it was becoming a viable concert favorite, as prominent composers began to take this instrument's warm, burnished tone more seriously. Through commissions by prominent soloists and symphony first-chair players, the literature has been enriched though works by Luciano Berio, Morton Feldman, Karel Husa, Frank Martin, Bohuslav Martinu, Krzysztof Penderecki, Walter Piston, Wolfgang Rihm, Alfred Schnittke, and Toru Takemitsu.

Druckman's Viola Concerto is a work built on structural rigor—it includes some twelve-tone techniques—but which uses the orchestra as a vastly colorful palette. “The theme of my Viola Concerto is the transformation of the relationship between the soloist and the orchestra,” the composer wrote. “The beautiful but slightly veiled voice of the viola is surrounded by the terrible power of the full orchestra. There is an insistent pattern: the viola initiates the activity, the orchestra at first following. The soloist gradually unleashes the force of the orchestra as the orchestra seizes upon moments in his discourse and imitates, underlines, elaborates, and transforms them.

“Three times the orchestra builds into overwhelming blocks of sound which are not related to the material of the soloist, but to each other. These masses slowly rearrange their internal harmonies, repeatedly moving from impenetrable density to a more stable clarity. They also serve to define the larger form of the work, which is in one movement of seven sections: solo viola, ORCHESTRA, solo viola, ORCHESTRA, solo viola, ORCHESTRA, solo viola.”

Sandwiched chronologically between these two works is *Brangle*, composed for the Chicago Symphony and first performed by them in Chicago on March 23, 1989, under the baton of Leonard Slatkin. In the composer's words, the piece is “concerned with dance: the rhythms and physicality of kinetic energy.” Its bracing textures are dedicated to idea that music of the post–World War II avant garde had often turned its back on this most essential of human elements in music—namely, pulse. The title refers to “brangling,” a sort of shaking or vibrating, but the term also alludes to similarly titled Renaissance dances, as a reflection of the composer's deep knowledge of the music of earlier styles and periods.

As the composer's program note continues: “The dances range from the first-hand reality of experience through the second-hand reality of cultural memory and to the purely imagined. The first movement is based on the rhythms of an eastern Mediterranean folk dance for men. The second movement deals with Hispanic-American rhythms, flipping a four-note motive from the perfumed world of Ravel, Albeniz and Falla to the late twentieth century and back. The third movement ... is an imagined feminine dance of acceleration.

“In fifteenth-century France the *branle* (*bransle*) was one of the steps of the courtly *basse danse*. In the sixteenth century it was an independent popular dance. In England the dance was known as *brangle* or *brawl*.”

To further illuminate his piece, Druckman quotes from Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, a scene in which Moth asks Armado, “Master, will you win your love with a French Brawl?” which he explains as “to jig off a tune at the tongue's end, canary to it with your feet, humour it with turning up your eyelids.” Later the composer would comment that the work's first movement (perhaps the first piece of music in history bearing the performance indication “Macho”) is related to a Turkish “men's dance” he heard as a student, built on a folk rhythm that he had always associated with the more brutish side of all-male society.

The first and second movements of *Brangle* were completed in February 1989, while the third had begun as a separate piece called *The Quickening Pulse*, completed in 1988 and first performed by Leonard Slatkin and the Saint Louis Symphony on July 8, 1988. Later Slatkin and the composer agreed to create a new piece with *The Quickening Pulse* as a finale.

The piece forms a fitting conclusion to a disc devoted to music meant to touch and to move. For if Druckman's career was dedicated to anything it was to the idea that the "classicizing" music of Schoenberg—which had itself grown up as a means of controlling an excessively romantic sensibility—had swung back, during the latter part of the twentieth century, toward a "romanticizing" emphasis on personal expression. His music became a brilliant illustration of the shift, which some have characterized as a cycle that continues unabated throughout history.

— Paul Horsley

Paul Horsley is the classical music critic for *The Kansas City Star*. From 1992 to 2000 he was program annotator and musicologist for the Philadelphia Orchestra.

"Nature" is what we see (ca. 1863)
(Emily Dickinson)

"Nature" is what we see —
The Hill — the Afternoon —
Squirrel — Eclipse — the Bumble bee —
Nay — Nature is Heaven —
Nature is what we hear —
The Bobolink — the Sea —
Thunder — the Cricket —
Nay — Nature is Harmony —
Nature is what we know —
Yet have no art to say —
So impotent Our Wisdom is
To her Simplicity.

Salomé
(Guillaume Apollinaire)

Pour que sourie encore une fois Jean-Baptiste
Sire je danserais mieux que les séraphins
Ma mère dites-moi pourquoi vous êtes triste
En robe de comtesse à côté du Dauphin

Just to make John the Baptist smile again
Sire, I would dance better than seraphims.
Mother, tell me why you are sad
Dressed as a princess, at a prince's side

Mon coeur battait battait très fort à sa parole

My heart used to beat, beat powerfully at his words

Quand je dansais dans le fenouil en écoutant
Et je brodais des lys sur une banderole
Destinée à flotter au bout de son bâton

As I danced in the fennel, listening
And I wove lilies onto streamers
To float from the end of his staff.

Et pour qui voulez-vous qu'à présent je la brode Son bâton refléurit sur les bords du Jourdain	And now for whom should I embroider His staff flowers again on the banks of the Jordan
Et tous les lys quand vos soldats ô roi Hérode L'emmenèrent se sont flétris dans mon jardin.	And all the lilies, O King Herod, when your soldiers Led him away, wilted in my garden.
Venez tous avec moi là-bas sous les quinconces Ne pleure pas ô joli fou du roi Prends cette tête au lieu de ta marotte et danse N'y touchez pas son front ma mère est déjà froid	Come with me, all of you, down to the arbor Weep no more, you sweet jester; Put this head in place of your jester's scepter Do not touch his forehead, mother, it is already cold
Sire marchez devant trabants marchez derrière Nous creuserons un trou et l'y enterrerons Nous planterons des fleurs et danserons en rond Jusqu'à l'heure où j'aurai perdu ma jarretière	Sire, march in front, halberd-carriers, behind We will dig a hole and bury it We will plant flowers and do a round dance Until the hour that I lose my garter
Le roi sa tabatière L'infante son rosaire Le curé son bréviaire	The king his snuff-box The child her rosary The priest his breviary

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La Blanche Neige
(Guillaume Apollinaire)

Les anges les anges dans le ciel L'un est vêtu en officier L'un est vêtu en cuisinier Et les autres chantent	Angels, angels in the sky One is dressed as an officer One is dressed as a cook And the others sing
Bel officier couleur du ciel Le doux printemps longtemps après Noël Te médaillera d'un beau soleil D'un beau soleil	Handsome officer, color of sky The gentle spring, long after Christmas, Will decorate you with a medal: A bright sun, a brilliant sun
Le cuisinier plume les oies Ah! tombe neige Tombe et que n'ai-je Ma bien-aimée entre mes bras	The cook plucks the geese Ah! falls the snow, Falls and there's no Beloved in my arms.

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I taste a liquor never brewed (ca. 1860)
(Emily Dickinson)

I taste a liquor never brewed —
From Tankards scooped in Pearl —
Not all the Vats upon the Rhine
Yield such an Alcohol!

Inebriate of Air — am I —
And Debauchee of Dew —
Reeling — thro endless summer days —
From inns of Molten Blue —

When “Landlords” turn the drunken Bee
Out of the Foxglove’s door —
When Butterflies — renounce their “drams” —
I shall but drink the more!

Till Seraphs swing their snowy Hats —
And Saints — to windows run —
To see the little Tippler
Leaning against the — Sun —

Founded in 1900, **The Philadelphia Orchestra** has distinguished itself as one of the leading orchestras in the world through a century of acclaimed performances, historic international tours, and best-selling recordings. Led by Music Director Wolfgang Sawallisch since 1993, the Orchestra recently celebrated its 100th Anniversary through a series of activities surrounding the year 2000, with performances, publications, tours, and broadcasts (including the internationally televised gala Birthday Concert on November 16, 2000). Six music directors have piloted The Philadelphia Orchestra through its first century, giving the ensemble an unparalleled cohesiveness and unity in artistic leadership. Its ongoing acclaim around the world is recognized through frequent overseas tours (to Asia in 1999, Europe in 2000, and to Asia again in the spring of 2001), the scope of its recording discography, and its unprecedented record of innovation in recording technologies and outreach. Following ten highly acclaimed years at the helm, Wolfgang Sawallisch will become Conductor Laureate in the fall of 2003, when Christoph Eschenbach becomes The Philadelphia Orchestra’s seventh Music Director.

Wolfgang Sawallisch became Music Director of The Philadelphia Orchestra in 1993. His tours with the Orchestra have included performances on four continents, generating critical praise and public applause in concert halls from Beijing to Birmingham and from Buenos Aires to Boston. Acclaimed as one of the greatest living exponents of the Germanic musical tradition, Sawallisch has enriched and expanded the Orchestra’s century-old reputation for excellence in this repertoire, while also promoting new and lesser-known compositions. His suggestion to devote the Orchestra’s entire Centennial Season in 1999–2000 to works written during the Orchestra’s

first century resulted in critical acclaim and box office success. The season featured encore performances of important and popular twentieth-century pieces introduced by the Orchestra as world or American premieres. Prior to his tenure in Philadelphia, Sawallisch headed the Bavarian State Opera in Munich for two decades.

David Zinman is Music Director of the Tonhalle Orchestra in Zurich, having taken up that post in 1995 after many years as a regular guest conductor there. He is also Music Director of the Aspen Music Festival and School. In 1998 he completed a highly successful thirteen-year tenure as Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. He has also served as Music Director of the Rochester Philharmonic (1974–85), the Rotterdam Philharmonic (1979–82) and the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra (1964–77). As guest conductor, Mr. Zinman has led the Boston Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, and the New York Philharmonic. He conducts and records frequently with major European orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Orchestre de Paris, the Concertgebouw Orchestra, the London Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic, and the Israel Philharmonic. Mr. Zinman's discography of more than eighty recordings has earned numerous international honors, including five Grammy awards, two Grand Prix du Disques, two Edison Prizes, the Deutsche Schallplattenpreis, and a Gramophone Award.

A violist of international reputation, **Roberto Díaz** continues to collaborate with the world's most important conductors and composers. He inspires new talent through his many teaching and master class appointments and reaches wide audiences with his solo and chamber music performances. Some of Mr. Díaz's orchestral engagements include The Philadelphia Orchestra, the National Symphony, the Boston Pops, the Bayerischer Rundfunk Orchestra, the Saarbrücken Radio Orchestra, the Russian State Symphony, and Orquesta Simón Bolívar. Conductors with whom he has collaborated include Wolfgang Sawallisch, Riccardo Chailly, David Zinman, Michael Stern, and Richard Hickox. Recently he played Krzysztof Penderecki's Viola Concerto in Finland with the composer conducting. An active chamber musician, Roberto Díaz has collaborated with artists such as Isaac Stern, Yo-Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax, and Yefim Bronfman. His festival appearances include Mostly Mozart at Lincoln Center, Marlboro, Spoleto, Verbier, Kuhmo, West Cork, and Angel Fire.

Among the celebrated singers of our time, **Dawn Upshaw** stands out as an artist of uncommon gifts and imagination. Her ability to reach to the core of text and music has earned her the devotion of a diverse audience throughout the world. Applauded in the opera houses of New York, Paris, Salzburg, and Vienna for her portrayals of the great Mozart roles, Ms. Upshaw is also renowned for her work in modern repertoire. Deeply involved in music of our time, she has brought it to a wider public than perhaps any other singer of her generation. Since 1993, she has given more than thirty-five world premieres, including works for orchestra and voice by Jacob Druckman, Christopher Rouse, and Judith Weir, and songs by Henri Dutilleux, Osvaldo Golijov, and Gabriela Ortiz. She has premiered three major opera roles written for her: Daisy in John Harbison's *The Great Gatsby*; The Countess in Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin*; and Mary in John Adams's *El Nino*. A two-time Grammy Award winner, Ms. Upshaw's discography includes more than fifty recordings, ranging from German lieder to American theater songs and the million-selling Symphony No. 3 by Henryk Górecki.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Aureole. Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, Leonard Slatkin conducting. New World 80318-2.
Chiaroscuro. The Juilliard Orchestra, Lukas Foss conducting. New World 80381-2.
Other Voices. American Brass Quintet. New World 80377-2.
Prism. New York Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta conducting. New World 80335-2.
String Quartets Nos. 2 and 3. C. Macomber (violin), C. Zeavin (violin), L. Martin (viola), F. Sherry (cello). Koch 7409.
Windows. Orchestra of the 20th Century, Arthur Weisberg conducting. CRI 781.

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Tommasini, Anthony. *The New York Times*, May 27, 1996 (obituary).
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JACOB DRUCKMAN (1928–1996)

80560-2

Counterpoise (1994)

1. “*Nature*” is what we see (Emily Dickinson) 4:04
2. *Salomé* (Guillaume Apollinaire) 7:44
3. *La Blanche Neige* (Guillaume Apollinaire) 3:40
4. *I taste a liquor never brewed* (Emily Dickinson) 5:09

Dawn Upshaw, soprano; The Philadelphia Orchestra, Wolfgang Sawallisch, conductor

5. Viola Concerto (1978) 21:41

Roberto Díaz, viola; The Philadelphia Orchestra, Wolfgang Sawallisch, conductor

Brangle (1988–89)

6. First movement 6:03
7. Second movement 8:44
8. Third movement 7:26

The Philadelphia Orchestra, David Zinman, conductor

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