



# AMERICAN CLASSICS



## AARON JAY KERNIS

### Flute Concerto

#### Air • Second Symphony

Marina Piccinini, Flute • Peabody Symphony Orchestra

Marin Alsop • Leonard Slatkin



**Aaron Jay Kernis (b. 1960)**

**Flute Concerto • Air • Second Symphony**

**Flute Concerto (2015)**

The *Flute Concerto* was written especially for Marina Piccinini and inspired by the beauty and elegance of her playing.

I consider the work to be in two halves – the darker and the lighter. The darker includes the longer first and third movements *Portrait* and *Pavan*, and the lighter half the shorter second movement *Pastorale-Barcarolle*, and the final *Taran-Tulla*. The movements are highly connected to each other musically and share ideas frequently, so that even with a great variety of affect and character the musical threads remain continuous and related.

An element that most of the movements (with the possible exception of the last) have in common is that each begins calmly and winds up spiraling out of control in different ways. Three of the movements are based around dance rhythms from past centuries. *Pastorale* is a gentle dance of the land and field, *Barcarolle* evokes the undulating music of a gondola traveling on water, *Pavan* is a slow, dignified dance in double time (though I have set it in triple), and a *Tarantella* is a continuously fast dance in 6/8 that often accelerates. “Tarantism, as a ritual, has roots in the ancient Greek myths. Reportedly, victims who had collapsed or were convulsing would begin to dance with appropriate music and be revived as if a tarantula had bitten them.” (*Wikipedia*)

*I. Portrait* travels through many moods and characters. Is it a portrait of the flute? Or of the composer?

*II. Pastorale-Barcarolle* begins as a gentle Italianate dance then repeatedly shifts to faster, more energetic and virtuosic music. Mandolin-like strains are heard...

*III. Pavan* starts with a gentle, expressive line traded between flute and oboe, then gradually is intercut with fast outbursts that turn into music of a Bacchic near-frenzy before returning to its opening.

Finally, *IV. Taran-Tulla* is a virtuoso romp, influenced by

the flutist-leader Ian Anderson’s classic rock group Jethro Tull (but more developing out of the blues side of its music, less out of the rock...)

The work is dedicated to Marina Piccinini with warmth and admiration. It was commissioned by the Detroit Symphony (Leonard Slatkin, Music Director Laureate), the Peabody Conservatory, the Rochester Philharmonic (Ward Stare, Music Director) and the Chautauqua Institution Symphony (Rossen Milanov, Music Director).

*Scored for solo flute, two each of flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon (with piccolo, English horn, bass clarinet and contrabassoon doublings), two horns, two trumpets, two trombones, tuba, timpani and three percussionists playing a wide array of instruments, piano (doubling celesta), harp and strings (the concertmaster plays mandolin in the second movement).*

**Air (for flute and orchestra) (1996)**

*Air* is like a love letter to the flute. Songlike and lyrical, it opens up the full range of the instrument’s expressive and poignant possibilities. Composed with two main themes and open harmony, the first theme poses melodic questions and their responses, while the second is very still, rising ever upward into the highest range of the instrument. Following a middle section of dramatic intensity it cycles back to the themes in reverse, developing each along the way, and ending quietly after a final plaintive ascent. *Air* is dedicated to my wife, pianist Evelynne Luest, and was originally written in 1995 for violin and piano, for Joshua Bell. Since its premiere it has been arranged in many versions; solo instrument and orchestra, chamber ensemble or piano. This is the premiere recording of this flute and orchestra setting.

*Scored for solo flute, two flutes (second doubling piccolo), oboe, two clarinets, bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and one percussionist, piano, harp and strings.*

**Second Symphony (1991)**

My *Second Symphony* was written in 1991, begun just after the end of the Persian Gulf War. The absurdity and cruelty of the war, the first in my conscious adulthood, and the particularly brazen nature of its reliance on gleaming new technological, “surgical” warfare used at a safe distance, made an enormous and lasting impression on me. It opened my eyes to the brutality and hollow moralizing about the necessity of war, of which nations are all too easily capable, and led me to examine our time’s culture of war and genocide. The Gulf War was the first war in which I “witnessed” (through the media) America’s participation. The period when the *Symphony* was created was fueled by a time of great personal change for me, and signifies both a loss of innocence and an important shift of tone in my music. Though the *Symphony’s* movement titles are direct and descriptive, it is not programmatic, nor does it describe any progression of images or engagement. The development of the work’s musical motives is compact and abstract, yet highly linear. However, primary musical lines and ideas are frequently encroached upon, covered, or even “annihilated” by more mechanistic or threatening ideas throughout the course of the work. One image from the Gulf War that influenced the last movement came from news reports of a civilian apartment building (mistakenly thought to be a military installation) which was flattened by American bombs just before the end of the war – its 500 civilian inhabitants were killed instantly.

The *Second Symphony* began a series of works touched by world conflict and human suffering which include my *New Era Dance* for orchestra, my English horn concerto *Colored Field* (1993 – also transcribed as a cello concerto), piano quartet *Still Movement With Hymn* (1994) and concerto for violin and strings *Lament and Prayer* (1995). One could say these are all part of my period of War Pieces. The *Symphony* was commissioned by Carillon Importers, Ltd. on behalf of Absolut Vodka for one of the series of concerts it presented at Lincoln Center in New York during the early 1990s. It was premiered by Hugh Wolff and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra in 1992, and its first recording appeared on a Decca/Argo release featuring Wolff and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

*Scored for two flutes and piccolo, three oboes (three doubling English horn), three clarinets (three doubling bass clarinet), three bassoons (three doubling contrabassoon), four horns, four trumpets, three trombone, bass trombone and tuba, four percussionists, piano (celesta), harp and strings.*

**Aaron Jay Kernis**

Great thanks to American artist Atticus Adams, currently living and working in Pittsburgh, for allowing the use of his image *Gilded Hydrangea*. atticusadams.com

## Aaron Jay Kernis

Photo: Richard Bowditch



Pulitzer, GRAMMY® and Grawemeyer Award-winning composer Aaron Jay Kernis is one of America's most performed and honored composers. He has been commissioned by the world's preeminent performing organizations and artists, from the New York Philharmonic to the Symphonies of San Francisco, Dallas, Detroit, Toronto, and Melbourne, and the Walt Disney Company to the Rose Center for Earth and Space at New York's American Museum of Natural History, and soloists Renée Fleming, James Ehnes, Joshua Bell, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, and Sharon Isbin. He received Northwestern University's Nemmers Prize and is a member of the Classical Music Hall of Fame and American Academy of Arts and Letters. He is the Workshop Director of the Nashville Symphony's Composer Lab; was new music adviser to the Minnesota Orchestra, with which he co-founded and directed its Composer Institute for 15 years; and serves on Yale's composition faculty. He has conducted in cities including Rome, Washington, and Portland. Leta Miller's book-length portrait of Kernis and his work was published in 2014 by University of Illinois Press. His music can be heard on the Nonesuch, Naxos, Signum, Koch, Onyx and Argo labels, among others.

[www.aaronjaykernis.com](http://www.aaronjaykernis.com)

## Marina Piccinini

Photo: Marco Borggreve



Internationally-renowned flutist Marina Piccinini's rich artistic tapestry is woven from her multi-national upbringing and vibrant, global perspective. Her extensive programs include premieres by Aaron Jay Kernis, John Harbison, Lukas Foss and Paquito D'Rivera. She has appeared as a soloist with the Boston, Vienna, Vancouver, Tokyo, Toronto and National Symphonies, and with the London, Rotterdam, and Hong Kong Philharmonics, among others. She has worked with leading conductors including Seiji Ozawa, Kurt Masur, Pierre Boulez and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Piccinini appears regularly on major stages across several continents, collaborating with the Tokyo, Brentano and Takács Quartets, pianists Mitsuko Uchida and Andreas Haefliger, and her trio Tre Voci, among others. She founded the Marina Piccinini International Masterclasses (MPIMC) with the New World Symphony, and her awards include the Avery Fisher Career Grant, and top prizes at the CBC Young Performers Competition and Concert Artists Guild International Competition. She is currently on the faculty of the Peabody Institute.

[www.marinapiccinini.com](http://www.marinapiccinini.com)

## Marin Alsop

Photo: Adriane White



Marin Alsop is an inspiring and powerful voice in the international music scene who passionately believes that "music has the power to change lives." She is recognized across the world for her innovative programming and for her deep commitment to education and the development of audiences of all ages. Her success as music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra has been recognised by the extension of her tenure until 2021. After her appointment in 2007, Alsop launched OrchKids, which provides music education and instruments to Baltimore's underserved youth. She became music director of the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra in 2012 and made history in 2013 as the first female conductor of the BBC's Last Night of the Proms, which she returned to conduct in 2015. Alsop conducts the world's major orchestras including the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. As a student of Leonard Bernstein, Alsop is central to his 100th anniversary celebrations, conducting Bernstein's *Mass* at the Ravinia Festival, where she serves as musical curator for 2018

and 2019. She recently concluded a 25-year tenure as music director of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in California. Alsop is the only conductor to receive the MacArthur Fellowship and was recently appointed director of graduate conducting at the Peabody Institute. She attended The Juilliard School and Yale University, which awarded her an Honorary Doctorate in 2017.

[www.marinalsop.com](http://www.marinalsop.com)

## Leonard Slatkin

Photo: Nico Rodamel



Internationally acclaimed conductor Leonard Slatkin is music director laureate of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO) and directeur musical honoraire of the Orchestre National de Lyon (ONL). He maintains a rigorous schedule of guest conducting throughout the world and is active as a composer, author, and educator. Highlights of the 2018–19 season include a tour of Germany with the ONL, a three-week American Festival with the DSO, the Kastalsky *Requiem* project commemorating the World War I Centennial, Penderecki's 85th birthday celebration in Warsaw, five weeks in Asia leading orchestras in Guangzhou, Beijing, Osaka, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, and the Manhattan School of Music's 100th anniversary gala concert at Carnegie Hall. He will also conduct

the Moscow Philharmonic, the Balearic Islands Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, the Louisville Orchestra, the Berner Symphonieorchester, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the St. Louis Symphony, the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo. Slatkin has received six GRAMMY® Awards and 33 nominations. His recent Naxos recordings include works by Saint-Saëns, Ravel and Berlioz (with the ONL), and music by Copland, Rachmaninov, Borzova, McTee, and John Williams (with the DSO). In addition, he has recorded the complete Brahms, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky symphonies with the DSO (available online as digital downloads). A recipient of the prestigious National Medal of Arts, Slatkin also holds the rank of Chevalier in the French Legion of Honour. He has received Austria's Decoration of Honour in Silver, the League of American Orchestras' Gold Baton Award, and the 2013 ASCAP Deems Taylor Special Recognition Award for his debut book, *Conducting Business*. His second book, *Leading Tones: Reflections on Music, Musicians, and the Music Industry*, was published by Amadeus Press in 2017. Slatkin has conducted virtually all the leading orchestras in the world. As music director, he has held posts in New Orleans, St. Louis, Washington, DC, London (with the BBC Symphony Orchestra), Detroit, and Lyon. He has also served as principal guest conductor in Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Cleveland.

[www.leonardslatkin.com](http://www.leonardslatkin.com)

## Peabody Symphony Orchestra



The Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University, founded in 1857, is reinventing the training of 21st-century citizen artists through its new Breakthrough Curriculum in Performing Arts Leadership, and an ensembles program designed to reflect today's professional opportunities. The Conservatory's flagship ensemble, the Peabody Symphony Orchestra (PSO), under the direction of Joseph Young, Ruth Blaustein Rosenberg Artistic Director of Ensembles, employs the largest instrumental forces of all Peabody ensembles and delivers the most performances during the season. Programming for the orchestra provides both its student musicians and audiences with exposure to a rich and diverse repertoire, including not only standard orchestral selections, but also contemporary works, American music, and premieres of new orchestral pieces. Peabody orchestras have regularly won ASCAP Awards for the Adventuresome Programming of Contemporary Music, and Peabody competition winners, faculty, and distinguished guest artists often perform with the PSO. This album marks the second PSO release for Naxos, and was recorded and produced by the Conservatory's own internationally renowned Recording Arts department.

[peabody.jhu.edu](http://peabody.jhu.edu)



Aaron Jay  
**KERNIS**  
(b. 1960)

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| <b>Flute Concerto (2015)*</b>                  | <b>28:27</b> |
| <b>1 I. Portrait</b>                           | <b>8:49</b>  |
| <b>2 II. Pastorale-Barcarolle</b>              | <b>4:30</b>  |
| <b>3 III. Pavan</b>                            | <b>9:05</b>  |
| <b>4 IV. Taran-Tulla</b>                       | <b>5:55</b>  |
| <b>5 Air (for flute and orchestra) (1996)*</b> | <b>10:44</b> |
| <b>Second Symphony (1991)</b>                  | <b>26:17</b> |
| <b>6 I. Alarm</b>                              | <b>6:18</b>  |
| <b>7 II. Air/Ground</b>                        | <b>11:44</b> |
| <b>8 III. Barricade</b>                        | <b>8:09</b>  |

\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

**Marina Piccinini, Flute 1–5**  
**Peabody Symphony Orchestra**  
**Leonard Slatkin, Conductor 1–5**  
**Marin Alsop, Conductor 6–8**

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(atticusadams.com); photograph by Marina Piccinini



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Pulitzer Prize- and GRAMMY® Award-winning composer Aaron Jay Kernis's *Flute Concerto* was inspired by and written for Marina Piccinini. Its four movements explore darker and lighter elements in various dance forms, most of which begin calmly but end up spiraling out of control. Kernis describes the songlike *Air* as 'a love letter to the flute.' His *Second Symphony* was composed at the time of the Persian Gulf War and signified a powerful shift of tone in his music. Non-programmatic but linear and compact, it forms a part of his 'War Pieces' of 1991–95.

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