



AMERICAN CLASSICS



BOSTON SYMPHONY COMMISSIONS

Timo Andres • Eric Nathan
Sean Shepherd • George Tsontakis

Robert Sheena, English Horn
Boston Symphony Orchestra • Andris Nelsons



Eric
NATHAN
(b. 1983)

① **the space of a door** (2016) **11:26**

George
TSONTAKIS
(b. 1951)

Sonnets – Tone Poems for English Horn and Orchestra (2016) **24:42**

- ② I. Sonnet 30. When to the sessions of sweet silent thought 6:44
- ③ II. Sonnet 12. When I do count the clock that tells the time 6:04
- ④ III. Rondo: Sonnet 60. Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore 3:55
- ⑤ IV. Sonnet 75. So you are to my thoughts as food to life 7:46

Timo
ANDRES
(b. 1985)

⑥ **Everything Happens So Much** (2016) **11:31**

Sean
SHEPHERD
(b. 1979)

Express Abstractionism (2017) **13:40**

- ⑦ I. dense bubbles, or: Calder, or: the origin of life on earth 4:30
- ⑧ II. Richter, or: the rainbow inside a bolt of lightning 3:14
- ⑨ III. Kandinsky, and: marble, and: Krasner 1:37
- ⑩ IV. the sun, or: the moon, or: Mondrian 4:14

Special thanks to Malachi Bosch Giuliano Cherubini Purcell for his support of this recording.

Eric Nathan (b. 1983): **the space of a door**

George Tsontakis (b. 1951): **Sonnets – Tone Poems for English Horn and Orchestra**

Timo Andres (b. 1985): **Everything Happens So Much**

Sean Shepherd (b. 1979): **Express Abstractionism**

Since becoming music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) in 2014, Andris Nelsons has continued the BSO's nearly 140-year tradition of commissioning and performing new works. American composers figured prominently in the early decades, and with the arrival of music director Serge Koussevitzky in 1924, a new generation, beginning with Aaron Copland, gained an unrivaled champion. Since then, the BSO has commissioned dozens of Americans, including Elliott Carter, Michael Gandolfi, John Harbison, Bright Sheng, and Augusta Read Thomas, to name a few. This collection features four new American works commissioned by the BSO and premiered under Andris Nelsons' direction within the first years of his tenure. Three of the four composers here (Tsontakis being the exception) were composition fellows of the BSO's Tanglewood Music Center (TMC).

Eric Nathan's *the space of a door* and **Timo Andres's** *Everything Happens So Much* were both commissioned in conjunction with a miniature Johannes Brahms festival at Symphony Hall in November 2016. A trumpet player and proficient pianist, Nathan attended the Boston University Tanglewood Institute and was also a TMC composition fellow (2010); he holds degrees from Yale, Indiana, and Cornell universities. The BSO commissioned his *Why Old Places Matter* for the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, and he has worked with musicians of the New York Philharmonic, the Berliner Philharmoniker, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and many others.

Nathan often finds inspiration in literature, visual art, and historic places. *the space of a door* (the title is from Samuel Beckett) was spurred by his first visit to the venerable Providence Athenaeum, near Brown University where Nathan is on the faculty. The moment of entry is captured in the big C major chord near the start of the piece, borrowed from Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*; other references include Brahms's *First* and *Second Symphonies*. "[The Athenaeum] was my starting point," Nathan writes, "providing a kind of

scaffolding ... as I filtered my musical ideas through the emotions experienced during the months working on it, including a sense of personal loss from the sudden death of one of my closest mentors, composer Steven Stucky. The piece takes a journey through a series of interconnected worlds punctuated by sections featuring massive, asynchronous textures in the strings, where each player is asked to play individually within the collective, as if a soloist. These sections are set against moments of stillness and fragility. A fast, wildly agitated section lies at the middle."

George Tsontakis's *Sonnets – Tone Poems for English Horn and Orchestra*, was commissioned by the BSO to showcase its long-time English Horn player Robert Sheena, and with the idea that the piece be tied to concerts marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. The composer felt the English Horn's dusky timbre was compatible with the intimacy of the sonnets. *Sonnets* was premiered by Robert Sheena with the BSO and Andris Nelsons on February 11, 2016.

Born into a Cretan Greek family in Astoria, Queens, New York City, Tsontakis studied classical violin as a child. He also heard Greek traditional and popular music constantly and loved Broadway musicals. He studied with Hugo Weisgall at New York's Queens College, with Roger Sessions at Juilliard, and with Franco Donatoni. Tsontakis has served as Composer in Residence at Bard College and the Aspen Music Festival. An accomplished conductor, he has worked with ensembles throughout the US. Among other honors, he received the Grawemeyer Award for his *Violin Concerto No. 2*.

From its gossamer opening, *Sonnet 30. When to the sessions of sweet silent thought* builds to a climax involving the entire orchestra. Its sudden collapse leaves the soloist to suggest a few hesitant, tentative fragments: "But while I think on thee, dear friend...." The composer links that "friend" to his teacher Roger Sessions, whose name is encoded in the poem's first line.

The composer sees *Sonnet 12. When I do count the clock that tells the time* as the contemplation of “aging and the inevitable, fleeting quality of life as it fades.” The movement is marked “Meditative Eastern”; the Persian touches in the melodic lines are a nod to Robert Sheena’s heritage. A ticking marimba represents the clock. A “hugely dramatic” chord in the orchestra sends the soloist to a higher range; a substantial darkening of the orchestral texture follows.

Sonnet 60. Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore, is “[A] mercurial movement, and in essence, I only ‘set’ the opening two lines.” The soloist’s long run of eighth notes in complicated groupings is picked up by the orchestra, then a broad, majestic section for orchestra alone gives the low strings a healthy workout. Regarding *Sonnet 75. So you are to my thoughts as food to life*, the composer writes, “[T]his is the only movement where the English Horn actually ‘sings’ the sonnet, line for line—as if intoning the enamored words. The poet’s love is represented as an intimate half-step rumination ending each initial melodic phrase. But when the power of that same love twists grotesquely into the rage of human jealousy, that formerly caressing minor second is inverted to its wider and tension-filled and explosive major seventh. The poet’s initial intimate love returns in the calming, concluding couplet.”

Recognized at an early age as a powerfully creative pianist, **Timo Andres** was immersed in classical repertoire but also gained notice for compelling performances of his own compositions. He grew up in Connecticut and attended Yale University. He was a TMC fellow in 2006. He has worked with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Metropolis Ensemble, and the New World Symphony, along with such musicians as Gabriel Kahane and Sarah Goldfeather, curating recital programs ranging from pop to high modernism.

Andres’s compositional practice often builds on “conversations” with older works. His *The Blind Banister*, a gloss on Beethoven, and *I Found it by the Sea* for piano quartet, a meditation on Brahms, exemplify this approach. According to the composer, for *Everything Happens So*

Much, having invented his own thematic ideas, he worked with that material as though it were someone else’s. The title was borrowed from a surreal Twitter account; the strangely ambiguous phrase suggests busy but obscure activity.

The piccolo’s opening theme is the work’s restless, essential kernel, balanced by its mirror image in the oboe. A slower, concurrent level of activity is established, and both levels develop organically. Instrumental colors are in constant flux. Solo piano plays percussive chords along with broken fanfares in the orchestra. A slower episode reveals shadows of the falling arpeggio/scale motif. Solo passages increase tension and energy once again to a fortissimo *tutti*, which ends abruptly, leaving a quiet, introverted closing passage.

The Reno, Nevada-born **Sean Shepherd** wrote *Express Abstractionism* in 2017 on a joint commission from the BSO and the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig celebrating an innovative new partnership. The BSO premiered it in February 2018. Shepherd studied at Indiana University and earned graduate degrees in composition at The Juilliard School and at Cornell University, where he worked with Steven Stucky. He was a TMC fellow in 2005. Shepherd’s music has been performed by the New York Philharmonic, Ensemble Intercontemporain, The Cleveland Orchestra, and the Reno Philharmonic, among others.

Express Abstractionism was inspired by five artists: the American sculptor Alexander Calder (1898–1976); the German Gerhard Richter (b. 1932); the Russian-born Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) and the American Lee Krasner (1908–1984), both for the third movement; and the Dutch-born Piet Mondrian (1872–1944). Shepherd used their diverse artistic techniques as analogies to the layering, stretching, stacking, or tiling of musical ideas, leading to fairly explicit correspondences between the four movements and their respective model(s). The composer’s tongue-in-cheek movement titles poke fun at modernists’ use of either dry, unenlightening titles (e.g., “Untitled”) or highly suggestive, poetic ones.

In the first movement, *dense bubbles, or: Calder, or: the origin of life on earth*, Shepherd’s music juxtaposes

“blocks” of instrumental combinations suggesting the changing interrelationships of Calder’s mobile shapes; overlapping speeds suggest movement. *Richter, or: the rainbow inside a bolt of lightning* was inspired by Richter paintings in which paint is applied using a board or squeegee, resulting in a directional texture with uneven densities. Sharp, short gestures are interspersed with a thick pattern of repeated figures. *Kandinsky, and: marble, and: Krasner* couples two very different abstract artists. Much of Lee Krasner’s 1940s work is grid-based, repetitive in idea but not in fact, calligraphy-like shapes

filling the canvas from edge to edge. Kandinsky layers pure, colorful, machine-exact geometry and organic, undulating curves. The movement’s scale melodies denote Krasner’s looping lines; brass and percussion suggest the solidity of Kandinsky’s forms. The proto-minimalist simplicity of Piet Mondrian’s late intuitive grid paintings led Shepherd to the still, austere, carefully balanced network of materials of *the sun: or: the moon: or: Mondrian*.

Robert Kirzinger

Boston Symphony Orchestra



The Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO), founded by the businessman, philanthropist, and Civil War veteran Henry Lee Higginson, gave its inaugural concert in 1881. It now reaches millions of listeners through concerts, recordings, the internet, radio, television, and educational programs. It develops future audiences through BSO Youth Concerts and future performers through its summer training program, the Tanglewood Music Center. Founded in 1885, the Boston Pops (essentially the BSO without its principal players) sets an international standard for performances of lighter music. The BSO’s first conductor was German-born Georg Henschel, whose successors included Arthur Nikisch, Karl Muck, Pierre Monteux, Serge Koussevitzky, Charles Munch, Erich Leinsdorf, Seiji Ozawa, and James Levine. Latvian-born Andris Nelsons became music director in the 2014–15 season. During Koussevitzky’s tenure (1924–49), the BSO established its permanent summer home at Tanglewood and founded the Berkshire (now Tanglewood) Music Center. The BSO’s commissioning legacy began with its 50th anniversary season in 1931. Munch led the BSO on its first international tours in the 1950s, including a visit to the Soviet Union. Seiji Ozawa’s 29-year tenure (1973–2002) encompassed the centennial of the BSO itself and that of its revered home, Symphony Hall. Under Andris Nelsons’ leadership, the BSO has initiated a historic partnership with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, earned several GRAMMY Awards, and launched its newest major venture, the Tanglewood Learning Institute.

www.bso.org

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Andris Nelsons, Music Director

Violin I

Malcolm Lowe *
Concertmaster
Tamara Smirnova ** † † †
First Associate Concertmaster
Alexander Velinzon
Associate Concertmaster
Elita Kang
Assistant Concertmaster
Bo Youp Hwang
Yuncong Zhang
Lucia Lin
Ikuko Mizuno
Jennie Shames
Valeria Kuchment
Tatiana Dimitriades
Si-Jing Huang
Wendy Putnam
Xin Ding
Glen Cherry
Lisa Ji Eun Kim

Violin II

Haldan Martinson * ** †
Principal
Julianne Lee
Assistant Principal
Sheila Fiekowsky † †
Nicole Monahan
Ronan Lefkowitz
Vyacheslav Uritsky
Nancy Bracken
Aza Raykhtsaum
Bonnie Bewick
James Cooke
Victor Romanul
Catherine French
Jason Horowitz

Ala Jojatu
Bracha Malkin
Jung-Eun Ahn °
Miguel Pérez-Espejo °
John Holland °
Kina Park °
Caroline Pliszka °
Christine Vitale °

Viola

Steven Ansell * ** † † †
Principal
Cathy Basrak
Assistant Principal
Wesley Collins
Robert Barnes
Rebecca Gitter
Michael Zaretsky
Mark Ludwig
Rachel Fagerburg
Kazuko Matsusaka
Daniel Getz
Rebekah Edwards
Danny Kim
Leah Ferguson
Stephen Dyball °
Nathaniel Farny °
Mary Ferrillo °
Stephanie Fong °
Kathryn Sievers °
Lisa Suslowicz °

Cello

Jules Eskin
Principal
Martha Babcock * **
Assistant Principal
Sato Knudsen † †

Mihail Jojatu †
Owen Young
Mickey Katz
Alexandre Lecarme
Adam Esbensen
Blaise Déjardin
Oliver Aldort
Theresa Borsodi °
Ronald Lowry °
Andrew Mark °
Michael Reynolds °
William Rounds °

Double Bass

Edwin Barker * ** † †
Principal
Lawrence Wolfe †
Assistant Principal
Benjamin Levy
Dennis Roy
Joseph Hearne
James Orleans
Todd Seeber
John Stovall
Thomas Van Dyck
Susan Hagen °
Joseph Holt °

Flute

Elizabeth Rowe **
Principal
Clint Foreman (A, S)
Elizabeth Ostling * † † †
Associate Principal
Linda Toote ° (T)

Piccolo

Cynthia Meyers (T, N, A, S)

Oboe

John Ferrillo † †
Principal
Mark McEwen (N)
Keisuke Wakao * ** †
Assistant Principal
Andrew Price ° (S)

English Horn

Robert Sheena (A, S)

Clarinet

William R. Hudgins † †
Principal
Michael Wayne (T, N, S)
Thomas Martin * ** †
Associate Principal
and E flat clarinet

Bass Clarinet

Craig Nordstrom (T, A, S)

Bassoon

Richard Svoboda
Principal
Suzanne Nelsen (S)
Richard Ranti * ** † †
Associate Principal
David Sogg ° †

Contrabassoon

Gregg Henegar (T, N, A, S)

Horn

James Somerville † †
Principal
Richard Sebring * ** †
Associate Principal
Rachel Childers (N, A, S)
Michael Winter (T, S)
Jason Snider (T, N, A, S)
Jonathan Menkis (N, A)

Hazel Dean Davis ° (T)
Lauren Winter ° (T)

Trumpet

Thomas Rolfs † †
Principal
Benjamin Wright (N, S)
Thomas Siders * ** †
Associate Principal
Michael Martin (T, N, A)
Bruce Hall ° (S)

Trombone

Toby Oft * ** † † †
Principal
Stephen Lange (S)
Shachar Israel ° (T)

Bass Trombone

James Markey (T, N, A, S)

Tuba

Mike Roylance (T, N, A, S)
Principal

Timpani

Timothy Genis (T, N, A, S)

Percussion

J. William Hudgins (T, N, A)
Daniel Bauch (T, S)
Kyle Brightwell (N, A, S)
Matthew McKay (T, N, S)

Harp

Jessica Zhou (T, N, A, S)
Principal

Piano/Celeste

Vytas Baksys ° (T, A, S)

Librarians

D. Wilson Ochoa
Principal
Mark Fabulich
Anya Brodrick °
Robert Jones °

Orchestra Manager and Director of Orchestra Personnel

Lynn G. Larsen

Assistant Personnel Managers

Bruce M. Creditor
Andrew Tremblay

Stage Manager

John Demick

* Principal, Nathan
** Principal, Tsontakis
† Principal, Andres
† † Principal, Shepherd
° Extra/substitute musician

T = Tsontakis
N = Nathan
A = Andres
S = Shepherd

Andris Nelsons



Photo: Marco Borggreve

Andris Nelsons became music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the fall of 2014. In 2018, he became Gewandhauskapellmeister of the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, in which capacity he brings the BSO and Gewandhaus Orchestra together for a unique multi-dimensional alliance. Nelsons has also established continuing collaborations with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and Berlin Philharmonic, and been a guest at the Bayreuth Festival and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. His recordings with the BSO, all made live in concert at Symphony Hall, include the complete Brahms *Symphonies* on BSO Classics, and Shostakovich's Symphonies 4, 5, 6, 7 (*Leningrad*), 8, 9, 10, and 11 (*The Year 1905*) as part of a complete Shostakovich symphony cycle for Deutsche Grammophon. Born in Riga in 1978 into a family of musicians, Andris Nelsons began his career as a trumpeter in the Latvian National Opera Orchestra before studying conducting. He was music director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra from 2008 to 2015, principal conductor of the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie in Herford, Germany, from 2006 to 2009, and music director of Latvian National Opera from 2003 to 2007.

www.andrisnelsons.com

Robert Sheena



Photo: Marco Borggreve

Robert Sheena has been the English Horn player of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Boston Pops Orchestra since 1994, occupying the Beranek chair in the BSO's woodwind section. He has performed as soloist with both the BSO and the Pops on many occasions. Sheena was formerly a member of the San Antonio Symphony and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as a Chicago-based freelancer. He teaches oboe and English Horn at Boston University, Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Longy School of Music of Bard College, and the Tanglewood Music Center, of which he is an alumnus.

ERIC NATHAN

(b. 1983)

1 the space of a door (2016) 11:26

GEORGE TSONTAKIS

(b. 1951)

2–5 Sonnets (2016) 24:42

TIMO ANDRES

(b. 1985)

6 Everything Happens So Much (2016) 11:31

SEAN SHEPHERD

(b. 1979)

7–10 Express Abstractionism (2017) 13:40

Robert Sheena, English Horn 2–5

Boston Symphony Orchestra

Andris Nelsons

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

Recorded: 11–13 February 2016 **2–5**, 8, 10–12

1 and 15, 17–19 **6** November 2016, 8–10 February

2018 **7–10** at Symphony Hall, Boston,
Massachusetts, USA

Producer, engineer and editor: Nick Squire

Assistant engineer: Joel Watts

Booklet notes: Robert Kirzinger

Publishers: Nathan Arts Music Publishing **1**, Theodore

Presser Company **2–5**, Andres & Sons Bakery **6**,

Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers, Inc. **7–10**

Cover : *Color Study: Squares with Concentric Circles*
(c. 1913) by Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944)



AMERICAN CLASSICS

The Boston Symphony Orchestra has a long tradition of commissioning and performing important new music, and the four works on this album were commissioned and premiered by the orchestra and its conductor Andris Nelsons during the first years of his tenure. Eric Nathan takes us on a journey through a series of interconnected worlds, whereas George Tsontakis marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death in a series of *Sonnets* for English horn and orchestra. Timo Andres carries on 'conversations' with composers of the past, while Sean Shepherd has been inspired by five giants of artistic modernism.

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
61:36