



# AMERICAN CLASSICS



## DAVID GOMPPER

**Cello Concerto • Double Bass Concerto**  
**Moonburst**

**Timothy Gill, Cello**

**Volkan Orhon, Double Bass**

**Royal Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Emmanuel Siffert**



## David Gompper (b. 1954)

### Cello Concerto • Double Bass Concerto • Moonburst

The music on this album presents my ongoing interest in the concerto form, a somewhat traditional approach that allows a single instrument to appear as an independent voice within a larger and rather complex sonic backdrop, a landscape – not a green screen – in an attempt to world-build. Foundationally, these three works are the final set of compositions that draw upon my *Sunburst* series, the set of intervallic relationships that has provided me with reams of material over the past decade. I have found that such pre-compositional work is essential to conjuring up original musical ideas in an effort to build such an infrastructure. I'd like to imagine that the listener's experience, gleaned from the surface, emanates from a deeper well, a universe that we can't possibly completely comprehend in a single listening or even render within a single composition.

In all three works I have played with binary ideas: day/night, light/dark, open/muted, articulate/murmuring, fast/slow, memory/forgetfulness, etc. These two-part designs are formally evident from movement to movement, especially in the way the timing of events unfold and play themselves out.

*Cello Concerto* (2019) is made up of two movements: an energetic and relentless opening gambit subtitled *Mnemosyne*, followed by *Lethe*, a response that is spectral and reflective of a memory that is fractured and detached. Attempts to recall and reconnect are made, but only as if in a dream, unconsciousness and unaware. Orchestration is reduced to strings and pianos/celeste/harp/percussion only, providing a particular sonic resonance that is other-worldly and reminiscent of a performance of Boulez's *Sur incises* I heard in a 1999 Carnegie Hall concert.

*Double Bass Concerto* (2018) – this three-movement work is the fourth in a series of compositions based on the Farey sequence. The concerto is in response to the experience of witnessing a solar eclipse, and specifically Baily's Beads. When light from the sun travels through the

valleys of the moon, there is a moment (around two minutes, depending on your point of view on earth) where "beads" of light seem to dance around the edges of the moon. This is suggested by the pulsating harmonics in the solo directly in the opening bars. The idea of covering and masking direct sunlight with the moon is, in some imaginary way, replicated sonically. I was keen to position the double bass in such a way as to create sonic shadows, auras, and glimpses of sound that are suggestive and ambiguous, often whispered and always muted.

*Moonburst* (2018), the second of a two-movement set of pieces for orchestra – *Sunburst* and *Moonburst* – reflects the transforming images of the night: a calm and gentle breeze triggering a whispering of leaves and twigs; the silent flight of owls amid a full moon overflowing with milky light and the distant yet sustained final mating calls of cicadas, all of which surrounds a sleepless mind reflecting on time passed. I composed the work in layers, beginning with a slow rotation of the *Sunburst* matrix heard spatialized among the strings at the opening while serving as a backdrop that captures the spirit of Sciarrino's *Sui poemi concentrici*. The first seven notes from the first movement of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (*Mondestrunken*) are transformed and distributed between the harp and vibraphone, followed soon after by the main tune from Debussy's *Clair de lune* (in the winds and brass throughout). While I performed both works as a pianist, the latter while both young and imperfectly impressionable, all of these ideas ultimately end as a mashup, not quotable. They have now become fused and ineluctable, with all elements emerging from a unified melodic and harmonic language. The nine-minute composition divides roughly into three unequal sections, with the middle part the most rhythmically stationary and harmonically sustained through standing waves and multiphonics, found in the oboes and bassoons.

David Gompper

## David Gompper

David Gompper has lived and worked professionally as a pianist, conductor and composer in New York, San Diego, London, Nigeria, Michigan, Texas and Iowa. He studied at the Royal College of Music in London with Jeremy Dale Roberts and Humphrey Searle. After teaching in Nigeria, he received his doctorate at the University of Michigan and taught at the University of Texas at Arlington. Since 1991 he has been professor of composition and director of the Center for New Music at the University of Iowa. From 2002 to 2003 Gompper was in Russia as a Fulbright Scholar, teaching, performing and conducting at the Moscow Conservatory. He received an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York City in 2009, a Fromm Commission in 2013, and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2020. Gompper's compositions have been performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and Merkin Concert Hall (New York), Wigmore Hall (London), Konzerthaus (Vienna) and the Bolshoi Hall and Rachmaninov Hall at the Moscow Conservatory. His compositions have been released on 21 albums, including his *Violin Concerto* with Wolfgang David and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra on Naxos (8.559637). As a pianist, he continues to maintain an active profile accompanying instrumentalists and singers, including violinist Wolfgang David, baritones Stephen Swanson and John Muriello, clarinetist Michael Norsworthy, violist Christine Rutledge, cellist Tim Gill and double bassist Volkan Orhon.



Photo: Andrej Kasik

## Timothy Gill



Photo: Krisztian Sipos

Timothy Gill is recognised as one of the most versatile instrumentalists of his generation, equally at home in the works of Beethoven or Xenakis. He is in demand as a soloist, chamber musician and principal cellist, having led the cello sections of all the London orchestras. In 2008 he was made a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, and he is currently professor of cello at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. He studied in Paris, Cambridge and London, first drawing critical acclaim for his concerts in the South Bank's Park Lane Group Series, following which he was contracted to make two albums of music for cello and piano on the Guild label. He has since toured the world as a soloist, appearing frequently with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Sinfonietta, where, in both organisations, he held the position of

principal cello for many years. His most recent solo performances include engagements at the BBC Proms, the MITO international music festival in Turin, Cello Unwrapped at Kings Place London and with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra in Dublin. Gill plays on a cello by Francesco Ruggeri, dated 1695.

## Volkan Orhon



Photo: Leonardo Ariel Rodas

Acclaimed for his musicality and virtuosity, Volkan Orhon was a prizewinner in the Concert Artists Guild competition in New York City, and was the co-first place winner of the International Society of Bassists Solo Competition. Additionally, he distinguished himself as the first double bass player ever to win the overall Grand Prize at the American String Teachers Association Solo Competition. Orhon has performed with internationally recognized musicians including Gary Karr, Fazil Say, the Emerson and Tokyo String Quartets. Orhon has recorded albums for the Albany, Centaur, and Crystal Records labels. Volkan Orhon is professor of double bass at The University of Iowa.

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

## Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Leader: Duncan Riddell



Photo: Chris Christodoulou

As the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) approaches its 75th anniversary in 2021, its mission to enrich lives through orchestral experiences that are uncompromising in their excellence and inclusive in their appeal places the RPO at the forefront of music making in the UK. Performing approximately 200 concerts each season and with a worldwide audience of more than half a million people, the Orchestra embraces a broad repertoire that enables it to reach the most diverse audience of any British symphony orchestra. Cadogan Hall in London has been the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's home since 2004. Here it performs an annual season of concerts, many of which are subsequently toured to its seven principal residency venues. In addition, the Orchestra promotes more than 45 concerts each season at partnership venues across the country. In London, the Orchestra also promotes a season of symphonic concerts at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall and a popular series at the iconic Royal Albert Hall, as the Hall's Associate Orchestra. As a respected cultural ambassador, the RPO enjoys a busy schedule of international touring, performing in the world's great concert halls and at prestigious international festivals.

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## Emmanuel Siffert



Swiss conductor Emmanuel Siffert is principal conductor of the San Juan Symphony in Argentina. He also teaches conducting and opera repertoire at the Institute of the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, as well with the National Symphony Orchestra of Argentina. He has also been the principal conductor of the Ecuador National Symphony Orchestra, Quito, European Chamber Opera, London, Orchestra Sinfonica, Aosta, and the Swiss Chamber Orchestra, and regularly conducted ballets at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. He studied violin in Salzburg under Sándor Végh and conducting with Horst Stein, Ralf Weikert, Jorma Panula and Carlo Maria Giulini. Siffert won the conducting prize at the Schweizerischen Tonkünstlerverein in 1993 and again in 1995. He conducted two seasons for the English National Ballet (2003–05), and performed at prestigious opera houses including the Teatro del Bicentenario in San Juan, Opera de Lima, Staatstheater Nürnberg and the Moldova National Opera and Ballet Theatre in Chisinau. Siffert has also conducted numerous orchestras and ensembles such as the Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Mozart Players among others.

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

and his online conducting book [www.approachtoconducting.com](http://www.approachtoconducting.com)



David  
**GOMPPER**  
(b. 1954)

**Cello Concerto (2019)**

**22:46**

**1** I. Mnemosyne

**13:07**

**2** II. Lethe

**9:39**

**Double Bass Concerto (2018)**

**26:46**

**3** I. Penumbra

**11:04**

**4** II. Umbra – III. Antumbra

**15:42**

**5 Moonburst (2018)**

**10:36**

**WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**

**Timothy Gill, Cello 1–2**

**Volkan Orhon, Double Bass 3–4**

**Royal Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Emmanuel Siffert**

Recorded: 12 December 2019 at Henry Wood Hall, London

1–2, and 7 January at Cadogan Hall, London 3–5, UK

Executive producer: David Gompper

Producer and editor: Andrew Walton (K&A Productions Ltd)

Engineer: Deborah Spanton (K&A Productions Ltd)

Booklet notes: David Gompper

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by Lasse Holst Hansen (shutterstock.com)



**AMERICAN CLASSICS**

David Gompper is an award-winning composer and the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2020. His luminously orchestrated and expressive works have attracted admiration throughout the US, Europe and beyond. Opening with relentless energy, the second movement of the *Cello Concerto* is spectral and dreamlike, while the *Double Bass Concerto* explores the light effects of a solar eclipse, using the soloist to suggest shadows, auras and glimpses of sound. A partner work to *Sunburst* (8.559835), the multi-layered *Moonburst* reflects the transformational imagery of nocturnal sounds and perceptions.

**www.naxos.com**

Playing  
Time:  
**60:19**