



AMERICAN CLASSICS



GEORGE OAKLEY

Wanderer: Chamber Works

Toccata • Sonata for Cello and Piano

Four Songs on Shakespeare Sonnets

Remembrance • Sonata-Fantasia

Naomi Louisa O'Connell, Mezzo-soprano

Anton Rist, Clarinet • Lizi Ramishvili, Cello

Inga Kashakashvili, Angelina Gadeliya, Tamar Mikeladze, Piano

George Oakley (b. 1979)

Wanderer: Chamber Works

Toccata (2008)

This was my first published work after a year-long break from composition. It was written in 2008 and premiered by pianist Inga Kashakashvili at Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall in 2009. It is a virtuosic piece that combines both classical and jazz elements.

Sonata for Cello and Piano (2013)

This composition was commissioned by my dear friend, James Carlson, and is dedicated to his son Dylan. It is program music written in three movements and inspired by a poem by James Carlson. The work was completed in 2013 and premiered the following year at Merkin Concert Hall in the Kaufman Music Center by cellist Jay Campbell and pianist Inga Kashakashvili.

The first movement begins in a state of struggle and doubt, with the theme introduced by solo cello representing the main character. After the opening, the music plunges into an intense chromaticism with technical and rhythmical challenges that create a sense of struggle. The movement ends dramatically, leaving the problem unresolved.

The second movement, *Prayer*, seeks resolution. It took me a while to find the right musical language to express the underlying emotion. Inspiration came to me on hearing a recording of Orthodox Christian church bells; this idea also became the basis for the next movement.

Writing the third movement was in some ways easy, because I knew that it would be cheerful and victorious. Nonetheless, there was the usual challenge of expressing “happy” emotions without being superficial.

The poem:

The sun's face – no longer
Only cold, and cold foreboding
Of joy's destruction, of struggle
Against a future dark and silent.

Then, the pure tone of a gong,
The sound of ancient chants,
Incantations of hope,
Armor against despair.

A dream no doubt, a trick
Played by the suffering soul.
Or magic that cannot work,
An illusion.

When day comes, it is gone,
Like a half-forgotten fevered night.
There was cold, but no sense of foreboding,
Was it illusion dispelled, prayers answered?
I shall not know.

James Carlson

Four Songs on Shakespeare Sonnets (2011)

I completed this cycle of songs in 2011 for a premiere at Weill Recital Hall. It was commissioned by soprano Nika Leoni, who suggested Shakespeare's Sonnets as lyrics. I welcomed this idea, as I had always been inspired by Shakespeare's works and their deep philosophy. To me, as a non-native English speaker, the special challenge was to work with Shakespeare's original language, which I have always admired.

An important task was to select the poems that would resonate with my own melodic style, and which had an abundance of vowels that could be used for singing through long musical phrases. I chose the four sonnets – 101, 111, 116 and 56 – so as to contrast with one another, both thematically and emotionally, and thereby to create more colorful and stylistically diverse music. Finally, I drew inspiration for my writing style from the musical language of Shakespeare's era, so that each song would somehow become a bridge connecting the Renaissance with modernity.

Remembrance (2014)

This piece is written for Anton Rist, currently principal clarinetist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, who premiered it at Merkin Concert Hall in the Kaufman Music Center in 2014. It is composed in one movement with three sections. The first section, *Daydream*, is very slow music, written in the manner of a five-part fugue. The main theme is a descending scale in A major that depicts a journey into the past. The second section, *Dream*, enters suddenly without preparation. The music is fast and chromatic with no central key. The third section, *Awakening*, mirrors the beginning and is based on a similar texture. However, the original theme appears only at the very end, in some way representing the awakening from sleep.

Four Songs on Shakespeare Sonnets

Texts by William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

5 Sonnet 101

O truant Muse what shall be thy amends
For thy neglect of truth in beauty dyed?
Both truth and beauty on my love depends;
So dost thou too, and therein dignified.
Make answer Muse: wilt thou not haply say,
‘Truth needs no colour, with his colour fixed;
Beauty no pencil, beauty's truth to lay;
But best is best, if never intermixed’?
Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?
Excuse not silence so, for't lies in thee
To make him much outlive a gilded tomb
And to be praised of ages yet to be.
Then do thy office, Muse; I teach thee how
To make him seem, long hence, as he shows now.

Sonata-Fantasia (2010)

This single-movement work for solo piano was written in September of 2010. As a concert pianist myself, I was always interested in creating a substantial work for piano solo that would demonstrate the variety of technical possibilities of the instrument. This music became my personal response to a life conflict for which I was trying to find an answer through musical composition. Nonetheless, the piece ends with the expectation of finding the answer in my following works. The musical material represents two contrasting characters that interact with each other throughout the compositions. It uses elements of Georgian folk music in combination with the musical language of the Classical-Romantic tradition.

George Oakley

6 Sonnet 111

O! for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand:
Pity me, then, and wish I were renewed;
Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink
Potions of eisel 'gainst my strong infection;
No bitterness that I will bitter think,
Nor double penance, to correct correction.
Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure ye,
Even that your pity is enough to cure

7 Sonnet 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

8 Sonnet 56

Sweet love, renew thy force; be it not said
Thy edge should blunter be than appetite,
Which but to-day by feeding is allayed,
To-morrow sharpened in his former might:
So, love, be thou, although to-day thou fill
Thy hungry eyes, even till they wink with fullness,
To-morrow see again, and do not kill
The spirit of love, with a perpetual dullness.
Let this sad interim like the ocean be
Which parts the shore, where two contracted new
Come daily to the banks, that when they see
Return of love, more blest may be the view;
As call it winter, which being full of care,
Makes summer's welcome, thrice more wished, more rare.

Naomi Louisa O'Connell

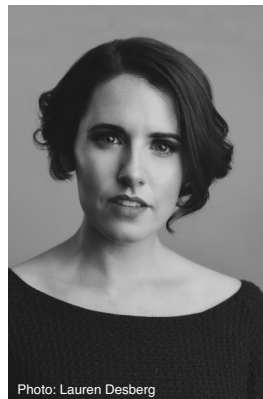


Photo: Lauren Desberg

Naomi Louisa O'Connell made her professional debut in 2012, starring on London's West End in Terrence McNally's play *Master Class*. She is a singer, actress and cabaret artist whose recent engagements include recitals at Carnegie Hall and Stanford University, Bernstein's '*Jeremiah*' *Symphony* in São Paulo, her one-woman cabaret *The Cheater's Almanac* at New York's Neue Galerie, and performances with Geneva Opera, Opera Omaha and the Spoleto Festival USA. Notable roles include Poppea with Oper Frankfurt, Cherubino with Welsh National Opera and Atlanta Opera, Mélisande with the Cincinnati Symphony and La Périchole with Garsington Opera. A Juilliard graduate and First Prize winner of the 2011 Concert Artists Guild Competition, O'Connell divides her time between the recital platform, and the theatre and opera stages.

www.naomiocconnell.com

Anton Rist

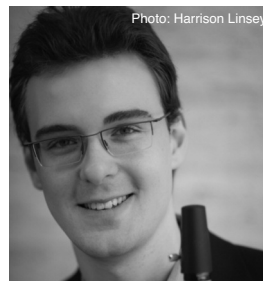


Photo: Harrison Linsey

Anton Rist was appointed principal clarinetist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in 2016. He previously held principal positions with the Princeton and New Haven Symphony Orchestras. In addition, Rist has performed with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Grant Park Festival Orchestra, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Louisiana Philharmonic and the American Ballet Theater. He has appeared at the Verbier, Pacific, St Barths, and Aspen Festivals, and has performed as a chamber musician throughout the US, Europe and Asia. As a teacher, Rist is on faculty at the Colorado College Summer Music Festival and the Interlochen Arts Camp, and has presented masterclasses around the country. In addition, he is a founding member of the Montserrat Music Festival in the West Indies. Born and raised in New York City, Rist studied at The Juilliard School. His primary teachers were Jon Manasse, Larry Guy, and Jo-Ann Sternberg.

Lizi Ramishvili



Lizi Ramishvili was born in the Republic of Georgia and gave her first concert when she was only 8. She studied at the Paliashvili Central Music School with Tamara Gabarashvili and continued her studies at the Kronberg Academy with Frans Helmerson, the Haute école de Musique de Genève-Neuchâtel and most recently with Jens Peter Maintz at the Reina Sofia School of Music in Madrid. She has received top prizes at the Nutcracker International TV Competition in Russia, the Renaissance International Competition in Armenia, the national final for the Eurovision Young Musicians Competition, as well as numerous prestigious scholarships. Ramishvili has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Berlin's Konzerthaus and leading international festivals. She has performed with such orchestras as the Real Filharmonía de Galicia, the Arpeggione Hohenems Chamber Orchestra, the Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra, the National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia, the National Symphony Orchestra of Azerbaijan, the Novaya Rossiya State Symphony Orchestra, and the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of such conductors as Yuri Bashmet, Benjamin Schwartz, Kazuki Yamada and Saulius Sondeckis.

Inga Kashakashvili



Georgian-born pianist, Inga Kashakashvili, has performed at major venues such as Carnegie Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Le Poisson Rouge, Steinway Hall, Merkin Hall at Kaufman Center, the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Tradegar House and the Tbilisi Center for Music and Culture. She is a prizewinner of numerous international competitions, including the Artists International Auditions and the Jacob Flier International Piano Competition in New York and the Newport International Competition for Young Pianists in Wales. She has participated in prestigious music festivals including the Fête de la Musique in conjunction with the French-American Piano Society and Steinway & Sons at Sofitel in New York, the United Sounds of America in Chicago, PianoSummer at New Paltz in New York, and the Leipzig Music Festival in Germany. Kashakashvili studied at Tbilisi State Conservatory, DePaul University and Mannes College of Music; her main teachers were Nino Katamadze, Eteri Andjaparidze and Vladimir Feltsman.

www.ingakashakashvili.com

Angelina Gadeliya



The pianist Angelina Gadeliya is active worldwide as a soloist, chamber musician, new music expert, festival organizer and artist teacher. Her work with Ensemble Connect and Decoda has frequently brought her to the stages of Carnegie Hall and The Juilliard School, as well as to South Korea, Germany, Abu Dhabi, Princeton University, the Trinity Wall Street series, and various New York locales. Gadeliya has appeared as soloist with orchestras across the US and holds degrees from Oberlin, Juilliard, Mannes, and has a doctorate from Stony Brook University. She is the co-artistic director of the Connecticut Bach Festival and serves on the faculty of the Beijing International Music Festival and Academy. Angelina Gadeliya is currently serving as the assistant professor in residence of piano, and director of keyboard studies at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. www.angelina.gadeliya.com

Tamar Mikeladze



A native of Tbilisi, Georgia, Tamar Mikeladze made her orchestral solo debut at age 11. She started her study at the Special Music School for gifted children that same year. She holds graduate and post-graduate degrees from Tbilisi State Conservatory. While in Georgia, she actively performed with national orchestras and appeared numerous times on national television and radio as well as teaching at the Special Music School. In 2003 she moved to the United States where she received artist and performer diplomas and a master's degree in piano performance from Indiana University, South Bend. In 2006, Mikeladze joined the piano faculty at the University of Notre Dame. Her most recent performances include appearances at the Auditorium Parco della Musica in Rome, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and Steinway Hall. A recipient of the Rosamond P. Haerberle Memorial Piano Award, Mikeladze served as adjudicator at the Michigan Music Association 47th Annual Competition and joined the piano faculty of the Michigan State University College of Music in 2015.

George Oakley



Photo: Oleg Osenkov

George Oakley is a Georgian-born American composer who "represents a return to a great tradition" (Jay Nordlinger). His unique musical style, deeply narrative and symbolic, derives from the rich folklore of Georgia, the long tradition of Western classical music, and his personal philosophical reflections. His compositions stand out for their poetic tone and virtuosity. *New York Concert Review* said about his *Cello Sonata*: "this work deserves to take its place in the smallish repertoire of cello sonatas." George Oakley's music has been performed at major stages, such as Carnegie Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Merkin Concert Hall at Kaufman Music Center, and Le Poisson Rouge. He has written

for such renowned artists as Lisa Batiashvili, Misha Rachlevsky, Nikolai Kachanov and Eteri Andjaparidze. Born in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia, George Oakley studied at the Z. Paliashvili Gymnazium for Gifted Children and at the V. Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire as a pianist. In 2003, after winning the top prize at the Flier International Piano Competition, he moved to the United States to continue his education as a pianist at DePaul University in the studio of Eteri Andjaparidze. He is a featured alumnus of the Steinhardt School at New York University, where he studied film scoring with Ira Newborn and classical composition with Justin Dello Joio. After his studies at New York University, Oakley was mentored by the prominent composer Richard Danielpour, who has said that "George Oakley is a composer of extraordinary gifts whose music speaks to the heart as well as the mind."

www.georgeoakleycomposition.com

George
OAKLEY
(b. 1979)

Wanderer: Chamber Works

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|----|---|--------------|
| 1 | Toccata (2008) | 3:47 |
| | Sonata for Cello and Piano (2013) | 20:29 |
| 2 | I. Quasi rubato andante | 7:07 |
| 3 | II. Prayer: Adagio molto e cantabile | 7:22 |
| 4 | III. Allegro ma non troppo | 5:48 |
| | Four Songs on Shakespeare Sonnets (2011) | 21:35 |
| 5 | Sonnet 101 | 3:57 |
| 6 | Sonnet 111 | 5:31 |
| 7 | Sonnet 116 | 5:16 |
| 8 | Sonnet 56 | 6:33 |
| | Remembrance (2014) | 9:42 |
| 9 | Daydream – Dream – Awakening | |
| 10 | Sonata-Fantasia (2010) | 15:55 |

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Naomi Louisa O'Connell, Mezzo-soprano [5–8]
Anton Rist, Clarinet [9]
Lizi Ramishvili, Cello [2–4]
Inga Kashakashvili [1–8], **Angelina Gadeliya** [9],
Tamar Mikeladze [10], **Piano**

Recorded: 2–3 November 2015 [5–8], 2–3 October 2016 [2–4],
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www.naxos.com/libretti/559856.htm

Producer, engineer and editor: Ryan Streber

Booklet notes: George Oakley • Publisher: Oakley Music

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

George Oakley is a Georgian-born American composer and a prize-winning concert pianist. The solo piano pieces on this recording, *Toccata* and *Sonata-Fantasia*, are technically demanding works which exhibit a range of styles from jazz to classical and Georgian folk music. Oakley's *Sonata for Cello and Piano* takes us from an initial state of struggle and doubt to a cheerful and victorious conclusion. For his *Four Songs on Shakespeare Sonnets*, Oakley 'drew inspiration ... from the musical language of Shakespeare's era, so that each song would somehow become a bridge connecting the Renaissance with modernity.' His mentor and friend Richard Danielpour has written that 'George Oakley's music is always highly expressive, inevitable without ever being predictable, and speaks to the heart as well as the mind.'

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
72:06