



# AMERICAN CLASSICS



**George  
TSONTAKIS**

**Anasa  
True Colors  
Unforgettable**

**David Krakauer,  
Clarinet**

**Eric Berlin, Trumpet**

**Luosha Fang and  
Eunice Kim, Violins**

**Albany Symphony**

**David Alan Miller**



## George Tsontakis (b. 1951)

### Anasa • True Colors • Unforgettable

#### Anasa for clarinet and orchestra (2011)

*Anasa* was commissioned by the Albany Symphony with funds provided by the Music Alive composer residency program of Meet the Composer and the League of American Orchestras.

*Anasa* is ancient Greek for 'breath' but also infers a kind of rest or pause. There is also a 'breath of life' sense to the meaning of the word and at the start of the work I envision our soloist passing such a life-giving breath to others around him as they receive it.

The work is in three movements with subdivisions. *Doyma* is a slow, melismatic introduction, in the Klezmer tradition of beginning a fast and rhythmic song with a very modal and languid melody. It is followed *attacca* by *Pistoli* – a quick, dancelike and obsessively repetitive song inspired by Cretan *lyra* and *lauto* (traditional Cretan instruments similar to a viola da gamba and lute). The *pistoli* (pistol shots) interrupt the dancing the way real celebratory pistol shots (aimed in the air, thankfully!) continue to enhance the excitement at Cretan weddings.

The middle movement, *Soliloquy*, is music more 'my own', in the sense that the ideas are abstract and free, but wholly connected to the essences of both styles. Klezmer ideas are implied in tandem with Greek, but manifest only in snippets, too fleeting to identify with any particular musical vernacular. The movement is mostly somber or even eerie. In it, as in all passages, I heard and anticipated the unique stylings of the great David Krakauer and imagined his personal sound as I composed it. I have implored my decades-long friend to add his special interpretive touches in his performance. The centerpiece of the movement is a scurrying cadenza where the soloist's ruminations are mimicked in close canon by flutes, trumpets and hi-hat until the return of the movement's opening music.

In the last movement, *Bir-Zirk!* I thought to 'give David what he wants'. 'Zirk' means 'circus' in Yiddish and I know that David has admonished me not to think of

Klezmer as circus or flippant music. Nor do I think I do – but in this case the outrageousness of the frenzy becomes a tool – a vehicle of excitement and exuberance to underscore the entire whole, the ultimate seriousness of both life and breath.

#### True Colors for trumpet and orchestra (2012)

Like *Anasa*, *True Colors* was commissioned by the Albany Symphony with funds provided by the Music Alive composer residency program.

The work is in two parts, the first acting as a short prologue to the substantial second movement. In *Echoing* the orchestra and, particularly, the orchestral brass echoes and sustains what might be heard as familiar trumpet 'fanfare' motifs of primary harmonic colors. The treatment engulfs the motifs in harmonic layering, close canon and long residual sustaining of the brief harmonic cells created by the figurations as the texture gathers coloristic density. Interspersed are two passages of a more ethereal chain of rising notes, creating more piquant, pastel harmonies as they evolve. The movement ends in a pyramiding crescendo, which is cut off by the solo trumpet – beginning with a new three-note descending figure which will play a part in the main, subsequent movement.

*Magic Act* is jazz-tinged throughout, beginning with a lazy, falling 3–2 suspension figure as an introductory 'logo'. The muted solo trumpet outburst that follows – a surging, upward arpeggio – announces the opening of the 'main event'. The musical terrain begins with a kind of free rhapsodic ballad then onto a rolling jazz harmonic progression, where the head capitalizes on the aforementioned three note descending figure. The coda of the movement follows after the chordal dynamic climax of the progression. It is a broad, deliberate B–A–C–H figuration (beginning on the D sharp from the previous B major) which leads to the optimistic and somewhat majestic 'feel-good (and truly American) ending'. A brief

postscript ends the work, with a refrain of the movement's opening 3–2 suspension figure, melting into a soft, all-brass chord.

The title has a double, if not triple, entendre. First, there are the true colors of the harmonic motifs – primary colors which will blend to make secondary and tertiary musical colors, just as red, yellow and blue blend to form all the possible colors. This is the way I have always thought of music – in terms of melody, harmony and texture. Complexities are created by blending primary harmonic colors – so there is no historical prejudice for any possible use of color at any time. There is, therefore, no atonality but all are a mixing of 'innocent' colors. This work shows my own true colors as a composer, and quite unabashedly.

Additionally, there are the true, affirming colors of the trumpet and its cohorts in the brass family, which connects to a story I was told by our soloist, Eric Berlin. Through a timely experience, Eric may have discovered his own true colors after he insisted that his parents buy a trumpet that was offered at an auction house. In my opening three note motif and at other times during the piece, I sought to capture the magic of such a moment of epiphany: young man meets his true instrument.

### **Unforgettable** for two violins and orchestra (2009 rev. 2013)

*Unforgettable* was commissioned by George Soros for the dynamic violin sister duo team of Jennifer and Angela Chun and premiered by them in Aspen, with Peter Ondjian conducting. I later revised the work for the 2013

Albany Symphony performances, adding some music to the finale as well as adjusting some of the soli writing.

The first movement begins with a violin duet which might seem to be an isolated phrase of nostalgic longing, left suspended and unfulfilled, with bell-like bass tones creating a 'dot, dot, dot' effect. There follows a phantasmagorically changing musical landscape indeed, which ranges in mood from serenity to almost frightening and propulsive gestures, then to simple and soothingly mantra-like phrases of Eastern meditative repetitions over deep pedal tones.

The second is a playful leapfrogging between the two violins, somewhat 'competitive'. The quirky start melds into a lyrical flow – a gentle waltzing together, still trading, but with a new musical gesture. The movement builds to a bit of a ruckus before returning to the same gently traded gestures, in reconciliation.

The work's finale begins with a buoyant, Baroque-ish bass line inspired by, but very different from, Bach's famous double concerto. The atmosphere evolves into a more contemporary and softly undulating melodic jazz-like ballad, accompanied by, mostly, muted brass. There follows a two-tiered climax before the work descends, ironically, to the initial nostalgic (and now, somewhat spiritual informed) 'logo' that began the work.

My choice of title is more imbued with irony than any other musical references, not unlike my chamber orchestra work, *Clair de Lune*. I sought to give the iconic titles a reborn meaning, i.e. my own.

**George Tsontakis**

## George Tsontakis



George Tsontakis has been the recipient of two of the richest prizes awarded in Classical music: the International Grawemeyer Award in 2005 for his *Second Violin Concerto*, and the 2007 Ives Living Prize from the American Academy. He studied with Roger Sessions at The Juilliard School and in Rome with Franco Donatoni. Born in Astoria, NY into Cretan heritage, he has become an important figure in the music of Greece and his music is increasingly performed abroad with several performances in Europe every season. Most of his music has been recorded by Hyperion, Koch, Innova and Naxos, including fourteen orchestral works, leading to two GRAMMY® nominations for Best Classical Composition. He served as Composer-in-Residence with the Aspen Music Festival for 40 years where he was founding director of the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble; with the Oxford Philomusica in England, with the Albany Symphony for six years, and with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center for the 2009-10 season, among others. He is Distinguished Composer-in-Residence at the Bard College Conservatory. His most recent premieres include chamber works for Maverick Concerts, London's Mobius Ensemble and large scale pieces for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Albany Symphony and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. He lives in New York's Catskill Mountains.

## David Krakauer



Photo: GMD Three

Internationally acclaimed clarinetist David Krakauer redefines the notion of a concert artist. Known for his mastery of myriad styles, he occupies the unique position of being one of the world's leading exponents of Eastern European Jewish klezmer music, and at the same time is a major voice in Classical music. He has appeared with the Tokyo, Kronos, and Emerson quartets, plus as soloist with the Dresden, Seattle, and Detroit symphony orchestras, among many others. With his band Ancestral Groove, he has redefined the klezmer genre with major appearances at Carnegie Hall and internationally. His discography contains some of the most important klezmer recordings of the past decade, notably Osvaldo Golijov's *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind* with the Kronos Quartet on Nonesuch. Consistently defying categorization, Krakauer has enjoyed major ongoing artistic collaborations with a tremendously diverse group of performers and composers including Dawn Upshaw, Itzhak Perlman, John Zorn, Fred Wesley, Music from Marlboro, Abraham Inc, the Klezmatics, John Cage, Danny Elfman, and Socalled.

## Eric Berlin



Photo: Bob Malone

Eric Berlin is Principal Trumpet of the Albany Symphony and Boston Philharmonic Orchestras, Associate Principal Trumpet of the Colorado Music Festival Orchestra, a member of the Boston Modern Orchestra Project and the world-renowned Empire Brass Quintet. In addition to his titled positions, he has performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic and Los Angeles Philharmonic. As a soloist, he has appeared most notably with Albany Symphony Orchestra, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Hartford Symphony Orchestra, Helsinki University Orchestra, and the US Coast Guard Band. A champion of contemporary music, he has commissioned, premiered and recorded numerous new works for trumpet and can be heard as soloist on MSR Classics, Naxos and Albany Records. Stephen Paulus' *Concerto for Two Trumpets* on his latest release of commissioned works with the UMass Wind Ensemble received a GRAMMY® nomination for Best Contemporary Classical Composition. As an educator, Mr. Berlin is Artist-Teacher of Trumpet at the University of Massachusetts, has given masterclasses worldwide and is known for his column *Eric Berlin's Workshop* in the international brass magazine *Brass Herald*. He is a lifetime member and a Director of the International Trumpet Guild. Eric Berlin is a Yamaha Performing Artist.

## Luosha Fang



Photo: Vanessa Briceño

Violinist Luosha Fang made her concert debut at the age of eight in Mozart's *Violin Concerto No. 3*, and has performed widely as soloist and chamber musician in leading venues throughout the United States. Fang was recently featured as soloist with the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra in Sibelius' *Violin Concerto*, and with the Louisville Orchestra in 'Autumn' from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. A winner of Astral's 2013 National Auditions, she has been a regular guest artist with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. She also premiered Chinese composer Shen Yiwen's violin concerto *Mulan* with the American Symphony Orchestra under Leon Botstein. Recently, she appeared in recital at Bard College and presented a concert of solo violin works by Jeffrey Mumford at Spectrum NYC. The winner of a 2015 S&R Foundation Washington Award, Fang was also awarded the Silver Medal at the prestigious 2010 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, as the first violinist of the Chimeng Quartet, of whom she is also a founding member. The quartet has also performed Takuma Itoh's *Concerto for String Quartet* with the Albany Symphony Orchestra under David Alan Miller.

## Eunice Kim



Photo: Claire McAdams

A native of the San Francisco Bay Area, violinist Eunice Kim made her solo debut at the age of seven with the Korean Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra. A winner of Astral Artists' 2012 National Auditions, Kim is the recipient of awards and honors from the California International Violin Competition, the Korea Times String Competition, and the Youth Excellence Scholarship for the Arts. She also represented the Curtis Institute of Music and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in the Millennium Stage Series Conservatory Project at the Kennedy Center. She has appeared at many political events, most recently performing for the Henry A. Kissinger Prize ceremony in Dresden, as well as performing for the United Nations and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at Bohemian National Hall, Cleveland. She has participated in prestigious summer festivals such as Ravinia's Steans Institute of Music, Marlboro School of Music, and Music from Angel Fire. This year, she was a guest artist for the Seongnam Music Festival and Manhattan Chamber Music Festival.

## Albany Symphony



youth performing arts groups. Our flagship education programs, Adopt-a-School and Meet the Maestro, bring musicians into classrooms for interactive music education, and Literacy-through-Songwriting, our in-school composer residency program, works with students on songwriting, storytelling, improvisation, teamwork, and self-expression.

### David Alan Miller



Photo: Gary Gold

GRAMMY®-winning conductor David Alan Miller has established a reputation as one of the leading American conductors of his generation. Music Director of the Albany Symphony since 1992, Mr. Miller has proven himself a creative and compelling orchestra builder. Through exploration of unusual repertoire, educational programming, community outreach and recording initiatives, he has reaffirmed the Albany Symphony's reputation as the nation's leading champion of American symphonic music and one of its most innovative orchestras. A native of Los Angeles, Mr. Miller holds a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley and a master's degree in orchestral conducting from The Juilliard School. From 1988 until 1992, he was Associate Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. From 1982 to 1988, he was Music Director of the New York Youth Symphony, earning considerable acclaim for his work with that ensemble.



Playing  
Time:  
**63:12**

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George  
**TSONTAKIS**  
(b. 1951)

**Anasa** for clarinet and orchestra (2011) **23:42**

- 1** I. Doyna – Pistoli **5:32**
- 2** II. Soliloquy **14:02**
- 3** III. Bir-Zirk! **4:08**

**True Colors** for trumpet and orchestra (2012) **18:06**

- 4** I. Prologue: Echoing **4:13**
- 5** II. Magic Act **13:53**

**Unforgettable** for two violins and orchestra (2009 rev. 2013) **21:24**

- 6** I. Changing Landscapes **8:34**
- 7** II. Leapfrogging **5:04**
- 8** III. Ballade **7:46**

**WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**

**David Krakauer, Clarinet** **1–3**

**Eric Berlin, Trumpet** **4–5**

**Luosha Fang, Violin** **6–8**

**Eunice Kim, Violin** **6–8**

**Albany Symphony Orchestra**

**David Alan Miller**

Recorded: 22 May 2011 at EMPAC Concert Hall, Troy, New York, USA (1–3), 19 March 2012 (4–5) and 16 December 2013 (6–8) at Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, Troy, New York

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Assistant Engineer: Doron Schachter

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(www.josetteurso.com)



**AMERICAN CLASSICS**

Over the last few years American composer George Tsontakis, winner of the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition, has crafted three distinctive and exciting additions to the contemporary concerto repertoire. *Anasa*, for clarinet and orchestra, combines elements of the Klezmer tradition with dance themes inspired by the lyra and lauto, traditional Cretan instruments. In *True Colors* the trumpet journeys in harmonically vivid, jazz-tinged directions, while *Unforgettable* balances the meditative with the playful, moving from ballad to phantasmagoria in a double concerto of drama and drive.

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