

Kevin Puts (b. 1972)**Symphony No. 2 • River's Rush • Flute Concerto**

Winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for his debut opera *Silent Night*, Kevin Puts has been hailed as one of the most important composers of his generation. Critically acclaimed for a richly colored, harmonic, and freshly melodic musical voice that has also been described as "emotional, compelling, and relevant," his works, which include two operas, four symphonies, and several concertos, have been commissioned, performed, and recorded by leading orchestras, ensembles and soloists throughout the world.

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2

A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Puts received both his Bachelor's Degree and his Doctor of Musical Arts Degree from the Eastman School of Music, and his Master's Degree from Yale University. He is currently Chair of the Composition Faculty at the Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute, and he is the Director of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute.

Composer's notes**Symphony No. 2**

On the morning of September 11, 2001, I was packing for my move to Italy where I would work for a year at the American Academy in Rome. I turned on the TV and found on every channel images of a commercial jet slamming into the side of the World Trade Center. A couple of weeks later, writer Jonathan Franzen would write in *The New Yorker*, "In the space of two hours we left behind a happy era of Game Boy economics and trophy houses and entered a world of fear and vengeance."

My *Second Symphony* is a musical illustration of this sudden paradigmatic shift. During the first eight minutes of the work, a gradual orchestral build describes an unsuspecting climate. The mood is one of bliss and, eventually, patriotic rhapsody. After a brief passage for solo violin, a violent upheaval effectively obliterates this opening sentiment and initiates another gradual crescendo which makes use of the same material as the opening, cast this time in darker and more ambiguous harmonic colors. At the height of this crescendo, the solo violin returns in a more extended passage than before and effectively subdues the turbulent orchestra. This leads to a reflective epilogue in which a clock-like pulse creates a mood of expectancy and uncertainty, interlaced with hope.

The work was commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music and premiered in April 2002 by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra with Paavo Järvi conducting.

River's Rush

River's Rush begins with bustling arpeggios, from which a simple two-note motif emerges from the orchestral bass and eventually blossoms into two-voice counterpoint. This idea moves through many of the instruments in the orchestra and culminates in a ruminative duet between two clarinets. Though much of the music is big and muscular, the quieter moments are driven by delicate orchestral colors and textures. Maybe I was thinking of the Mississippi, how its appearance can vary under different types of sunlight. This is achieved – in musical terms – through the use of different combinations of instruments, but it also has to do with the chords I used. I took a new approach to harmony in *River's Rush* by combining major and minor chords from different keys freely and intuitively, almost as a painter would combine paints on a canvas. Sometimes I created very complex sonorities using three disparate chords, sometimes I only needed one. The result, I hope, is that all the music feels like it comes from the same source. There can be both variety and economy.

River's Rush was commissioned by the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra in celebration of the orchestra's 125th anniversary. It was given its premiere on September 17, 2004 at Powell Hall, Saint Louis, Missouri, under the direction of Leonard Slatkin.

Flute Concerto

Bette and Joe Hirsch are longtime patrons of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in Santa Cruz, California, where Marin Alsop will conclude her twenty-five years as Music Director in August 2016. Unbeknownst to the intentions of one another, they each approached the festival in hopes of commissioning a piece from me as a gift to the other. The result is my *Flute Concerto*, a work they commissioned jointly.

Like most composers, I am fascinated by complexity in music, but I am also drawn – perhaps more emotionally – to the more modest statements composers make, ones in which the composer's intentions are laid bare with

elegant transparency. My *Flute Concerto* begins with a simple melody I once improvised as a student. Beginning with a rising three-note motive, the melody, though irregular in its rhythmic setting, is lyrical and easy to remember. Much of the music in the *Concerto*, including the spritely phrases played by the flute when it first enters, can be traced back to the shape and rhythm of this initial motive. When I began the second movement I had in mind the slow movement of Mozart's *Piano Concerto in C major, K. 467*, in which Mozart creates magic with little more than a major chord repeated in triplets, a simple bassline played *pizzicato*, and a melody floating above. To me, it is music of otherworldly beauty whose emotional impact is incalculably greater than the sum of its parts. I found myself entering into this hallowed environment, and – in a sense – speaking from within it, freely drawing upon my own proclivities. Rhythm drives the third movement, its main idea returning rather obsessively to the opening motive of the piece. It culminates in a highly energetic dialogue between the soloist and a small, contrapuntal band of winds, brass and percussion.

The *Flute Concerto* was commissioned by Bette and Joe Hirsch and premiered on August 2, 2013 with Adam Walker, flute and the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra conducted by Carolyn Kuan, who stood in for a temporarily injured Marin Alsop. It was subsequently performed in October, 2015 by Adam Walker and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra conducted by Marin Alsop.

This recording would not have been possible without the support of Joe and Bette Hirsch, who funded it completely. Nor without the talents of the students at the Peabody Institute who played with brilliance and unflagging commitment. My most heartfelt thanks to all of them, and to Dean Fred Bronstein for his support of the project. I am also indebted to Karen Chester, who led a team of Peabody Recording Arts and Sciences students under the tutelage of Ed Tetreault in the engineering of this recording. But there is no one to whom I owe more gratitude than Marin Alsop. Her continuing belief in my work is a constant source of encouragement and inspiration.

Kevin Puts

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Adam Walker

At the forefront of a new generation of wind soloists, Adam Walker was appointed principal flute of the London Symphony Orchestra in 2009 at the age of 21 and received the Outstanding Young Artist Award at MIDEM Classique in Cannes. In 2010 he won a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship Award and was shortlisted for the Royal Philharmonic Society Outstanding Young Artist Award. As a soloist, Adam Walker performs regularly with all the major British orchestras, including the BBC Scottish Symphony, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony, BBC Philharmonic and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. Other highlights include the Baltimore Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic, Auckland Philharmonia, Solistes Européens Luxembourg, Malmö Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Chamber Orchestra and the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra. Recital highlights include LSO St. Luke's, City of London Festival, Newbury Spring Festival, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festspiele and the West Cork, Utrecht and Moritzburg Chamber Music Festivals. He appears regularly at Wigmore Hall where collaborations include performing with Brett Dean, Angela Hewitt, James Baillieu, guitarist Morgan Szymanski and harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani.

www.adamwalkerflute.com

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Peabody Symphony Orchestra

Linda Goodwin: Executive Director of Ensembles/Concert Operations • Paul Faatz: Senior Ensemble Coordinator
Melina Gajger: Orchestra Coordinator • Darryl Carr: Stage Manager • Michael Repper: Assistant Conductor



Photo: Will Kirk (Homewood Photography)

The Peabody Symphony Orchestra draws its members primarily from graduate and upper-division students of the highest level of musicianship and performs six to seven public concert programmes each season. Programming for the orchestra is designed to provide both its student musicians and the listening public with exposure to a rich and diverse repertoire, including not only standard orchestral selections, but also contemporary works, American music, and premières 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 concertos with the orchestras. This recording marks the first major label release for the Peabody Symphony Orchestra and was recorded and produced by the Conservatory's own internationally renowned Recording Arts Department.

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5

Marin Alsop



Photo: Adriane White

2002 to 2008. In the summer of 2016, she serves her 25th and final season as music director of the acclaimed Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in California. Alsop is often making history: in 2005 she was the first conductor to be awarded a MacArthur Genius award and in September 2013 as the first female conductor of the BBC's Last Night of the Proms in London.

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6



AMERICAN CLASSICS



KEVIN PUTS

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Flute Concerto • River's Rush

Adam Walker, Flute

Peabody Symphony Orchestra • Marin Alsop



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