



**BRIAN WILBUR
GRUNDSTROM**

AN ORCHESTRAL JOURNEY

OMEGA RECORDING STUDIOS ORCHESTRA
ERIK OCHSNER, CONDUCTOR





LeCLAIR IMAGE LLC

PROGRAM NOTES written by Brian Wilbur Grundstrom unless otherwise noted

CONTENTMENT, POEM FOR ORCHESTRA

2 flutes, 2 oboes (english horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings

Grundstrom's first orchestra work, *Contentment*, reflects his love of melody, as melancholy musical kernels meander and grow, eventually climaxing into warm and satisfying lyrical melodies.

JUBILATION! DANCE FOR ORCHESTRA

2 piccolos, 2 flutes, 2 oboes (english horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, xylophone, vibraphone, marimba, percussion, strings

Jubilation! Dance for Orchestra is an uplifting and joyful celebration. The dance, however, is not a traditional one, but takes the listener on travels over exotic peaks and through colorful streets. There are frequent changes in meter, providing unusual interest, often with five beats to the measure instead of the usual three or four. A full complement of winds, brass and mallets brings much excitement, climaxing with a brass chorale preceding a big tutti ending.

SUITE FOR CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Commissioned by Erik Ochsner and the SONOS Chamber Orchestra
flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, timpani, strings

i. **BEFORE THE FALL**, composed while the composer lived in Brooklyn with a view of the twin towers, was almost completed before that defining moment of September 11th. The title also portrays the sense of loss felt as summer fades away and the anticipation of cold and dark as winter approaches.

ii. **AVALON** is the mystical island of healing that King Arthur sought out after his battle. This piece represents the slow and necessary healing process following a dramatic event. Mysterious and epic sounding, Avalon has a freestyle beginning with interjecting motives – then transitions and builds upon these interjections to a steady and foreboding feel with string pizzicato. The color and character changes subtly as the piece slowly climaxes and relaxes.

iii. **CELEBRATION!** deals with the joy and celebration of life that we need to express after coming to terms with the sadness and disappointments that are also a part. With its excitement and vigor, as well as its unexpected turns, Celebration! makes a great concert opener!!

AMERICAN REFLECTIONS FOR STRINGS AND HARP

Commissioned by Erik Ochsner and the SONOS Chamber Orchestra

violin I solo, violin I section, violin II solo, violin II section, viola solo, viola section, violincello solo, violincello section, contrabass, harp

As the title of the new piece suggests, Grundstrom was committed to writing music that captures the American character, but not in the usual style of patriotic anthems. "This is not an overt rah-rah stars-and-stripes sort of thing, but rather a more pensive mood," he notes. There's a personal connection in this work's setting: Grundstrom received his B.A. in music at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg PA, the site of the Civil War's climactic battle that helped define America.

The piece opens with a playful, buoyant melody in the strings against a delicate pizzicato accompaniment and delicate flourishes in the harp. Other figures join, including a descending fourth interval that suggests a birdcall. The mood remains light and cheery until a shadowy waltz theme appears, unsettling the jovial atmosphere with a more sinister cast. Soon the material from the opening returns to compete with the darker theme, only this time it takes on a more pensive tone. There is a gradual breaking down of the material into smaller fragments until the mood becomes decidedly brooding and unsettled. Darkness will not get the final word, however; with a few decisive string gestures, the jovial opening melody returns with a flourish followed by a short, decidedly upbeat recapitulation. – *Brian Wise*

The polyphony of the work is nothing short of genius. Truly. The relationship between the parts is so well written. Having your work on the program was wonderful. It truly embodies the best of American contemporary classical music. It is rhythmically enticing, harmonically satisfying and interesting, makes full use of what a string section can do, shows a broad spectrum of colors without forcing anything, provides several "eye closingly beautiful moments", and keeps the audience engaged from beat one. – *Jeffrey Dokken, conductor*

CHENONCEAU

Commissioned by Max Lifchitz and North/South Consonance
flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, strings

Chenonceau, one of the most magnificent French castles in the Loire Valley, is known for the formal elegance and beauty of its gardens. A visit on a beautiful May day with the tulips in their prime inspired the piece. The music starts with a favorite compound meter (also in Celebration), which combine groups of varying number of beats. A 4/4 meter consists of eight eighth-notes, which have been re-grouped in a pattern of 3 + 3 + 2. This compound meter propels the piece forward, and can be easily juxtaposed against 4/4. The texture has been varied by using different combinations of the instruments, not using all the instruments at the same time, and by contrasting the winds against the strings. Melodic ideas are passed from one instrument to the next, sometimes by starting with the lowest instrument, and adding in the voices above one at a time, reminiscent of a fugue.

LeCLAIR IMAGE LLC





BRIAN WILBUR GRUNDSTROM

Brian Wilbur Grundstrom's compositions for film, orchestra, opera, chorus, piano, quintet and other ensembles demonstrate an innovative use of harmony and melody, which although firmly rooted in the tonal tradition is entirely new. Audiences take to his compositions immediately, finding in his compositions traces of Aaron Copland, Kurt Weill and Samuel Barber.

Classically trained in piano as well as music theory from Gettysburg College, he has continued orchestration and composition studies with John David Earnest.

Grundstrom won Outstanding Emerging Artist in the 2013 DC Mayor's Arts Awards and has received five grants from the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, an agency supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. His awards also include Encore from American Composers Forum, ASCAPLUS from ASCAP and Composers Assistance Program from the American Music Center. He has received Peer Awards for Sadie's Waltz and Arc of Light: A Portrait of Anna Campbell Bliss from Television, Internet, & Video Association of DC (TIVA-DC), and an OutMusic nomination for Pepe! The Mail Order Monkey Musical, which sold out as part of the Capital Fringe Festival.

A member of ASCAP, Grundstrom attended the prestigious ASCAP/NYU Buddy Baker Film Music Workshop. His features include Arc of Light: A Portrait of Anna Campbell Bliss, and 2 Minutes Later, in addition to writing music for many short films. His studio includes the latest in technologies, including Vienna Symphonic Library, and he is able to render his orchestral compositions at high professional standards.

His music has been performed by La Orquesta Sinfónica De Guayaquil, Sunderman Woodwind Quintet, SONOS Chamber Orchestra, North/South Consonance, Shippensburg Festival Orchestra, Trinity Chamber Orchestra, George Washington University Orchestra, NIH Philharmonia,

Holyoke Civic Symphony, The Queer Urban Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra of Northern Virginia, Chamber Music by Candlelight by Baltimore Symphony Orchestra musicians, Colla Voce and The New Jersey Gay Men's Chorus as well as on the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage.



Brian Wilbur Grundstrom conducting Queer Urban Orchestra. Photo by Andy Wagner.

Brian has an amazing talent for composing cinematic scores. I look forward to working with him on our next film."

Brian is currently writing an opera based on Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom The Bell Tolls*. He is represented by Jeffrey James Arts Consulting and his compositions can be heard at www.brianwilbur.com.

SONOS Chamber Orchestra Music Director Erik Ochsner writes: "Many audiences cringe at the thought of new music. We had such positive feedback from audiences on how much they enjoyed Grundstrom's work. It is modern, yet tonal."

Edward Tyndall, Writer/Director of *Sadie's Waltz* (Mobius Films) writes: "It was a joy to work with Brian on my last two projects. His dedication to the collaborative nature of



Maestro Jeffrey Sean Dokken and The Symphony Orchestra of Northern Virginia perform Brian Wilbur Grundstrom's *Suite for Chamber Orchestra*. Maestro Dokken's musical assistance for this recording is appreciated. Photo by Peter J. White

Clarinetist Angela Murakami

The composer would like to acknowledge Angela Murakami for her assistance in preparing the orchestral parts for the recording sessions, in addition to playing 1st clarinet





Photo credit: Ian Bergerhoff

ERIK OCHSNER

Finnish-American conductor Erik Ochsner's versatility as a conductor has stretched across a broad range of repertoire: from conducting as few as five performers in contemporary and modern works, to leading 300 performers in "live to projection" film concerts of *Lord of the Rings*, *Pirates of The Caribbean*, *Star Trek* (2009), *Star Trek Into Darkness*, *Back to the Future* and *E.T.*! After the success of Pixar in Concert at the Krakow (Poland) Film Music Festival, he returned to conduct (for an arena audience of 10,000) a fully synchronized live performance of Disney's *Frozen*. Ochsner is Principal Guest Conductor of *Bugs Bunny at the Symphony*, Artistic Director of the Dranoff International 2 Piano Foundation (Miami), and Music Director of New York's SONOS Chamber Orchestra. When reviewing a performance of *Rite of Spring* with SONOS, the *New York Times* said "All the hallmarks of a great "Rite" were here," and the Ontario Arts Review said "Watch this man, he is brilliant." He was previously Assistant Conductor of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, under Robert Spano.

In 2002, Ochsner began an 8-year collaboration as Rehearsal Conductor for Academy Award winning Chinese composer Tan Dun (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*). A highlight was serving as Assistant Conductor and Chorus Master for the Shanghai workshop of *The First Emperor*, a Metropolitan Opera commission. His work can also be seen in the world premiere DVD recording of Tan Dun's opera *Tea: A Mirror of Soul*.

Ochsner has led orchestras in Adelaide, Albuquerque, Beijing, Detroit, Indianapolis, Kaohsiung (Taiwan), Kitchener-Waterloo, Krakow, Melbourne, Mexico City, New York, Oregon, Ottawa, Reykjavik, Richmond, Rochester, Round Top Festival Institute (Texas), St. Louis, Shanghai, Stockholm, Tampere (Finland), Wellington, West Saxony (Germany) and Wolf Trap.

Ochsner's SONOS Chamber Orchestra commissioned *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra* by Swedish composer Fredrik Sixten. In December 2016, Erik will conduct a concert of all *Star Wars* music with the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, Canada. Erik studied with Charles Bruck, Erich Kunzel, Marin Alsop and Helmuth Rilling. Erik lives in New York and attended The Pierre Monteux School for Conductors and Dartmouth College. www.erikochsner.com and www.SONOSChamberOrch.org

BWG My Orchestral Journey started the night Maestro Erik Ochsner conducted the world premiere of Celebration! with his newly formed SONOS Chamber Orchestra. Erik has been a champion of my music, also commissioning *American Reflections* and conducting this recording. Each of my compositions explores a different mood: happiness, contentment, celebration, jubilation, foreboding, contemplative - yet each of them still reflects my voice: including a strong affinity for melody, accessibility, long musical lines and my own distinctive use of tonal harmony. I love beautiful melodies that speak to the listener, with interesting harmony and rhythm to keep them engaging. Next in the journey is an opera for Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and you may watch studio footage of a scene being recorded at www.brianwilbur.com.



Erik Ochsner, conductor & Brian Wilbur Grundstrom

Tracks 1-5 & 7 recorded July 22-24, 2015
at Omega Recording Studios, in Rockville MD

Session Coordinator **Edward "Pete" Petersen**
Session Producer **Andy Happel**
Session Engineer **Jim Curtis**

Track 6 recorded February 20, 2010
at New Colony Theater in Portsmouth VA

Session Producer & Engineer **Robert Ian Winstin**

Cover Photo by **LeCLAIR IMAGE LLC**

Executive Producer **Bob Lord**
Executive A&R **Sam Renshaw**
Recording Session Manager **Matt Konrad**
Audio Director **Jeff LeRoy**
Production Engineer **Nate Hunter**
Art & Production Director **Brett Picknell**
Graphic Design **Ryan Harrison**
Marketing **Morgan MacLeod**

info@navonarecords.com
www.navonarecords.com
223 Lafayette Road
North Hampton NH 03862

Navona Records is a
PARMA Recordings company



BRIAN WILBUR AN ORCHESTRAL GRUNDSTROM JOURNEY

OMEGA STUDIOS ORCHESTRA | ERIK OCHSNER, CONDUCTOR

- 1 **CONTENTMENT, POEM FOR ORCHESTRA** (1999) 10:54
- 2 **JUBILATION! DANCE FOR ORCHESTRA** (2000) 8:20
- SUITE FOR CHAMBER ORCHESTRA** (2001-2002)
- 3 **i. BEFORE THE FALL** (2001) 10:18
- 4 **ii. AVALON** (2002) 12:54
- 5 **iii. CELEBRATION!** (2002) 8:00
- 6 **AMERICAN REFLECTIONS FOR STRINGS AND HARP** (2009) 14:32
Millennium Orchestra | Robert Ian Winstin, conductor
- 7 **CHENONCEAU** (2013) 13:22

BW
WG

www.brianwilbur.com



©2016 NAVONA RECORDS LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. THE NAVONA IMPRINT IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF PARMA RECORDINGS LLC.
UNAUTHORIZED DUPLICATION IS A VIOLATION OF APPLICABLE LAWS.

