

GEORGE SAKAKEENY, BASSOON

The image features a dark blue background with a large, bright, textured full moon in the center. Below the moon is a silhouette of a city skyline with various skyscrapers of different heights and shapes. The text 'full moon in the city' is written in a black, sans-serif font across the middle of the moon.

full moon
in the city

OBERLIN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC ENSEMBLE | Timothy Weiss, conductor

Bassoon Concertino (2014) **Augusta Read Thomas** (b. 1964)

- 1 Part 1: Paul Klee: "Rope Dancer"
(Homage to Hans Abrahamsen) 3:13
- 2 Part 2: Wassily Kandinsky: "Sky Blue"
(Homage to Bent Sørensen) 5:04
- 3 Part 3: Joan Miró: "Ladders Cross the Blue Sky in a Wheel of Fire"
(Homage to Poul Ruders) 3:26

full moon in the city (2013) **Libby Larsen** (b. 1950)

- 4 ...at 3 am 5:36
- 5 juking the moon 3:57
- 6 ...5 am 4:31

OBERLIN SINFONIETTA | Timothy Weiss, conductor

Concerto for Bassoon and Strings (2008) **Russell Platt** (b. 1965)

- 7 I Slow 8:11
- 8 II (Song) Sostenuto; like a dream 1:53
- 9 III Still slow—Cadenza—Fast 9:09

OBERLIN ORCHESTRA | Raphael Jiménez, conductor

Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra (1998) **Peter Schickele** (b. 1935)

- 10 I Blues 5:54
- 11 II Intermezzo 4:18
- 12 III Scherzo 6:56
- 13 IV Song 5:23
- 14 V Romp 1:54



Bassoonist **George Sakakeeny** has appeared as a soloist with orchestras throughout North and South America, Europe, and the Far East. Three major works for bassoon and orchestra have been commissioned for him, including Libby Larsen's *full moon in the city* (2013) and Peter Schickele's Bassoon Concerto (1998), both of which appear on this recording.

In addition to his position as professor of bassoon at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Sakakeeny holds titles at Simon Bolivar University in Caracas, Venezuela, and at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China. He has held the principal bassoon positions of the New Japan Philharmonic, the Handel & Haydn Society of Boston, the Opera Company of Boston, the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, the Grand Teton Music Festival, the New Hampshire Music Festival, and the Peninsula Festival, and he has performed extensively with the Boston Symphony and Boston Pops orchestras.

Sakakeeny's former students hold positions in symphony orchestras, chamber ensembles, and universities throughout North and South America and the Far East. He is the author of the iBook *Making Reeds Start to Finish with George Sakakeeny*. He performs on a vintage Heckel bassoon, #8683.

Bassoon Concertino (2014)

Augusta Read Thomas

I am exceptionally grateful to George Sakakeeny, Tim Weiss, and the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble for this stellar recording. Commissioned by and dedicated with admiration and gratitude to the Danish Chamber Players and bassoon soloist Gunnar Eckhoff, Bassoon Concertino was premiered on April 6, 2014, in Copenhagen's Tivoli Concert Hall.

The work consists of three parts (fast, slow, faster), is based on beautiful works of art, and offers homages to three Danish composers:

Part 1: Paul Klee: "Rope Dancer" (homage to Hans Abrahamsen)

Part 2: Wassily Kandinsky: "Sky Blue" (homage to Bent Sørensen)

Part 3: Joan Miró: "Ladders Cross the Blue Sky in a Wheel of Fire" (homage to Poul Ruders)

It is rare that we hear music that showcases a bassoon player. This concertino requires exceptional virtuosity of the soloist featuring playing of all kinds—rhythmic, athletic, punchy, lyrical, delicate, jazzy, whimsical, capricious, elegant—and celebrates the amazing artist and beautiful instrument in all its colors.

Although highly notated, precise, carefully structured, and soundly proportioned, and while musicians are elegantly working from a nuanced, specific text, the piece feels as if it is organically self-propelled, on the spot—as if we listeners are overhearing a captured improvisation. —*Augusta Read Thomas*

full moon in the city (2013)

Libby Larsen

Full moon in the city, a stroll for bassoon and strings, imagines a bassoon after hours, walking in the club district of an unnamed city. A triptych, it features movements titled "...at 3 am," "Juking the Moon," and "...5 am." The affect of the music borders on jazz but is not jazz—rather, it is a noir portrait of echoes of late-night music, the kind of music that evokes party fatigue and staying up all night.

The movements "...at 3 am" and "...5 am" use the form of *meander* to move somewhere but stay in the same place—on the same block of the same street, if you will. "Juking* the Moon" muses on the bassoon around 4 a.m., strolling along the street, hearing fragments of songs about the moon** as juke boxes and bar musicians play out into the night.

I'm proud to say that George Sakakeeny is my friend. I am in awe of his talent, and I am humbled by his generosity as a teacher. We also have a good deal of fun together, and that is how this work came to be—through our friendship, deep and not so deep conversations, and devotion to music as a way of life. —*Libby Larson*

***Juke.** n. \ˈjʊk\ 1. A cheap nightclub or bar (i.e., juke joint); 2. A style of jazz music performed in bars and brothels; 3. A coin-operated machine that plays records. (Verb): to tour juke joints, usually with a date; to drive from one cheap bar to the next for the entire night.

****References:** "Moondance" (Van Morrison), "Astronomy Domine" (Pink Floyd), "Space Oddity" (David Bowie), "Fly Me to the Moon" (Bart Howard), "Walking on the Moon" (The Police), "Moon River" (Henry Mancini), "Bike Ride to the Moon" (Dukes of Stratosphere), "Howling at the Moon" (The Ramones), "By the Light of the Silvery Moon" (Hawley Ades)

Concerto for Bassoon and Strings (2008)

Russell Platt

Concerto for Bassoon and Strings is an arrangement of my Quintet for Bassoon and Strings (1996-97), a work that was commissioned and premiered by the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota with Charles Ullery, principal bassoonist of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, as soloist. The piece reflects my musical concerns of the late 1990s: an attraction to the styles of Copland and Bartók, and the lyrical minimalism of John Adams and Aaron Jay Kernis.

Melody is the binding agent. The opening movement, which begins in an atmospheric A major, is made in the form of a suspension bridge: two emotive climaxes that are preceded, connected, and concluded by more ruminative stretches of counterpoint. The “Song” (which is not part of the quintet) is a setting of a poem by Paul Muldoon about a young rake dreaming of the innocence of his rural childhood in Northern Ireland, when all that mattered to him was his dog; the bassoon takes the baritone part, with the text removed, and the piano part is transcribed for the strings.

The opening of the finale recalls moments from the first movement, viewed as if from a higher angle; then, after an extravagant cadenza, the music plunges into an athletic allegro that, with a couple of diversions, takes us to the emphatic close. The very gifted Peter Kolkay was the soloist in the world premiere of the concerto, which took place on November 16, 2008, at St. John’s Northwestern Military Academy near Waukesha, Wisconsin, with the Wisconsin Philharmonic conducted by Alexander Platt. —*Russell Platt*

Concerto for Bassoon (1998)

Peter Schickele

When I was about 12 years old and living in Fargo, North Dakota, I started fooling around on the old clarinet my mother had played in her college band; when it became apparent that I had more than a passing interest in music, I was sent to a teacher.

Bertram McGarrity was a fine clarinetist, and after hearing me play, he said, “Peter, you already have so many bad habits on the clarinet that it would be easier for you to start a new instrument,” and he suggested the bassoon. I realized later that he had an ulterior motive: Fargo-Moorhead had an ambitious community orchestra (its programs, around 1950, included works by Shostakovich and Messiaen), but no bassoonists. I never regretted the switch, because bassoonists were always in demand; my career lasted about 10 years, from junior high school through Swarthmore College. I quit when I reached Juilliard (as a composition major), because at Juilliard there were real bassoonists around—bassoonists who not only knew how to make their own reeds, but who owned their own instruments. Since then, my rare forays into public bassoon playing have been restricted to the P.D.Q. Bach part of my life.

This work was commissioned for the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus, Ohio, to commemorate the ensemble’s 20th anniversary season and move to the newly restored Southern Theatre. It is dedicated to National City in gratitude for its generous support of the arts. The work was first performed by the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus on March 7, 1999, with Timothy Russell, musical director, and George Sakakeeny, bassoon soloist. —*Peter Schickele*



AUGUSTA READ THOMAS

A daring and prolific composer whose creations have been performed by major orchestras and led by top conductors throughout the world, Augusta Read Thomas has earned widespread acclaim for the sheer brilliance of her work and the remarkable diversity of her artistic influences, among them the improvisation of jazz and the experimental drive of modern masters such as Luciano Berio. During a career that has included considerable experience as both an artist and educator, Thomas has served as composer in residence for Daniel Barenboim and Pierre Boulez with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1997-2006) and with the New Haven Symphony. Her ballet for orchestra, *EOS (Goddess of the Dawn)*, was composed in honor of Boulez; it was commissioned and premiered by the Utah Symphony in 2015. Thomas' *Astral Canticle* was one of two finalists for the Pulitzer Prize in Music. In 2009, she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She is one of six University Professors at the University of Chicago and is a fixture at the Tanglewood Music Center.



LIBBY LARSEN

Composer Libby Larsen's catalog consists of more than 400 works spanning virtually every genre, from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral works and operas. Her music has been praised for its dynamic, deeply inspired, and vigorous contemporary American spirit. Sought after for commissions and premieres by major artists, ensembles, and orchestras around the world, she has established a permanent place for her works in the concert repertory. Larsen has received numerous awards and accolades, including a 1994 Grammy Award as producer of the CD *The Art of Arlene Augér*, which features Larsen's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Her opera *Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus* was selected as one of the eight best classical music events of 1990 by *USA Today*. The first woman to serve as a resident composer with a major orchestra, she has held residencies with the California Institute of the Arts, the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, the Philadelphia School of the Arts, the Cincinnati Conservatory, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony. Larsen's many commissions and recordings are a testament to her fruitful collaborations with a long list of world-renowned artists, including the King's Singers, Benita Valente, and Frederica von Stade, among others. She was presented a lifetime achievement award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.



RUSSELL PLATT

Russell Platt holds a unique position in American music. As a composer, he is the winner of both the Charles Ives Scholarship and Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a 2014 Civitella Ranieri Fellowship, and a 2007 Copland House Fellowship; as a writer, he has been honored with a 2010 ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for Music Criticism, in recognition of his work for *The New Yorker*, where he is a longtime senior music editor, and for *Opera News*. Platt's music is consistently performed by exceptional musicians including the New York Festival of Song, the Knights, the American Modern Ensemble, and the St. Petersburg and Amernet string quartets. Platt has received numerous commissions and has been awarded six composing residencies at Yaddo and three residencies at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. He is an alumnus of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, the Curtis Institute of Music, the University of Minnesota, and St. Catharine's College.



PETER SCHICKELE

Composer, musician, author, satirist—Peter Schickele is internationally recognized as one of the most versatile artists in the field of music. His commissions are numerous and varied, ranging from works for the National Symphony and the Minnesota Opera to compositions for distinguished instrumentalists and singers. Schickele arranged one of the musical segments for the Disney animated feature film *Fantasia 2000* and created the score for the film version of Maurice Sendak's children's classic *Where the Wild Things Are*. For many years he did a weekly, syndicated radio program, *Schickele Mix*, which was heard nationwide over Public Radio International and which won ASCAP's prestigious Deems Taylor Award. In his well-known other role as perpetrator of the oeuvre of the now classic P.D.Q. Bach, Schickele is acknowledged as one of the great satirists of the 20th century. In testimony, Vanguard has released 11 albums of the fabled genius' works; six have been released by Telarc. Random House has published 11 editions of *The Definitive Biography of P.D.Q. Bach*; Theodore Presser has printed innumerable scores; and VideoArts International has produced a DVD of P.D.Q. Bach's only full-length opera, *The Abduction of Figaro*.

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