

# TRACEUR

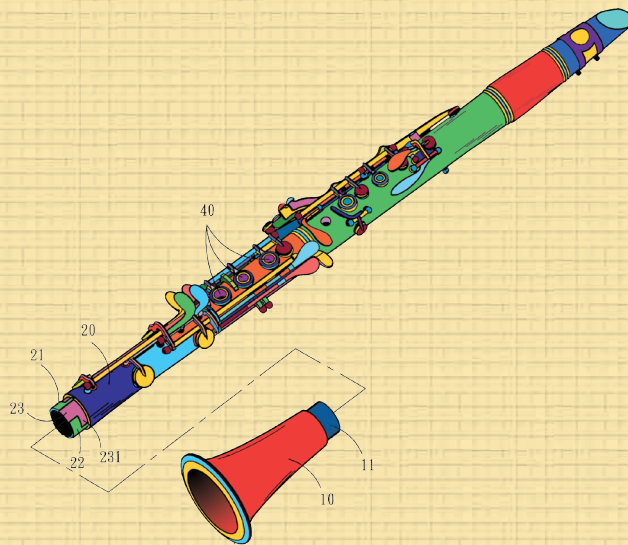
AMERICAN • MUSIC

## CLARINET

MICHAEL • NORSWORTHY

## PIANO

DAVID • GOMPPER



Beaser • Schwantner • Foss • Epstein • Bermel • Gompper

# TRACEUR - American Music for clarinet and piano

## SOUVENIRS (2001-2002)\*

ROBERT BEASER (b. 1954)

1	Happy Face	1:58
2	Lily Monroe	2:34
3	Y2K	4:30
4	Spain	5:15
5	Cindy Redux	2:40
6	Ground O	3:37

## 7 BLACK ANEMONES (1980)

JOSEPH SCHWANTNER (b. 1943)

4:54

## THREE AMERICAN PIECES (1944-1945)

LUKAS FOSS (1922-2009)

8	Early Song (1944)	5:07
9	Dedication (1944)	5:15
10	Composer's Holiday (1945)	2:56

## 11 NEBRASKA IMPROMPTU (2013)\*

MARTI EPSTEIN (b. 1959)

7:22

## SCHIZM (1993-1994)

DEREK BERMEL (b. 1967)

12	Field of Stars	2:56
13	Puppet State	4:56

## 14 TRACEUR (2014-2015)\*

DAVID GOMPPER (b. 1954)

14:39

\* premiere recordings

Total time 68:47





**Michael Norsworthy's** unique voice on the clarinet has made him a sought after soloist and chamber music collaborator and garnered praise from around the globe for performances that explore transcendent virtuosity and extremes of musical expression. As one of the most celebrated champions of the modern repertoire, he has premiered over 150 works in collaboration with a veritable who's who of composers including Babbitt, Birtwistle, Carter, Ferneyhough, Finnis, Gompfer, Lachenmann, Lindberg, Murail, and Rihm among others in leading venues such as Carnegie Hall, Vienna's Musikverein, Moscow's Tchaikovsky Hall, Lincoln Center, The Casals Festival, and the Aspen Music Festival. His discography can be found on the Albany, BMOP/sound, Cantaloupe, Cirrus, ECM, Gasparo, Mode, Navona, New World, and New Focus labels. He is principal clarinet with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Professor of Clarinet, Director of Contemporary Music Performance and Chair of the Woodwind Department at the Boston Conservatory. His teachers include Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, Eric

Mandat, Kalmen Opperman, and Richard Stoltzman. Norsworthy is an artistic advisor for Henri Selmer Paris and an artist clinician for Vandoren SAS and plays on Selmer Paris clarinets and Vandoren products.



**David Gompfer** has lived and worked professionally as a pianist, a conductor, and a composer in New York, San Diego, London, Nigeria, Michigan, Texas and Iowa. He studied at the Royal College of Music in London with Jeremy Dale Roberts, Humphrey Searle, pianist Phyllis Sellick and conductor Norman Del Mar. After teaching in Nigeria, he received his doctorate at the University of Michigan and taught at the University of Texas, Arlington. Since 1991, he has been Professor of Composition and Director of the Center for New Music at the University of Iowa. In 2002-2003 Gompfer was in Russia as a Fulbright Scholar, teaching, performing and conducting at the Moscow Conservatory. In 2009 he received an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York City, and a Fromm commission in 2013. Gompfer's compositions have been performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and Merkin Halls (New York), Wigmore Hall (London), Konzerthaus (Vienna) and

the Bolshoi and Rachmaninoff Halls (Moscow Conservatory). The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra recorded his Violin Concerto with Wolfgang David (Naxos). As a pianist, he has maintained an active collaborative profile with Wolfgang David, Timothy Gill, Christine Rutledge, Stephen Swanson and John Muriello, and on this disc, Michael Norsworthy.



## Program notes and biographies

### Three American Pieces (1944-1945)

"I wrote my Three American Pieces at a time when I was in love with my newly adopted country. This love affair began with The Prairie, based on poetry by Carl Sandburg. Sandburg and Aaron Copland were responsible for revealing the United States to this youngster from Paris. My American period continued until I became wildly avant-garde, and I've continued to write such pieces ever since. All the music possesses an open-air quality I think I learned from Aaron, but I've handled it my own way. And there is always the influence of folk music — I looked at it a lot. I was also in love with jazz. The only popular idiom I never got close to was Broadway."

The Three American Pieces are about 14 minutes long. The longest piece is the second, "Dedication." Its initial Lento builds to an accelerating central episode whose agitato climax is the suite's weightiest moment: a Lento reprise follows. The brisk outer movements are clearly "American." Movement one, "Early Song," begins lyrically (Andante) — a prairie lullaby? An Allegro episode eager and breathless follows. A reprise of the opening leads to a final section in which the piece's contrasting materials are superimposed. The closing "Composer's Holiday" zestfully appropriates a variety of popular styles.

German-born composer **Lukas Foss** (1922-2009), immigrated with his family to Philadelphia in 1937 where the young Foss began to study at the Curtis Institute of Music. The earliest iteration of this piece was completed in 1944, during a particularly successful period in Foss' life and career; having just received wide acclaim for his cantata The Prairie, he was appointed as the pianist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra the same year and became the youngest ever recipient of the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship the following year. His compositions during this time mostly reflect a neoclassical style: Foss prioritized both melodic and formal clarity in his works, while continuing to explore a chromatic and occasionally dissonant harmonic sound world. Foss, like Aaron Copland, was also strongly associated with the Ameri-

can Populism movement, helping to establish an American nationalistic sound based on clarity and simplicity designed to represent an inclusive narrative of American collective identity.

### Souvenirs (2001-2002)

Souvenirs was commissioned by the piccolo committee of the National Flute Association. I collected the ideas for Souvenirs' six movements over the course of the late '90's and finally composed the work in earnest during the summer and fall of 2001. From the outset I understood that I wanted to write a work which continued in the path of my Mountain Songs for flute and guitar (1985)—one which explored folk elements reformatted in one way or another. In the earlier work I explicitly took extant and sometimes well-known Appalachian tunes and processed them through reinvented harmonies, materials and architectures. Souvenirs comes from more disparate sources, including Mountain Songs itself (Cindy Redux being a piano version of Cindy). Three of the six songs are completely original, composed in a strophic and diatonic style, two are based on folk tunes, and one is an invented trope on a Lorca transcription of a Spanish folk song (The Four Mules) -- discovered, lost and re-remembered.

The premiere of the original version of Souvenirs was given at the National Flute Convention in Washington DC in 2002, performed by Carol Bean, (piccolo) and Jeffrey Watson (piano). The idea of making a clarinet version had been with me from the start, as I wanted to make it a "portable" work, which could have a life with a number of different treble instruments. In the summer of 2005, when I was composer-in-residence with the Aspen Music Festival, I made this new clarinet version, which was given its first performance by Joaquin Valdepenas (clarinet) and Anton Nel (piano).

The opening movement, Happy Face, uses only the white keys of the piano. It was actually one of the last pieces composed in the cycle (I wrote it upon returning from Rome in July 2001), and is coyly weightless. Lily Monroe is based on the eponymous folk song and is treated in a Mountain Song-like fashion: strophic, alternating between light and shadow (think Bambi meets Godzilla) with an implied arch



form, becoming increasingly schizophrenic and finally collapsing under the mass of its own hubris. Y2K has actually nothing to do with the Millennium. It is a “song without words” for a dear friend. I began sketching it a few years before, but couldn’t find a context for it. When I finally understood how it fit in *Souvenirs* I was able to finish it. Spain comes from the Federico Garcia Lorca fragment based on a Spanish song “Los Cuatro Muleros”. I was given this by the guitarist Eliot Fisk; it sat in my studio for a while and then disappeared. I kept trying to remember it, but, as any composer does, I kept re-imagining it instead, until it morphed. The process of re-inventing allowed me to turn it into something different and strange---and it became the longest of the six movements and the centerpiece of the work. Spain is followed jarringly without warning by *Cindy Redux*-- which is about as far removed from it as Granada is from Apalachicola. I had long wanted to make a transcription of *Cindy* and had worked on one sporadically over the years between other projects. It fits remarkably well into this collection, even though it serves a completely different structural function. *Ground 0* (the letter 0, not zero) was composed in October of 2001. It is simply impossible for anyone living in New York City not to have been profoundly affected by the events of the prior month. As we all hobbled around trying to make sense of it all, I finally resorted to the only thing I knew how to do: compose. For the longest time I was uncomfortable referring to it by name literally, and left the song hanging with temporary working titles. Yet as time receded and worked its magic, I began to more readily accept things for what they were. And so sometime later I accepted the present title, albeit slightly skewed, for what it was as well.

*-Robert Beaser 2016*

**Robert Beaser** was born May 29th 1954 in Boston, Massachusetts. One of the most accomplished creative musicians of his generation, Beaser’s music has been performed and commissioned by major orchestras, conductors, ensembles and performers worldwide, including The New York Philharmonic, and The Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Cited early in the 1980’s as one of the “New Tonalists”, his works now defy categorization, blurring boundaries and reconciling seem-

ingly contradictory worlds in unexpected ways. His music has received numerous major awards and honors including a GRAMMY nomination, an EMMY Award (2016), Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellowships and The Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome. In 2004 he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Beaser studied literature, political philosophy and music at Yale College, graduating summa cum laude, in 1976. He went on to earn his Master of Music, M.M.A. and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the Yale School of Music. His principal composition teachers have included Jacob Druckman, Earle Brown, Toru Takemitsu, Arnold Franchetti, Betsy Jolas (at Tanglewood), Yehudi Wyner Lukas Foss and Goffredo Petrassi.

From 1978-1990 he served as co-Music Director and Conductor of the innovative New York contemporary chamber ensemble *Musical Elements* at the 92nd street Y, bringing premieres of over two hundred works to Manhattan. From 1988-1993 he was the *Meet The Composer/Composer-in-Residence* with the American Composers Orchestra. Until 2013 he served as the ACO’s Artistic Director, and currently he is the Artistic Director Laureate. Since 1993, he has been Professor and Chairman of the Composition Department at the Juilliard School in New York City.

In Beaser’s article in the New York Times Opinionator section (2012), he describes his artistic epiphany and transformation from 1970’s modernism to a more personal flexible stylistic hybridity. Since the latest 70’s, he has appropriated elements from folk traditions, pop and other sources, and synthesized them with western classical tradition to create music whose simple surface transparency belies deeper complexities, conflicts and contradictions. His acclaimed opera, *The Food of Love*, written for *Glimmerglass* with playwright Terrance McNally, has been televised nationally for the PBS “Great Performances” series, and his Grammy-nominated *Mountain Songs* for flute and guitar has become one of the most performed works in its genre. His recent commission, from 27 Wind Ensembles across the US, *The End of Knowing*, has been hailed as a unique and significant addition to the repertoire.



Beaser's works have been recorded for London/Argo, EMI, Naxos, Linn, New World Records, Innova, Bridge, Summit, CRI and Music-masters among many others. He has been guest lecturer at major universities and conservatories throughout the US and Europe, and has served as co-issue editor for the Contemporary Music Review "The New Tonality" issue. He has served as trustee of numerous institutions including the American Academy in Rome and The MacDowell Colony. His music is published exclusively by Schott Music Corporation, New York.

### **Black Anemones (1980)**

*Black Anemones by Agueda Pizarro*

"Mother, you watch me sleep / and your life / is a large tapestry / of all the colors..."

"...weaving through eyes / the dew of flames / on the web."

Two Poems of Agueda Pizarro, composed between July and August 1980, is the third of five works I have written for soprano, Lucy Shelton. The other works include: Wild Angels of the Open Hills (1977), commissioned by the Naumburg Foundation for the Jubal Trio, Sparrows (1979), premiered by the Twentieth Century Consort, Dream-caller (1984), commissioned by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and Magabunda (Witchnomad), "four poems of Agueda Pizarro," (1983), for soprano and orchestra, commissioned, by the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra. Two Poems of Agueda Pizarro was premiered by Lucy Shelton and pianist Margot Garrett on Nov. 25, 1980, in Alice Tully Hall, at Lincoln Center, in New York City. The texts are drawn from a bilingual collection of poems entitled, Sombraventadora/Shadowwinner by the American poet, Agueda Pizarro. While the poems were originally conceived and written in Spanish, this setting employs the English version translated by the poet's friend, Barbara Stoler Miller. The surrealistic images and the magical poetic landscape the poems evoke, mirror the vocal qualities I find most enchanting in Ms. Shelton's singing and my response was to attempt to unite these two compelling worlds. This work has been transcribed for flute or violin with piano and is presented here in Michael Norsworthy's recent transcription for clarinet.

**Joseph Schwantner** is an independent composer known for his dramatic and unique style and as a gifted orchestral colorist is one of the most prominent American composers today. He received his musical and academic training at the Chicago Conservatory and Northwestern University and previously served on the Juilliard, Eastman and Yale faculties. Schwantner's compositional career has been marked by many awards, grants, and fellowships, including the Pulitzer Prize in 1979 for his orchestral composition Aftertones of Infinity and several Grammy nominations. Among his many commissions is his Percussion Concerto, which was commissioned for the 150th anniversary season of the New York Philharmonic and is one of the most performed concert works of the past several decades. Christopher Lamb, soloist in the new Naxos recording of Schwantner's music by the Nashville Symphony Orchestra received a 2012 Grammy Award for «Best Classical Instrumental Solo» with Schwantner's Percussion Concerto. Schwantner is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

### **Nebraska Impromptu (2013)**

Nebraska Impromptu was written at the request of clarinetist Michael Norsworthy and is a musical reflection of the Nebraska landscape I remember from my childhood. The piece opens with a series of chords; the subsequent sections are developments of each of the specific chords.

-Marti Epstein

**Marti Epstein** is a composer whose music has been performed by the San Francisco Symphony, The Radio Symphony Orchestra of Frankfurt, the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Ensemble Modern, and members of the Boston Symphony. She has completed commissions for the Foxborough Musical Association, the Fromm Foundation, The Munich Biennale, the Iowa Brass Quintet, the CORE Ensemble, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, Longy School of Music, the Ludovico Ensemble, Guerilla Opera, the Radius Ensemble, and the Callithumpian Consort. In 2005, she was a recipient of a Massachusetts Cultural Council Grant. Marti has been a fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center (1986, 1988), and has been in residence at the MacDowell Colony



(1998, 1999). Marti's on the Steering Committee for the Boston Modern Orchestra Project Scoreboard and was Composer-in-Residence for the Radius Ensemble in 2009 and 2010. BSO English horn soloist Robert Sheena and the Boston Conservatory Wind Ensemble under the direction of Eric Hewitt have recorded Bloom, her concerto for English horn and Wind Ensemble. Cellist Rhonda Rider recently premiered and recorded so near, so far, a piece Marti wrote for Rhonda's recent residency at the Grand Canyon. Marti's new string quartet, Hidden Flowers was commissioned by the Tanglewood Music Center for the 2012 Festival of Contemporary Music 2012, where it was premiered in August 2012. In November 2015, Marti will be releasing Hypnagogia, a CD of her chamber music. Marti is Professor of Composition at Berkeley College of Music and also teaches composition at Boston Conservatory.

#### **SchiZm** (1993-1994)

Originally written for oboe and piano, transcribed by the composer for clarinet and piano, "SchiZm" is made up of two highly contrasting movements. The first, Field of Stars, is a short, eerily-still musical puzzle with a seemingly strong Middle-Eastern flavor. Three separate metric cycles (in the clarinet/oboe, the piano left hand, and the piano right hand) come together every 60 beats and dictate the expansive harmonic structure. The second movement, Puppet State, is lively and whimsical, in which a variety of genres -- an animated salsa, a languid habanera, and a sultry klezmer-tango -- are juxtaposed.

Grammy-nominated composer and clarinetist **Derek Bermel** has been widely hailed for his creativity, theatricality, and virtuosity, and his engagement with other musical cultures has become part of the fabric and force of his compositional language. Recently appointed Artistic Director of the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, he is also Director of Copland House's Cultivate, Composer-in-Residence at

Mannes College of Music, and just finished a four-year term as Artist-in-Residence at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study. Bermel has become recognized as a dynamic and unconventional curator of concert series that spotlight the composer as performer and has received commissions from the Pittsburgh, National, Saint Louis, New Jersey and Pacific Symphonies, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, WNYC Radio, eighth blackbird, the Guarneri and JACK String Quartets, Music from Copland House and Music from China, De Ereprijs (Netherlands), violinist Midori, ASKO/Schoenberg Ensemble and Veenfabriek (Netherlands), among others. His many honors include the Alpert Award in the Arts, Rome Prize, Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellowships, American Music Center's Trailblazer Award, and Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters; commissions from the Koussevitzky and Fromm Foundations, Meet the Composer, and Cary Trust; and residencies at Yaddo, Tanglewood, Aspen, Banff, Bellagio, Copland House, Sacatar, and Civitella Ranieri.

#### **Traceur** (2014-2015)

This work is based on a series of sketches that were generated at the MacDowell Artist Colony in New Hampshire in December and January of 2013-2014, ideas generated from the ascending order of fractions that create interesting symmetrical properties (the Farey series). While this trench work served as a somewhat obtuse structural foundation, the surface and expression of the music is very much related to the experience — mostly imagined — of the art of Parkour, and the person known as a traceur, who as a skilled runner and jumper often performs acrobatic feats of flight (mostly choreographed). This work is about the idea of tracing a path, a person trying to run as fast as possible into (but not around) rails and obstacles with minimal energy and without slowing down.

## Recording Information

Tracks 1-13 recorded at Mechanics Hall, August 11-14, 2015

Track 14 recorded at Mechanics Hall, November 16, 2015

Tracks 1-6 produced by Robert Beaser, David Gompper and Michael Norsworthy

Tracks 7-14 produced by David Gompper and Michael Norsworthy

All tracks recorded, edited and mastered by Patrick Keating

### Publishers:

Beaser – Schott Music

Schwantner – Schott Helicon

Foss – Carl Fischer

Epstein – [www.martiepstein.com](http://www.martiepstein.com)

Bermel – Peer Music

Gompper – [www.davidgompper.com](http://www.davidgompper.com)

Photo of Mr. Norsworthy by Matthew Wan

Photo of Mr. Gompper by Jill Tobin

Clarinets – Selmer Paris; Piano Hamburg Steinway

Mr. Norsworthy would like to thank Henri Selmer Paris for their generous sponsorship.

The artists thank the University of Iowa for their sponsorship and support of this recording.

This recording was made possible with generous support from the University of Iowa's Office of the Vice President for Research & Economic Development, the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, and the School of Music, David Gier, director.

For more info on the artists, please visit:

[www.michaelnorsworthy.com](http://www.michaelnorsworthy.com)

[www.davidgompper.com](http://www.davidgompper.com)

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