



AMERICAN CLASSICS



GLORIA COATES

Piano Quintet

Symphony No. 10 'Drones of Druids on Celtic Ruins'

**Kreutzer Quartet • Roderick Chadwick, Piano
CalArts Orchestra • Susan Allen, Conductor**



Gloria Coates

Piano Quintet • Symphony No. 10 'Drones of Druids on Celtic Ruins'



Gloria Coates, born in Wausau, Wisconsin, began composing and experimenting with overtones and clusters at age nine. Both Alexander Tcherepnin and Otto Luening were important mentors. Her formal studies took her from Chicago and Louisiana (with a Master's Degree in Composition), to New York's Cooper Union Art School, and Columbia University.

Living primarily in Europe since 1969, Gloria Coates has promoted American music: a German-American Music Series (1971–1984), writing musicological articles, and broadcasts for WDR Cologne, and Radio Bremen. From 1975 to 1983 she taught for the University of Wisconsin's International Programs, initiating the first music programs in London and Munich. She has lectured on her music in India, Poland, Germany, Ireland, and England; and at Harvard, Princeton, Brown, Boston, and Wisconsin-Madison.

The 1978 Warsaw Autumn Festival premiere of *Music on Open Strings (Symphony No. 1)* (1973), was the most discussed work at the festival. In 1986 it was a finalist for the Koussevitzky International Recording Award (KIRA), and at Munich's Musica Viva in 1980, it was the first work by a woman composer to be performed in the series' 34-year history.

Festivals at which her compositions have been performed include March Music (Berlin), New Music America (New York), Crash (Dublin), Other Minds (San Francisco), the Dresden Festival, Warsaw Autumn, Avanti (Finland), the Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte (Montepulciano), and Aspekte Salzburg. Artists include the Kronos, Kreutzer, and Jack Quartets; orchestras include the Bavarian Radio Symphony, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the Stuttgart Philharmonic, the Milwaukee Symphony, the Vienna Radio Symphony, the City of London Sinfonia, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Polish Chamber Orchestra.

Gloria Coates has written many orchestral works, some with chorus, which include 16 symphonies (the highest number of symphonies ever written by a woman composer), ten string quartets, chamber music, solo and vocal music, electronic musique concrète, and the opera *Stolen Identity*.

Piano Quintet: A Personal View

In the summer of 2015, the Kreutzer Quartet and Roderick Chadwick premiered Gloria Coates' *Piano Quintet* at the Gastig in Munich – a commission from the Siemens Stiftung, mfm, and the Munich Ministry of

Culture. This was the latest step on a journey which began in 1992, when I met Gloria in that city, and our friendship and collaboration began.

Gloria's music is instantly recognizable, a feat which very few composers have achieved. The key to playing and understanding it is to enter fully into her world, which is like no other. Her music looks very simple on the page, but takes years to learn how to play, to inhabit.

In this work, as in a number of others, one half of the quartet is tuned a quarter-tone higher than the other, which means unisons and chords bear halos of beats and harmonics. Talking about the relationship between this microtonally tuned quartet and the conventionally tuned piano, Coates has noted: "The overtones of the piano are very important for the chordal elements of the harmony in the strings which is microtonal." This offers a glimpse into her harmonic imagination, where the ever-more-intricate interweave of high partials from diatonic chords offers rainbows of microtones – the very pattern of the music. Not for nothing was Gloria's earlier *Piano Trio* subtitled *Split the Lark – and you'll find the Music*, a quote from Emily Dickinson, so important here.

The *Piano Quintet* is rooted in the poetry of fellow American pioneer, Emily Dickinson. Coates has a profound affinity to Dickinson's work, and an uncanny knack of finding her way to its core. The overall work is inspired by the poem, *After great pain, a formal feeling comes –*, which Dickinson wrote early in 1862. Interestingly, in conversation, the line which Gloria pulled out as this poem's title (of course the poems are not named) was, "The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs." However, the quintet's movements bear titles drawn from other Dickinson poems. Gloria insists that these phrases were "taken for their meaning for the music and for no other reason." There is no contradiction here; this offers insight into Coates' "layered" approach to the many meanings that she finds in Emily Dickinson. She, naturally, writes music which counterpoints with the poetry on many levels.

The first movement title, *Invisible, as Music*, is drawn from Dickinson's *This World is not Conclusion*. I suspect that one inspiration for the movement's ritualistic feel is

the fourth line of the poem: "It beckons, and it baffles."

The bulk of the movement is a concertante for the first violin, who sings away, while the four colleagues erect implacable defiles of sound all around. By the end of the movement, there is reconciliation among the quartet, and the solo line is resolved into hard-won, but wavering, unison. Perhaps this echoes the poem's peroration "Much Gesture, from the Pulpit – / Strong Hallelujahs roll – / Narcotics cannot still the Tooth / That nibbles at the soul –." But, the deeper meaning of the movement, seems to spring from the first stanza of *After great pain, a formal feeling comes –*, which concludes:

The stiff Heart questions 'was it He, that bore',
And 'Yesterday, or Centuries before'?

The second movement, entitled *The wizard-fingers never rest*, is large scale and discursive. It is the only section written in 5/4, the most common time signature in Coates' nine string quartets. The title is drawn from Dickinson's poem *A something in a summer's Day* (as is the last). The "wizard-fingers" inspired the opening cascading figures in the cello, piano and violin. For any quartet that knows the whole trajectory of this composer's output, which the Kreutzers do, these gestures recall the cello harmonics of *String Quartet No. 1*, while the tolling and knocking gestures of the rest of the movement echo the more recent *String Quartet No. 9*. In the center of this movement, the first violin uncouples from this gigantic mechanism, to return the throbbing lyric of the first movement, this time in artificial harmonics.

The end of this movement, the turning point of the quintet, is a perfect counterweight to Dickinson's central stanza:

The Feet, mechanical, go round –
A Wooden way
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –
Regardless grown,
A Quartz contentment, like a stone –

Movement three, *The Torrents of Eternity* is framed by piano *glissandi*, "on the white keys" to start, and, inside the piano, circling the strings, to finish. We find ourselves in a glacial landscape of slow sliding and subduction – perhaps Dickinson's "Torrents of Eternity", which "Do all but inundate" – but these torrents and inundations are now frozen. As always Coates' use of *glissando*, is tightly organized. This is strict counterpoint, beginning with a mirror canon split between high and low instruments, which re-emerges as inverted vertical counterpoint in four, then five parts. The string players end at maximum distance from each other, *pianissimo*, verticality achieved by the most painstaking, and sometimes, painful, steps. The centerpiece of the movement, its dark heart, is a piano outburst of "nails inside piano", "pound fists on low strings", leading to tectonic clusters struck with the whole arm. Gloria's vision of how this should sound, and its expressive and emotional impact, is very precise. Like the music of György Kurtág, the apparent simplicity of her notation belies the exactitude, technical and conceptual, which it, and she, demand.

The fourth and final movement, *A something so transporting bright*, offers a radiant realization of *A something in a summer's Day*. The end achieves Dickinson's "shimmering grace" by the quartet playing in "unison/octaves". The "shimmer", results from the use of microtones. For the whole duration of this movement, the quartet plays the melody, in "unison" while the piano underpins, and eventually overwhelms the music with a ladder of slowly ascending chords. For me, this is the perfect reflection of the end of *After great pain, a formal feeling comes*:

This is the Hour of Lead –
Remembered, if outlived,
As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow –
First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –

Peter Sheppard Skærved

Symphony No. 10 'Drones of Druids on Celtic Ruins'

Symphony No. 10 'Drones of Druids on Celtic Ruins' was commissioned in 1989 by the Erding Ministry of Culture. Erding, a small town in Bavaria, was settled in ancient times by early Celtic tribes whose archaeological ruins (Schanzen), now buried under fields of corn and hops, were being threatened by the construction of a new highway that would pass through them. The commission was for an orchestral work which might be performed outdoors over the Schanzen.

Wandering over the fields for inspiration, I remembered reading how the Celts keened and clapped over their dead with wild, trembling voices. Looking across the fields, I saw the mounds anew, as if they were covering buried souls. Sounds, forms and feelings rushed into my mind, and the composition began to take shape.

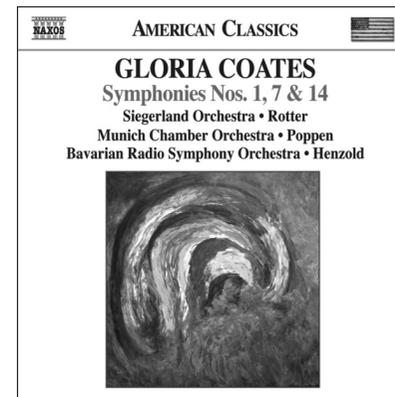
Written for brass and percussion instruments, *Symphony No. 10* is divided into three movements – three being the magic number of the Celts. The titles of the movements are derived from fragments of poems by Emily Dickinson. The poems themselves are not related to the content of the music, but rather the fragments only. Within the movements are long held tones that sometimes curve microtonally, or shake into semitones that form shifting interlocking tetrachords, creating a moving body of sound. Similar to the ancient Celtic music, there are constant repetitions, but in this work, not one repetition is like the other. Even the instrumentation changes with each movement. In the first movement, *Ages coil within*, the brass instruments dominate, creating a howling sound. The second movement, *The Glory of Decay*, is written entirely for percussion instruments. The composition climaxes into a final plea, *gamuts of eternity*, with frightening keening and anxious drumming that seem to harbor the screams and crying of the banshees. This recording is from a live performance in Los Angeles during a Portrait Concert at REDCAT on 13 November 2014. The orchestra was soloistic, and composed of many well-known brass and percussion players: Eloy Neira, David Aguila, Nicolas Bejarano, trumpet; Allen

Fogel, Erin Poulin, Adam Wolf, French horn; Corey Hoeben, Zack El-Magharbel, Jenna Hindi, trombone; Michael Gilleran, tuba; Dalia Berman, Tionna Brunson, Joshua Carro, Kelly Furniss, Leanna Goddard, Brietta Greger, Robin Hirshberg, David Johnson, Michael Ohlinger, David Sumner, James Waterman, and Anna Wray, percussion.

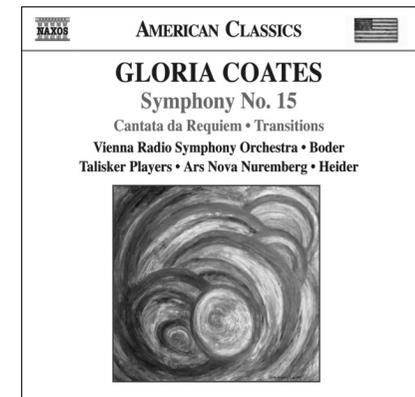
The conductor was Susan Allen, the internationally renowned harpist who made her debut as a conductor with the performance of this symphony. It was discovered shortly thereafter that Susan Allen was gravely ill. To everyone's deep sadness, she passed away within the year. This was Susan Allen's final, joyous, burst of musical energy.

Gloria Coates

Also available



8.559289



8.559371

Kreutzer Quartet

Peter Sheppard Skærvæd, Violin I • Mihailo Trandafilovski, Violin II
Morgan Goff, Viola • Neil Heyde, Cello



The Kreutzer Quartet has been critically acclaimed for its performances and recordings of works from our time and from the great quartet literature. This has resulted in cyclic performances and recordings of works ranging from Anton Reicha and Beethoven to Michael Tippett and Roberto Gerhard. They are the dedicatees of hundreds of new works. Composers who have written for them include Gloria Coates, Hans Werner Henze, Michael Finnissy, Hafliði Hallgrímsson, Poul Ruders, Edward Cowie, Jörg Widmann and George Rochberg. During the latter part of 2018 they will present new works by composers including Robert Saxton, Laurie Bamon, Elliott Schwartz, Peter Dickinson, Roger Redgate, Robin Holloway, Jeremy Dale Roberts, Gary Carpenter, David Matthews, Paul Pelay and Rosalind Page, to name just a few. The Quartet are Ensemble in Residence at Goldsmiths College, London. The Quartet has a truly international career, playing at venues ranging from the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, to Wilton's Music Hall, their London 'home', and appearing regularly at festivals including the Bergen International Festival and the Venice Biennale.

Roderick Chadwick



Roderick Chadwick is a pianist, teacher and writer on music. In recent years he has made a speciality of performing large-scale piano works from the last 50 years including Lachenmann's *Serynade*, John McGuire's *48 Variations* for two pianos with Mark Knop, and Stockhausen's *Mantra*, recorded with Knop and Newton Armstrong on the Hat Hut label. He has also featured on recordings of music by Gloria Coates, Michael Finnissy and Sadie Harrison, among others. As a member of the ensembles Plus-Minus and Chroma he has played at the Ultima (Oslo), Huddersfield, Buxton and TRANSIT (Leuven) Festivals, and his duo partnerships with several leading violinists have led to recitals from Kioi Hall in Tokyo to Troidhaugen. Roderick is a frequent performer of Messiaen's music, and in 2008 was artistic advisor to the Royal Academy of Music for their part in the Southbank Centre's Messiaen Centenary Festival. He has recently completed a book on the genesis of Messiaen's *Catalogue d'oiseaux* with Peter Hill.

Susan Allen



Susan Allen (10 May 1951–7 September 2015) was an American harpist and music educator. She was particularly known for giving world premieres of music for both the classical and electric harp by contemporary composers. She performed in a variety of genres including classical, experimental, jazz, and world music, and she intended to expand her career to include conducting. At the time of her death, Susan Allen was associate dean of the Herb Alpert School of Music at California Institute of the Arts.

GLORIA COATES

Piano Quintet (2013) 22:31

- 1 Invisible, as Music 3:04
- 2 The wizard-fingers never rest 9:42
- 3 The Torrents of Eternity 5:37
- 4 A something so transporting bright 3:51

Symphony No. 10 'Drones of Druids on Celtic Ruins' (1989) 36:44

- 5 Ages coil within 12:23
- 6 The Glory of Decay 11:50
- 7 gamuts of eternity 12:25

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Kreutzer Quartet 1-4

Peter Sheppard Skærved, Violin I

Mihailo Trandafilovski, Violin II

Morgan Goff, Viola • Neil Heyde, Cello

Roderick Chadwick, Piano 1-4

CalArts Orchestra 5-7

Susan Allen, Conductor 5-7

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Mastering: Matthias Ruckdaeschel and Ulrich Kraus 1-4,
John Baffa 5-7 • Publisher: Gloria Coates (GEMA)

Booklet notes: Peter Sheppard Skærved and Gloria Coates

Cover painting: *Parallel Universe* (1991) by Gloria Coates



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Gloria Coates's personal sound-world is unlike any other in contemporary music. Her *Piano Quintet* is rooted in the poetry of fellow American pioneer Emily Dickinson, with half of the quartet tuned a quarter-tone higher than the other, the strange beauty of the music emerging in glacial landscapes and shimmering microtones. Coates's *Symphony No. 10* evokes the archaeological ruins of a Celtic tribe, inspiring a torrent of dramatic percussion and long held tones that curve and shake in a moving body of sound.

With thanks to Siemens Stiftung, Musica Femina Munich and the Munich Ministry of Culture for the commission and performance of *Piano Quintet*, and to the California Institute of the Arts for the invitation to a Portrait Concert at REDCAT. Special thanks to David Rosenboom, Susan Allen and Lauren Pratt.

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Playing
Time:
59:24