



AMERICAN CLASSICS



**Peter
BOYER**

**Balance of Power
Orchestral Works**

Curtain Raiser

Fanfare for Tomorrow

Rolling River

Elegy

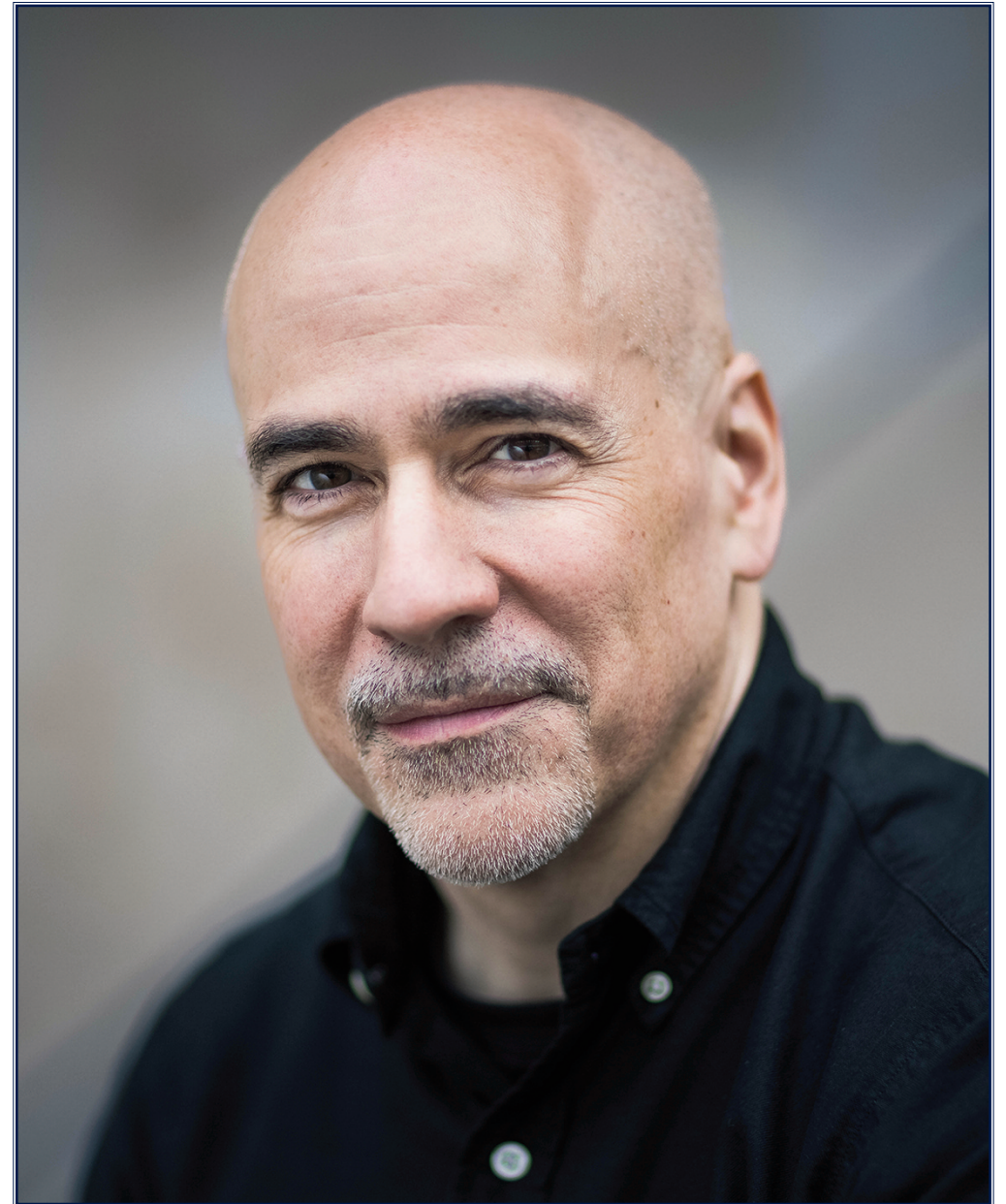
In the Cause of the Free

Radiance

Fanfare, Hymn and Finale

**London Symphony
Orchestra**

Peter Boyer



Peter
BOYER
(b. 1970)

Balance of Power • Orchestral Works

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|-----------|--|--------------|
| 1 | Curtain Raiser (2017) (version for orchestra, 2020) | 5:07 |
| | Balance of Power (2019) | 18:47 |
| 2 | I. A Sense of History | 8:05 |
| 3 | II. A Sense of Humor (<i>Scherzo politico</i>) | 5:07 |
| 4 | III. A Sense of Direction | 5:34 |
| 5 | Fanfare for Tomorrow (2021) (version for orchestra) | 2:44 |
| 6 | Rolling River (Sketches on “Shenandoah”) (2014) | 5:10 |
| 7 | Elegy (2021) | 3:29 |
| 8 | In the Cause of the Free (2017) | 6:42 |
| 9 | Radiance (for string orchestra) (2021) | 9:20 |
| 10 | Fanfare, Hymn and Finale (2018) (version for orchestra, 2020) | 7:47 |

Recorded: 28–29 January 2022 at Henry Wood Hall, London, UK
Producer, engineer, editor and mixer: Simon Rhodes
Recording engineers: Jonathan Stokes, Neil Hutchinson (for Classic Sound Ltd)
Mastering engineer: James Linahon
LSO recordings manager: Mario de Sa

Peter Boyer (b. 1970)

Balance of Power • Orchestral Works

This recording, my third in the Naxos American Classics series, encompasses eight recent works, composed in response to a diverse group of commissions and circumstances. I've often been drawn to American historical themes, and my best-known work, *Ellis Island: The Dream of America* (Naxos 8.559246), has led to other commissions dealing with American subject matter. Works recorded here include a fanfare for the inauguration of a US president, and a more substantial piece dealing with a former US secretary of state.

Curtain Raiser was commissioned in its original version by The American Band of Providence (Brian Cardany, conductor) to celebrate its 180th anniversary in 2017. In seeking to compose a piece which could serve as a rousing concert opener for this and other festive occasions, I settled on this title, which seems to suggest the character of this music. I created a new orchestral version for this recording.

Balance of Power was commissioned by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for the 90th anniversary season of the National Symphony Orchestra. It was funded by former US Ambassador Bonnie McElveen-Hunter, in honor of the 95th birthday of Dr. Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State. Thomas Wilkins conducted its premiere with the NSO at the Kennedy Center on September 18, 2021.

I was approached about this project in the fall of 2018 by Bonnie McElveen-Hunter, who has commissioned a series of orchestral works from some of America's finest composers. My knowledge of Dr. Kissinger's work at that point was fairly minimal, but knowing that he had served in one of the most controversial presidential administrations gave me mixed feelings about accepting the commission. However, the former Ambassador is persuasive, and she offered to arrange a lunch meeting with Dr. and Mrs. Kissinger in New York City to discuss this potential project. How often does a composer receive an invitation to dine with someone who directly impacted world history? I accepted. In discussing the work to be composed, Dr. Kissinger had two brief cordial requests, delivered in his well-known German-accented low voice: "Please don't make it too abstract, so I can understand it"; and "Could it be a humorous symphony?" I was not expecting these requests, but resolved to accommodate them (though the work would not be a symphony per se).

Over the next several months, I delved into Kissinger research. I found biographies by Walter Isaacson and Niall Ferguson to be particularly fascinating, along with Kissinger's own *Diplomacy* and *World Order*. This led me to a framework for the piece, and a title: *Balance of Power*. This is a concept that runs strongly through Dr. Kissinger's thinking and writing. Crucially, this orchestral work does *not* attempt to be either a "biographical portrait" or a political statement of any kind. What it does attempt to do is present three separate and contrasting movements that relate in different ways to this unique individual.

The first movement, *A Sense of History*, takes its musical cues from Dr. Kissinger's profound understanding of history, how it has unfolded, and the idea of a balance of power – which, as a metaphor, provides a fascinating orchestral canvas to explore. In reading *Diplomacy* and *World Order*, I felt a greater understanding of world events, power struggles, and conflicts, and of how history has been shaped by these dramas over the centuries. This suggested to me the nature of the music.

The tone changes drastically with the second movement, *A Sense of Humor*, which was composed directly in response to Dr. Kissinger's request – this from a man renowned for his wit. It was clear to me that this movement had to be a *scherzo* (Italian for "joke"), and its subtitle is *Scherzo politico*. In a tongue-in-cheek reference to Kissinger's famously low *basso* speaking voice, the central section of this movement is a duet between contrabassoon and bass clarinet. I think of this section, in which these low-pitched instruments toss blues scales back and forth at each other, as brief "musical negotiations."

The third movement, *A Sense of Direction*, contrasts greatly in tone from both previous movements. The phrase "a sense of direction" jumped out at me from Kissinger's writings, in which he praised statesmen who possessed this quality of a vision for the future. Musically, these words suggested to me a propulsive quality, which I tried to evoke by the repeated pulsating chords, played by strings, marimba and vibraphone, which begin the movement. These simple harmonies, repeated many times in a rhythmic pattern, might suggest a kind of engine or motor that is driving us toward a brighter future. The tone of this movement is frankly much more upbeat than one might expect after absorbing some of Dr. Kissinger's writing, which is often sobering in outlook; but I felt that focusing on his phrase "a sense of direction" afforded me some creative license to end this piece in an optimistic manner.

Fanfare for Tomorrow was commissioned for the inauguration of President Joseph R. Biden on January 20, 2021. It was premiered at the United States Capitol during the Inaugural Prelude by “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band, led by its director, Colonel Jason K. Fettig. In what had to be a unique way for a composer to experience a premiere, I heard this fanfare being performed in the background of CNN’s television coverage, at the very moment when Joe Biden and Kamala Harris arrived at the Capitol, to take their oaths as the President and Vice President of the United States. Shortly after the premiere, I created this new orchestral version of the fanfare.

Two works on this recording were commissioned by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra for the Cincinnati Pops (John Morris Russell, conductor). For *Rolling River (Sketches on “Shenandoah”)*, I was asked to create a new orchestral setting of this American folk song. My approach in creating *Rolling River* (the title comes from a lyric in the song) was to put this beautiful tune front and center, and to surround and highlight it with the rich colors of the symphony orchestra. The request was for something sweeping and “cinematic,” and I attempted to deliver that in this setting, including suggestions of a rolling river in the woodwind writing.

In the Cause of the Free was commissioned as a reflection on Veterans Day and the signing of the Armistice which ended the First World War. In reading poetry from “The Great War,” words from the poem *For the Fallen* by Laurence Binyon led me to choose this title.

*With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.*

While these lines were written by a British poet, remembering his fallen countrymen, they could be seen as equally relevant to American and other soldiers who were lost in that war. The work features a solo trumpet, playing a kind of “soliloquy” on the subject matter in a cadenza passage. During these recording sessions, James Fountain, principal trumpet of the London Symphony Orchestra, played this solo with remarkable beauty and eloquence, which left me and his colleagues deeply moved.

The brief *Elegy* also arose in response to the subject matter of war. In 2018, I was commissioned to compose and conduct incidental music for a play based on war letters, titled *If All the Sky Were Paper*. The letters read in the play, primarily written by soldiers, were often profoundly moving. The music which I composed served as underscore for the actors’ readings of these letters, so it needed to be simple and direct in conveying a mood. *Elegy* is an adaptation of some of that music for English horn, harp, and string orchestra.

Radiance is the only work here which did not originate with a commission. When planning this recording project, I saw an opportunity to create a new work specifically for this album. As this recording includes a great deal of celebratory and boisterous music, I believed that a contrasting work which could explore the lyricism of the LSO’s superb string section would be welcome. I worked on *Radiance* during the dark days of the coronavirus pandemic, and sought to remain focused on a mood of serenity and beauty, looking ahead to a more optimistic time.

Fanfare, Hymn and Finale was commissioned in its original version by “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band (Colonel Jason K. Fettig, director), in celebration of its 220th anniversary in 2018. It seemed clear that this piece had to open with a celebratory fanfare. I also wanted to include contrasting music which might convey a sense of nobility, and thought that composing a hymn-like section could work well for this purpose. Finally, I thought that mixed-meter music of a jubilant, propulsive quality also would be appropriate. This led me to the title of *Fanfare, Hymn and Finale*, which I believe clearly describes the musical content and structure of the work. I created a new orchestral version for this recording, to revel in the virtuosity of the London Symphony Orchestra.

Peter Boyer



London Symphony Orchestra



The London Symphony Orchestra is built on the belief that extraordinary music should be available to everyone, everywhere. From orchestral fans in the concert hall to first-time listeners across the world. The London Symphony Orchestra was established in 1904, as one of the first orchestras shaped by its musicians. Since then, generations of remarkable talents have built the LSO's reputation for uncompromising quality, and inspirational repertoires. The LSO is Resident Orchestra at the Barbican in the City of London, and reaches international audiences through touring, residencies and digital partnerships. Through a world-leading education and community programme, LSO Discovery, the LSO connects people from all walks of life to the power of great music. Based at LSO St Luke's, the orchestra's community and music education centre and a leading performance venue on Old Street, LSO Discovery's reach extends across East London, the UK and the world. In 1999, the LSO formed its own recording label, LSO Live, and revolutionised how live orchestral music is recorded, with over 150 recordings released so far. Overall, the LSO has made more recordings than any other orchestra, with 2,500 recordings to its name. The orchestra has collaborated with a genre-busting roster of world-class artists through its work in film, video games and bespoke audio-only experiences. In addition to entertaining and inspiring millions of listeners, the LSO's performances have been decorated with multiple honours from the GRAMMY Awards, Oscars, Golden Globes, BAFTAs, and BRITs, not to mention three Mercury Music Prize album nominations. www.lso.co.uk

Peter Boyer



Peter Boyer is one of the most frequently performed American orchestral composers of his generation. His works have received over 600 public performances by more than 200 orchestras, and tens of thousands of broadcasts by classical radio stations around the US and abroad. He has conducted recordings of his music with three of the world's finest orchestras: the London Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Boyer's GRAMMY-nominated *Ellis Island: The Dream of America* has become one of the most performed American orchestral works of recent years, with 250 performances by more than 100 orchestras. In 2017, *Ellis Island* was filmed in concert with Pacific Symphony (conductor Carl St.Clair), and a cast of stage

and screen actors for PBS' *Great Performances*, America's preeminent performing arts television series. The national telecast premiere was in June 2018. Boyer has received commissions from prestigious American institutions and ensembles, including The Kennedy Center for the National Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Pops, Cincinnati Pops, Pacific Symphony, and "The President's Own" United States Marine Band, which premiered his *Fanfare for Tomorrow* at the inauguration of President Biden. Other orchestras that have performed Boyer's music include The Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and Nashville Symphony. He has served as composer-in-residence of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra and the Pasadena Symphony. In 2010, Boyer composed the Boston Pops 125th anniversary commission, *The Dream Lives On: A Portrait of the Kennedy Brothers*, which was narrated by acclaimed actors including Robert De Niro, Morgan Freeman, Ed Harris, and Alec Baldwin. In addition to his work for the concert hall, Boyer is active in the film and television music industry. He has contributed orchestrations to more than 35 film scores from all the major movie studios, for several leading Hollywood composers. He has arranged music for the Academy Awards, and composed music for the History Channel. His music has appeared in documentary films, short films, and a variety of television programs. He holds the Helen M. Smith Chair in Music at Claremont Graduate University. In 2019, Boyer received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, which is officially recognized by both Houses of Congress as one of the most prestigious American awards.

www.propulsivemusic.com

Peter BOYER

(b. 1970)

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Christine Pendrill, English horn 7

Bryn Lewis, Harp 7

James Fountain, Trumpet 8

London Symphony Orchestra

Peter Boyer

***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

A detailed track list and full recording details
can be found inside the booklet.

Booklet notes: Peter Boyer

Publisher: Propulsive Music (BMI)

Peter Boyer would like to thank Bonnie McElveen-Hunter,
Joel Kassimir and Charlie Zhang for their generous
contributions toward this recording project.

Cover photograph by Benjamin Ealovega



AMERICAN CLASSICS

This album presents eight of the most recent works by Peter Boyer, one of the leading American orchestral composers of his generation. *Balance of Power* was commissioned for the 95th birthday of former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, while *Fanfare for Tomorrow* was composed for the inauguration of President Joe Biden in 2021. Each of these pieces displays Boyer’s vivid soundscapes and tuneful American sensibilities, from the cinematic sweep of *Rolling River* to *Radiance*, composed especially for this album. Boyer’s GRAMMY-nominated *Ellis Island: The Dream of America* (8.559246) has received over 250 performances and was televised by PBS.

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
59:12