

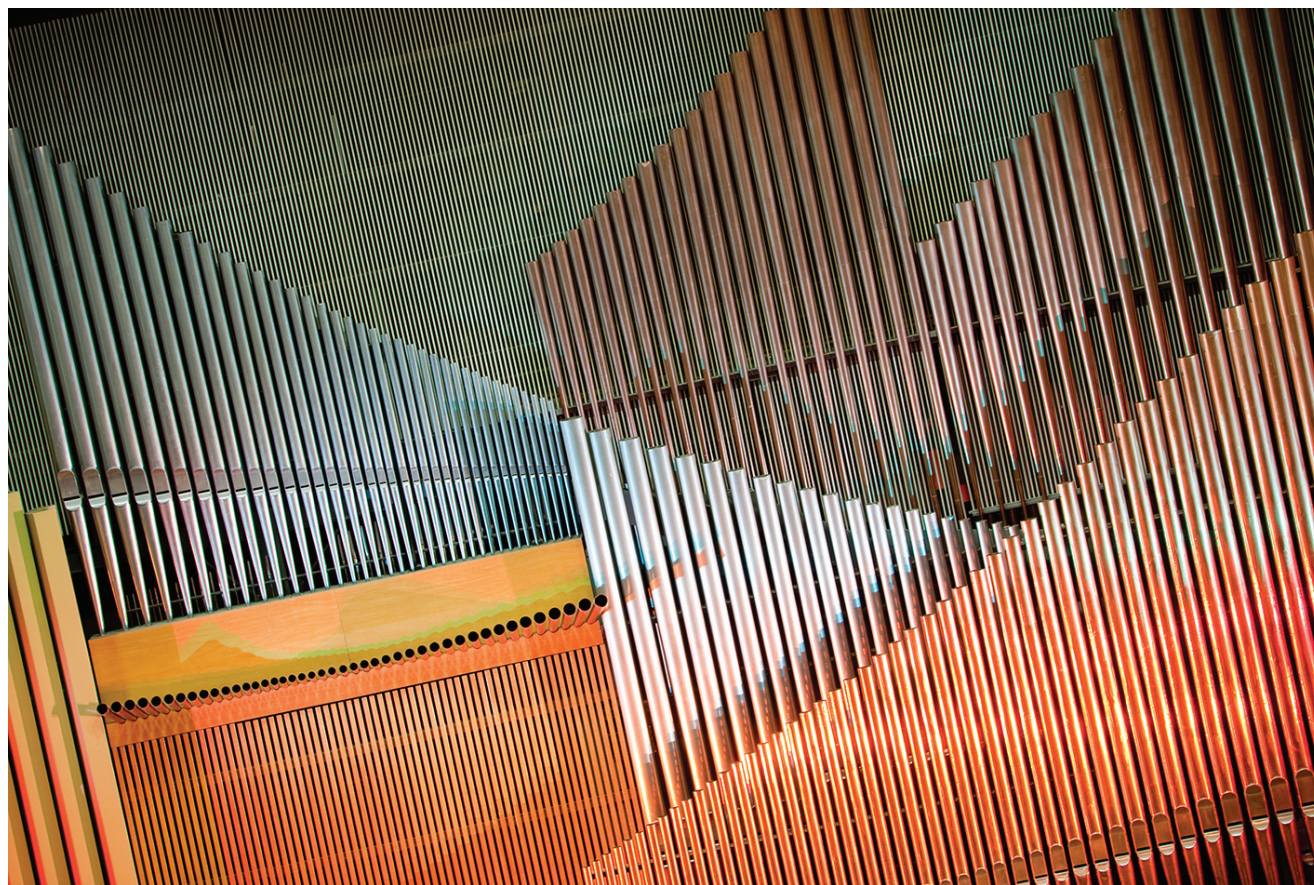


ORGAN CONCERTOS

Oquin • Parker • Rouse

Paul Jacobs, Organ

Nashville Symphony • Giancarlo Guerrero



ORGAN CONCERTOS

Horatio Parker (1863–1919)

Organ Concerto in E flat minor, Op. 55 (1901–02)

20:40

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I. Allegro moderato – Andante | 10:34 |
| 2 | II. Allegretto, ma ben moderato | 3:11 |
| 3 | III. Allegro moderato, molto risoluto | 6:55 |

Wayne Oquin (b. 1977)

4 **Resilience (2015)**

12:05

Christopher Rouse (1949–2019)

Organ Concerto (2014)

20:11

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|------|
| 5 | I. Allegro non troppo | 6:37 |
| 6 | II. Lento | 8:20 |
| 7 | III. Presto | 5:14 |

Charles Ives (1874–1954)

Variations on “America” (1891–92)

(rev. and ed. E. Power Biggs [1906–1977], 1949)

8:00

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------|------|
| 8 | [Introduction]: Allegro | 1:10 |
| 9 | [Theme]: Moderato | 0:40 |
| 10 | Variation 1: Moderato | 0:46 |
| 11 | Variation 2: Andante | 0:53 |
| 12 | Interlude I | 0:31 |
| 13 | Variation 3: Allegro | 0:59 |
| 14 | Variation 4: Polonaise | 0:50 |
| 15 | Interlude II | 0:14 |
| 16 | Variation 5: Allegro | 1:57 |

Charles Ives • Wayne Oquin • Horatio Parker • Christopher Rouse

Organ Concertos

Horatio Parker

(15 September 1863, Auburndale, Massachusetts – 18 December 1919, Cedarhurst, New York)

Organ Concerto in E flat minor, Op. 55

First performance: December 1902, with the Boston Symphony and the composer as the soloist.

In 1894, a precocious student named Charles Ives enrolled at Yale University, becoming part of the first class to be taught by Horatio Parker, who had just launched his career at Yale the same year. Challenging Parker with his decidedly unconventional approach to composition, Ives would spar with his mentor; decades later, he lobbed stinging criticisms when recalling the strictures of an (often anonymous) “routine-minded professor.”

Yet, as the musicologist Gayle Sherwood Magee writes, it was under Horatio Parker’s guidance that the rebellious Ives acquired “the tools to become an accomplished composer” – particularly given the many gaps in his knowledge left by the “open-minded but incomplete education” he received from his musician father. Parker was tirelessly devoted to education and essentially worked himself to a premature death at the age of 56.

Horatio Parker came of age when such Boston-based figures as George Chadwick (one of his own teachers) were seeking to define an authentically American voice for classical music. Still, they drew heavily on developments from German Romanticism. Parker, for example, spent a formative period from 1882 to 1885 studying in Munich under the composer and organist Josef Rheinberger.

Back in the United States, Parker made a living as an organist, choirmaster, and teacher – including a stint at the new National Conservatory of Music in New York, which Dvořák had just been hired to direct. Along with church music and orchestral pieces, Parker wrote a large-scale, Romantic oratorio, *Hora Novissima* (1893), in which he attempted to come to terms with the deaths of his infant son and his father. Setting a text by the medieval Benedictine monk Bernard of Cluny, *Hora Novissima* offers an ecstatic vision of Paradise. It won Parker national attention, and he became known above all for such choral compositions as *St. Christopher* and *Morven and the Grail*. He also wrote for the theater: although it was a critical failure, *Mona* (1912) was the first full-length opera by an American produced at The Metropolitan Opera.

The *Organ Concerto* was commissioned by the Boston Symphony, which requested a work in which the composer might appear as the soloist. At the time, a concerto for organ and orchestra was considered novel by Parker’s peers, but the work was dubbed “an imposing and brilliant composition” by one critic.

Although relatively compact, the *Organ Concerto* is the largest of Parker’s orchestral works. The composer omits the woodwind section entirely, creating an orchestral soundscape of brass, timpani, harp and strings, in and out of which he weaves the solo organ.

The first movement is unusually structured in two parts. The first begins with a forceful chord from the “King of Instruments” emphasizing the home key of E flat minor, over which the strings pronounce the dignified main theme. A gentle second theme, expressing both solace and longing, poses contrast. These ideas – at times presented in a kind of call-and-response between organ and ensemble – are developed in the rest of the first section. The tempo then shifts to *Andante* for the second, meditative section of further transformations. Setting mood of chamber music-like intimacy, this section starts with a duet between the organ and solo violin, the harp later entering. Other solo passages follow, leading to an ecstatic climax and a subdued conclusion in B major.

The second movement is *scherzo*-like in character, beginning with a rhythmic motto from the timpani; a lyrically contrasting middle section spotlights the organ. In the finale, again starting with drums, Parker builds a thrilling fugue from the imposing opening theme. Speeding up in the coda, the concerto comes to rest on another grand chord, now in the major.

In addition to solo organ, Parker’s *Concerto* is scored for four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, harp and strings.

Wayne Oquin

(b. 9 December 1977, Houston, Texas; resides in New York City)

Resilience

First performance: 4 February 2016, Paul Jacobs at the organ with the Pacific Symphony led by Carl St.Clair.

The Texas-born composer Wayne Oquin has been widely commissioned by ensembles across the United States and Europe, and has built an impressive catalogue ranging from symphonic wind compositions to choral and orchestral works. Among the illustrious performers who have commissioned music from him is Paul Jacobs, with whom Oquin has for years enjoyed a close association: both musicians follow parallel careers as highly regarded educators at The Juilliard School, where Oquin has taught since 2008.

The idea of a “mini-concerto” for the organ began when the conductor of the California-based Pacific Symphony, Carl St.Clair, asked Oquin to compose a piece for organ and orchestra that would have a “celebratory” character. The composer recalls realizing from the start that this would entail “writing for two vast ensembles, each of which is rivaled only by the other in terms of both power and subtlety.” The resulting work, *Resilience*, he describes as “a 13-minute exploration of two seemingly limitless spheres.”

Resilience is based on a variety of call-and-response patterns between the soloist and orchestra that is apparent from the outset. The orchestral replies, writes Oquin, are meant to be “as wide-ranging as the King of Instruments itself,” while “a feeling of urgency, a sense of struggle” emerges in several passages – above all at the close of the piece, “where, with each orchestral harmonic strike, the organ is simultaneously shot down and summoned to new heights, pushing the boundaries of the soloist’s technique to the utmost limits ... no hands!”

Regarding the title, Oquin explains that the composition is based on developing a limited number of motifs, with the first two chords expressing an “emphatic resolve” that saturates the score. “Though the initial idea transforms and travels far,” he notes, “its influence is never abandoned.” Even when the rhythmic pulse is “temporarily suspended” in slower passages, “the music’s insistence on the original harmonic material does not diminish. My hope is that this motivic allegiance in some way mirrors real-life tenacity, determination, and perseverance; that the human capacity to excel, even amidst life’s tumult, is reflected in every bar.”

In addition to the solo organ, *Resilience* is scored for three flutes (third doubling piccolo), two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, celesta and strings.

Christopher Rouse

(15 February 1949, Baltimore, Maryland – 21 September 2019, Towson, Maryland)

Organ Concerto

First performance: 17 November 2016 with Paul Jacobs as the organ soloist and Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting The Philadelphia Orchestra.

Christopher Rouse played a vital role in re-establishing the appeal for contemporary audiences of age-old orchestral genres like the concerto and symphony. His command of orchestration combined with his skill as a musical storyteller made him one of the most frequently commissioned and performed American composers of his generation. His music has figured prominently on Nashville Symphony Orchestra programs; the orchestra’s recording of his *Symphony No. 5* (Naxos 8.559852) – a work that tips the composer’s hat to Beethoven’s *Fifth* – earned Rouse a posthumous GRAMMY Award in the Best Contemporary Classical Composition category in 2021.

When Rouse was coming of age, much of the creative energy in new music centered around rock (Led Zeppelin left a particularly strong impression on his musical psyche), while music composed for the traditional orchestra seemed to many to have reached a dead end. Rouse made his name by helping turn that perception around. His *Trombone Concerto*, commissioned to mark the New York Philharmonic’s 150th-anniversary season and a homage to Leonard Bernstein, received the Pulitzer Prize in Music in 1993.

Rouse found the concerto format particularly attractive and produced more than a dozen such works for prominent soloists, including (in addition to trombone) works for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, violin, cello, percussion, piano, harp, guitar, and organ. It was for Paul Jacobs that he wrote the last-named work, which is dedicated to the organist. Along with its innovations, Rouse noted that the *Organ Concerto* is “certainly ... intended to show off what the organ – and, of course, the soloist – are capable of.”

Rouse often devised tailor-made formal designs for each of his works, taking into account the unique characteristics of the instrument and soloist in question. But for the *Organ Concerto*, he opted to follow the conventional three-movement pattern: two fast outer movements frame a slow one at the center.

By restricting his orchestra to very low woodwinds and leaning on other instruments in the lower depths, Rouse intensifies the dark coloration of his soundscape, setting in relief the high registers provided by the organ, violins, and trumpets. The music similarly develops a tension between knotty dissonances and familial harmonic colors. Rouse's rhythmic virtuosity comes to the fore in the finale, which the critic George Loomis likened to "a fiendish, magic gigue."

In addition to the solo organ, Rouse's *Organ Concerto* is scored for bass clarinet, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, three percussionists and strings.

Thomas May

Charles Ives

(20 October 1874, Danbury, Connecticut – 19 May 1954, New York City)

Variations on "America"

Decades before he achieved belated recognition as the father of American modernism, 14-year-old Charles Ives became the youngest professional organist in his native Connecticut. His appointment was no act of desperation or nepotism – Ives had already acquired a virtuoso technique on the instrument and could perform major works by Bach and Mendelssohn. His *Variations on "America" (My Country, 'Tis of Thee)* was premiered by Ives on a Fourth of July concert in 1892, and demonstrates his precocious skill as a performer and his early interest in unusual techniques like bitonality. The work would probably have been lost to history were it not for the efforts of E. Power Biggs, who wrote to Ives in 1948 requesting music to feature on his weekly radio broadcast from Harvard's Busch-Reisinger Museum. In his response, Ives stated that playing the highly demanding pedal variation "gave him almost as much fun as playing baseball."

David Crean

Paul Jacobs



Internationally celebrated organist Paul Jacobs combines a probing intellect and extraordinary technical mastery with an unusually large repertoire. He has performed to great critical acclaim on five continents and in each of the 50 United States. The only organist ever to have won a GRAMMY Award, Jacobs is an eloquent champion of his instrument both in the United States and abroad. During the 2023/24 season, Jacobs returned to the Los Angeles Philharmonic twice: for the 20th Anniversary celebration of Walt Disney Hall; and in a performance of Lou Harrison's *Organ Concerto* with Esa-Pekka Salonen. Recent highlights include the premiere of a new organ concerto written for him by Lowell Liebermann, with performances at the Jacksonville Symphony and Oregon Bach Festival, and Messiaen's *Livre du Saint-Sacrement* at Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie. A fierce advocate of new music, Jacobs has premiered works by Michael Daugherty, John Harbison, Stephen Paulus and Christopher Rouse, among others. Jacobs studied at the Curtis Institute of Music and Yale University. He joined the faculty of The Juilliard School in 2003 and was named chair of the organ department in 2004.

Nashville Symphony



One of Tennessee's largest and longest-running nonprofit performing arts organizations, the Nashville Symphony has been an integral part of the Music City sound since 1946. Led by music director Giancarlo Guerrero and president and CEO Alan D. Valentine, the 83-member ensemble performs more than 160 concerts annually, with a focus on contemporary American orchestral music through collaborations with such leading composers as Jennifer Higdon, Terry Riley, Joan Tower, Aaron Jay Kernis, Michael Daugherty, John Harbison, Julia Wolfe, and Hannibal Lokumbe. The orchestra is equally renowned for its commissioning and recording projects with Nashville-based artists such as bassist Edgar Meyer, banjoist Béla Fleck, singer-songwriter Ben Folds, electric bassist Victor Wooten, and composer Kip Winger. The Nashville Symphony is one of the most active recording orchestras in the United States, releasing more than 40 projects, the majority on Naxos, over the past 25 years. Together, these recordings have earned a total of 27 GRAMMY Award nominations and have won 14 GRAMMY Awards, including two for Best Orchestral Performance. Schermerhorn Symphony Center is home to the Nashville Symphony and widely regarded as one of the finest concert halls in the United States.

Giancarlo Guerrero



Giancarlo Guerrero is a six-time GRAMMY Award-winning conductor and music director of the Nashville Symphony. He has championed contemporary American music through numerous commissions, recordings and performances, presenting eleven world premieres and fifteen recordings of works by the country's most prominent composers including Jonathan Leshnoff, Michael Daugherty, Terry Riley, and John Adams. As part of this commitment, he helped guide the creation of Nashville Symphony's Composer Lab & Workshop initiative with Aaron Jay Kernis. Guerrero has been a frequent guest conductor in North America, performing with the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, and the orchestras of Boston, Baltimore, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dallas, Detroit, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Montréal, Philadelphia, Seattle, Toronto, Vancouver, and Houston. He recently completed a six-season tenure as music director of the NFM Wrocław Philharmonic. Elsewhere internationally, he has led orchestras in Germany, London, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Australia. An advocate for music education, he works with the Curtis Institute of Music, Colburn School, the National Youth Orchestra (NYO2) in New York, and the Nashville Symphony's Accelerando program.

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Paul Jacobs, Organ
Nashville Symphony 1–7
Giancarlo Guerrero 1–7

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet
Recorded live: 27–30 October 2019 **1–3**, 23–25 February
2023 **4–7** and 19 March 2024 **8–16** at the Laura Turner
Concert Hall, Schermerhorn Symphony Center, Nashville,
Tennessee, USA

Producer: Tim Handley

Engineer: Trevor Wilkinson

Assistant engineer: Saint Thomas LeDoux **8–16**

Booklet notes: Thomas May, David Crean

Publishers: Novello & Co., Ltd **1–3**, Watersong Press **4**,

Boosey & Hawkes / Hendon Music, Inc. **5–7**,

Mercury Music Corporation **8–16**

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

The organ concerto tradition goes back to the 17th century and the Baroque era, but composers have constantly adapted this age-old genre to their own expressive ends – this recording provides ample evidence of its appeal today. The *Organ Concerto* by Horatio Parker, today remembered as Charles Ives’ teacher, emerged at a time when composers were seeking an authentically American voice and was hailed by one critic as “imposing and brilliant.” Dedicated to Paul Jacobs, Christopher Rouse’s *Organ Concerto* is notable for its contrasting dark and light sonorities both in instrumentation and harmonic color. Wayne Oquin’s *Resilience* reflects the human capacity for tenacity and perseverance; the composer describes it as “a 13-minute exploration of two seemingly limitless spheres.” The program ends with Ives’ *Variations on “America”* – a piece for solo organ composed for the Fourth of July celebrations in 1892.

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Playing
Time:
61:04