



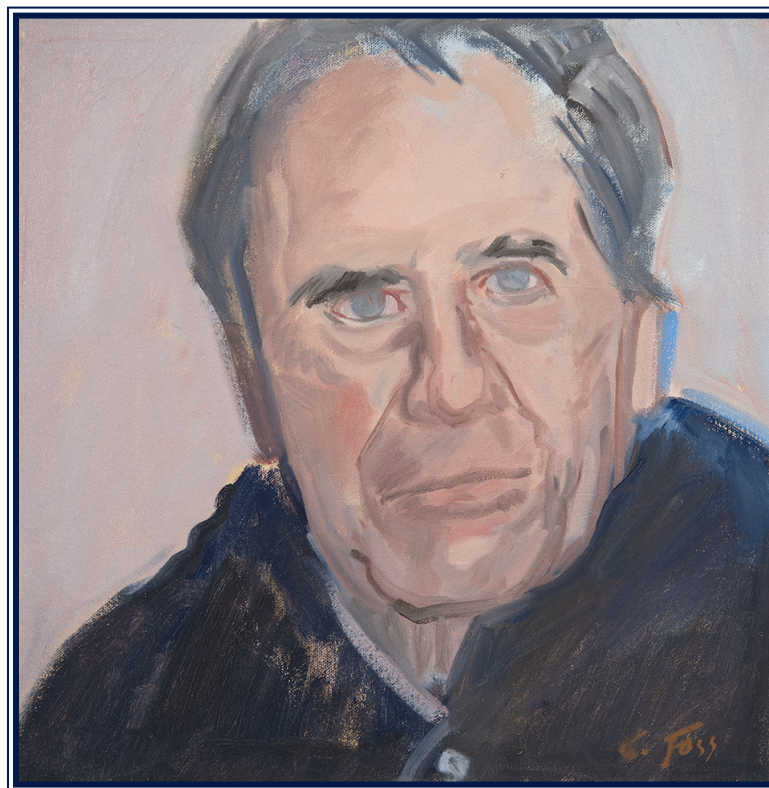
LUKAS FOSS

Symphony No. 1

Renaissance Concerto • Three American Pieces • Ode

Amy Porter, Flute • Nikki Chooi, Violin

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra • JoAnn Falletta



Lukas Foss (1922–2009)

Ode • Renaissance Concerto • Three American Pieces • Symphony No. 1

Lukas Foss was born in Berlin in 1922 (birth name Lukas Fuchs). He began studying music in Paris at age eleven, and in 1937, when he was fifteen, settled with his family in Philadelphia, USA. He went on to enroll in the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied piano, composition and conducting. Thereafter, despite his European roots, he strongly identified as an American composer. He employed many diverse styles in his works, freely exploring techniques ranging from atonality to serialism and aleatoric music while never wholly committing to one -ism or another. He once said, “I think that, if you are going to have a big foot in the future, you’ve got to have a big foot in the past. That creates real strength.” The works on this album demonstrate his commitment to that belief. Three of them fall firmly into Foss’s early neo-Classical period, relying heavily on Classical models and techniques while sounding distinctively contemporary, whereas the other builds on Renaissance sources to achieve the same end.

Ode (1944, rev. 1958)

Foss composed *Ode* during the summer of 1944 while residing at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. In it he expressed his feelings about the tragic loss of American lives during the Second World War (its original title was *Ode to Those Who Will Not Return*). He explained it was intended to suggest “crisis, war, and ultimately faith.” It opens with a heavy, funereal tread sustained by an ostinato bass figure that alternates between descending major and minor thirds – an ambiguity that continues in the rising brass statements that Foss builds above it. Strings introduce a more lyrical yet still anguished idea that is succeeded by a lively, mixed-meter motif introduced on bassoon (*Vivace*). As the composer develops this new idea contrapuntally, he further exploits the major-minor polarity that already exists in the opening ostinato and adds frequent tritones to further cloud the sense of traditional tonality. After a climax that relies heavily on *fortississimo* trumpets, the opening ostinato returns briefly on timpani and low strings as upper strings continue their impassioned pleading from before. The ostinato returns in full force for the coda, and the piece ends, not in triumph, but with quiet affirmation. Tremolo strings that include a non-tremolo solo sextet (four violins, viola and cello) support the major-minor figure in rising horns and a peaceful, shimmering C major chord in woodwinds.

George Szell and the New York Philharmonic gave the first performance of *Ode* on 15 March 1945. Foss revised the work in 1958 for a performance by Eugene Ormandy and The Philadelphia Orchestra (the version played here). The revised score bears this well-known quote from John Donne, which was part of Foss’s inspiration in writing the piece: “Any man’s Death diminishes me because I am involved in Mankind and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls: It tolls for thee.”

Renaissance Concerto (1985)

It was not unusual, even in some of his most forward-looking compositions, for Foss to build on the music of others. His *Phorion* (1966), for example, adapted and distorted a Bach solo violin partita; *Non-Improvisation* (1967) juxtaposed fragments of a Bach clavier concerto with other material; and his *Baroque Variations* (also 1967) borrowed music from Handel, Domenico Scarlatti and Bach. His *Renaissance Concerto* for flute and orchestra is another such case, where each of the four movements is derived from previously written melodies. Foss called the work a “handshake across the centuries.”

Even the movement titles evoke the past. The first is called *Intrada*, a word typically applied to 16th- and 17th-century preludes (from an Italian word for “entrance”). The flute soloist begins with a free, cadenza-like passage played over mostly traditional – even triadic – harmony; muted trumpets and trombone sound a distant brass chorale. Soon, Foss introduces a melody derived from *The Carman’s Whistle*, a Tudor-era song perhaps best-known in its harpsichord arrangement by William Byrd (although both Percy Grainger and Rimsky-Korsakov also used the tune). Picked up by the soloist, the tune alternates with recurrences of the more recitative-like opening material. Unmuted, the brass interject playful, fanfare-like motifs but mute again for the closing moments that recall their earlier chorale; the movement fades to nothing as if the memory of the past is lost.

Foss based the second movement, *Baroque Interlude*, on a harpsichord piece (*L’Enharmonique*) by Jean-Philippe Rameau. He evokes the appropriate sound world from the very beginning, scored for cembalo (“and/or harp”), timpani and pizzicato strings. Once the flute enters with the melody, we are off on a pleasant and playful Baroque holiday that Rameau himself might have recognized were it not for the strange melodic and harmonic turns the composer takes. The slow movement, *Recitative*, derives from the lament Orfeo sings in Monteverdi’s eponymous opera after he learns that his beloved Eurydice has died: *Tu se’ morta, mia vita, ed io respiro?* (“You are dead, my life, and I still breathe?”). With its pointed appoggiaturas (and a few 20th-century pitch bends), it sounds

Lukas Foss and JoAnn Falletta, c. 1988



like a mournful, despairing lover's cry. Foss's orchestration is of interest here; the movement is scored for just flute and strings. The latter are divided into two groups: a distant group of soloists instructed to play *con sordino* if remaining on stage, and the remaining group playing without mutes (if the soloists group performs in the wings, the muting directions are reversed). Rhythmic flow is left largely to the soloist, while the accompanying strings play mostly block chords, just as would be the case in Renaissance opera.

Jouissance brings the concerto to a festive close. Based on *Musing*, a round for four voices by David Melvill published (with a slightly bawdy text) in 1612, it gives the soloist a technical workout for range, rhythm and a few extended techniques (flutter tonguing, key clicks in unison with a drum, and breath tones). A lengthy cadenza (during which high tambourine and drum are instructed to "shadow" the flute), the soloist displays great agility. Throughout, Foss revels in the contrapuntal interplay based on his round tune, and when it returns after the cadenza, he treats it to still more intricate development. On the final page, the soloist is instructed to slowly move to the exit while playing, the part first reduced to breath tone and finally to breath tone and key clicks until the part is "not necessarily audible." The last word goes to a single chime, played after the soloist has left the stage.

Renaissance Concerto was commissioned by a consortium of organizations that included the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, of which Foss was musical director from 1963 to 1970 (and which conductor JoAnn Falletta now leads). The composer wrote it specifically for flautist Carol Wincenc, who premiered the work with Foss and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra on 10 May 1986.

Three American Pieces (1944–45, orch. 1989)

Three American Pieces, written shortly after *Ode* in 1944–45, was originally composed for violin and piano and later orchestrated by the composer. Foss acknowledged Copland's influence on the piece in its "open-air quality." The first movement, *Early Song*, begins with a gentle *barcarolle* in a modally inflected G major that soon gives way to what Foss described as a "rustic dance" centered on F. The key melodic motif repeats several times in both solo part and orchestra before the

barcarolle idea returns, this time in D major, to provide a moment of respite before the *Allegro* returns. Foss now presents it in triple (and later mixed) meter, thus organically connecting it to the gentle opening. The violin ends the movement with three truncated statements of the dance motif.

The second movement, *Dedication*, opens with a brief but somber wind chorale. Muted strings enter to support a wide-ranging, lyrical melody from the soloist that unfolds as if it were being improvised. The bassoonist begins a duet with the soloist that leads to a more rhythmically animated mid-section where mixed meter prevails. When the opening languor returns, Foss combines duple-compound meter in the woodwinds against duple-simple in the strings and triple-simple in the solo violin to provide an eerie, unsettled feeling to what is otherwise gentle and consoling music. The finale, *Composer's Holiday*, is a non-stop hoedown of fun. With an initial theme clearly reminiscent of Stephen Foster's *Camptown Races* and a contrasting, blues-inflected idea that adds rhythmic and harmonic color, the movement speeds to an exhilarating, "All-American" C major cadence.

Foss's modest orchestration consists of flute, B flat clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, optional trombone, piano (which retains much of its original figuration), percussion and strings. He states that the latter can be limited to solo instruments, although that is not the case here. Later, in cooperation with Carol Wincenc, he created a version for flute and piano; he also approved a version for clarinet made by Richard Stoltzman that was further edited by Seunghee Lee.

Symphony No. 1 in G major (1944)

Foss's *Symphony No. 1* was mostly written, like *Ode*, during the composer's summer 1944 residence at the MacDowell Colony – a productive period that also saw the composition of three ballets (*Gift of the Magi*, *The Heart Remembers* and *Within These Walls*). Fritz Reiner (with whom Foss had studied conducting at Curtis), led the premiere with the Pittsburgh Symphony on 4 February 1945. The four-movement work is an ambitious statement for a 22-year-old fledgling composer. He had clearly begun to absorb some of the many influences around him – primarily Copland – but was also finding ways to assert his own individual voice.

The first movement is a quirky and questioning development of relatively simple material. It begins with an off-hand, open-air figure for woodwinds that will return, more fully orchestrated, near the end of the movement. Foss continues this breezy 6/8 mood but starts to “complicate” things with mixed meters until a bass pulse begins and the music becomes more serious and “grounded.” He introduces a strong, three-note figure (rising fifth, descending fourth) in bright trumpets – later played in double-note values on low brass and strings – but the bucolic mood continues unabated. Solo violin picks up the three-note figure for further development and by now we realize it derives from the same motif that kicked off the symphony. This reaches a glorious climax after which Foss quickly thins the texture and ends the movement quietly.

In the *Adagio* movement, Foss lays out a clear A–B–A structure. The opening panel of the form is an extended cantilena beginning with solo horn, followed by oboe, bassoon (doubled by piccolo two octaves higher) and, once again, horn. Strings take over the melody and begin to add contrapuntal development to the musical argument. This builds to the central section, which introduces a martial element featuring four-square phrases, but Foss soon reintroduces the cantilena idea on bass clarinet. In the final panel, the composer returns to lush lyricism, once again reducing the orchestration until just a dying fall from solo cello brings the movement to a peaceful conclusion.

The third movement is in traditional rondo form (A–B–A–C–A) – one might think of it as a *scherzo* with two trios. It starts with a burst of energy from the entire orchestra before the horns – followed by trumpet and trombone – announce the principal theme, a syncopated line with narrow intervals. Strings take it over before the first “trio” theme arrives in oboe and English horn: a modestly more wide-ranging idea with subtly jazzy inflections. Foss develops it in woodwinds, brass and strings until the opening energy returns and the composer goes back to his first idea. The second trio features a yet more expansive line tossed among winds and first violins that the composer develops extensively until the final return of the opening. A reprise of the first trio theme in the coda makes for satisfying symmetry.

In the concluding movement, the longest of the four, Foss begins with a callback to the first, starting with the same flute-and-piccolo flourish that opened the symphony. He next introduces a principal theme on clarinet that moves propulsively through all sections of the orchestra as it rockets toward a climax. Foss adds still more rhythmic energy with a terse figure initially presented by string quartet and piano, which intensifies and leads to a return of the first theme, this time on violins. He develops this idea more fully until the texture thins out to just timpani, bassoon and double basses. Here, he begins building to the final climax. The string quartet idea returns, and each page of the score gets thicker with notes until everyone has joined in the drive to the end. The concluding measures gleefully assert a triumphant G major – the same key in which the symphony began. You can sense the confidence and pride with which the young composer signed his score, “Lukas Foss, Thanksgiving 1944.”

Frank K. DeWald

This recording was made in the wake of a special concert in Carnegie Hall. That event had a triple purpose: to celebrate Lukas Foss on the 100th anniversary of his birth, to recognize him for transforming the Buffalo Philharmonic into an adventurous and world-renowned orchestra, and to honor him for mentoring JoAnn Falletta at the start of her conducting career.

Peter J. Rabinowitz's biographical sketch of Foss and his concert program notes for that occasion (which include two works not on this album) can be found at www.naxos.com/notes/559938.htm

Amy Porter



Flutist Amy Porter has been praised by critics both for her exceptional musical talent and her passion for scholarship. Through a versatile and distinguished career as a concert performer, she has become a skillful and creative muse for composers of our time, and given numerous performances at Carnegie Hall. The multifaceted Porter is also an acclaimed professor of music at the University of Michigan. She has won praise both as a recording artist and chamber musician. The winner of the Third Kobe International Flute Competition, she is a member of Trio Virado alongside violist Jaime Amador and guitarist João Luiz. Formerly a member of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Porter graduated from The Juilliard School. She is the host of the *PorterFlute Pod* podcast and her AOS-Wellness website offers her Anatomy of Sound™ curriculum. www.amyporter.com

Nikki Chooi



Praised for his powerful and poetic performances, internationally acclaimed violinist Nikki Chooi has established himself as an artist of rare versatility. He is concertmaster of the GRAMMY Award-winning Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and was previously concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. As a laureate of the Queen Elisabeth, Tchaikovsky and Michael Hill International Violin Competitions, Chooi's performances have graced renowned stages worldwide. He has been featured at Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium, Marlboro Music Festival, International Chamber Music Festival Utrecht, Dresden Music Festival, Chamber Music New Zealand, and Fundación Beethoven in Chile. Chooi has performed as a soloist with prominent international orchestras, including the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia, and the Belgian National Orchestra. His collaborations have extended to working with a myriad of distinguished conductors and fellow artists, among them JoAnn Falletta, Timothy Chooi, Yo-Yo Ma, Renée Fleming, and Eric Owens. www.nikkichooi.com

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra



Founded in 1935, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) is Buffalo's leading cultural ambassador, presenting more than 120 classics, pops and youth concerts each year. Since 1940, the orchestra's permanent home has been Kleinhans Music Hall. In 2022, it made its 25th appearance at Carnegie Hall, celebrating the life and works of former BPO music director Lukas Foss. Over the decades, the BPO has matured in stature under leading conductors William Steinberg, Josef Krips, Lukas Foss, Michael Tilson Thomas, Julius Rudel, Semyon Bychkov and Maximiano Valdés. During the tenure of JoAnn Falletta, the BPO has rekindled its distinguished history of radio broadcasts and recordings, including the release of over 60 albums of diverse repertoire on the Naxos and Beau Fleuve Records labels. The Philharmonic's recording of John Corigliano's *Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of*

Bob Dylan (Naxos 8.559331), featuring soprano Hila Plitmann, received GRAMMY Awards for Best Classical Vocal Performance and Best Classical Contemporary Composition, and its recording of Richard Danielpour's *The Passion of Yeshua* (Naxos 8.559885-86) with the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus received a GRAMMY Award for Best Choral Performance.

www.bpo.org

JoAnn Falletta



Photo: Enid Bloch

Multiple GRAMMY-winning conductor JoAnn Falletta serves as music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) and music director laureate of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra. She has guest-conducted many of the most prominent orchestras in America, Canada, Europe, Asia, and South America. As music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, Falletta became the first woman to lead a major American orchestra. With a discography of over 125 titles, she is a leading recording artist for Naxos. Her GRAMMY-winning Naxos recordings include Richard Danielpour's *The Passion of Yeshua* (8.559885-86) and John Corigliano's *Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan* (8.559331), both with the BPO, and Kenneth Fuchs' *Spiritualist* with the London Symphony Orchestra (8.559824). Falletta is a member of the esteemed American Academy of Arts and Sciences, has served as a member of the National Council on the Arts, is the recipient of many of the most prestigious conducting awards and was named *Performance Today's* Classical Woman of the Year 2019 and one of the 50 great conductors of all time by *Gramophone* magazine.

www.joannfalletta.com

Lukas
FOSS
(1922–2009)

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|----|---|-------|
| 1 | Ode (1944, rev. 1958) | 10:38 |
| | Renaissance Concerto (1985) | 20:24 |
| 2 | I. Intrada | 5:10 |
| 3 | II. Baroque Interlude (after Rameau) | 3:43 |
| 4 | III. Recitative (after Monteverdi) | 4:37 |
| 5 | IV. Jouissance | 6:42 |
| | Three American Pieces
(1944–45, orch. 1989) | 13:02 |
| 6 | No. 1. Early Song: Andante | 4:47 |
| 7 | No. 2. Dedication: Lento | 5:12 |
| 8 | No. 3. Composer's Holiday: Allegro | 2:58 |
| | Symphony No. 1 in G major (1944) | 30:40 |
| 9 | I. Andantino – Un poco allegretto | 6:56 |
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| 11 | III. Scherzo: Vivace | 7:35 |
| 12 | IV. Andantino – Allegro | 9:32 |

Amy Porter, Flute 2–5

Nikki Chooi, Violin 6–8

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

JoAnn Falletta

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Cover painting of Lukas Foss by Cornelia Foss

Photo by Christopher Foss (ChristopherFossPhotography.com)



AMERICAN CLASSICS

Berlin-born Lukas Foss studied music in Paris before settling in Philadelphia in 1937. Though he freely explored diverse compositional styles, three of the works in this recording fall into his early neo-Classical period and exemplify his dictum that “to have a big foot in the future, you’ve got to have a big foot in the past.” *Symphony No. 1 in G major* is lyrical, bucolic and subtly jazz-influenced, while the *Three American Pieces* show Aaron Copland’s “open air” influence. Foss’s *Ode* expresses his feelings about the loss of American lives during the Second World War, and *Renaissance Concerto* is a “handshake across the centuries” ingeniously spiced with unexpected harmonic twists.

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Playing
Time:
74:55