



Margaret
BROUWER

Rhapsodies

The Art of Sailing at Dawn
Rhapsody, Concerto for Orchestra
Symphony No. 1 "Lake Voices"
Path at Sunrise, Masses of Flowers
Pluto

ORF Vienna Radio
Symphony Orchestra

Marin Alsop



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Photo: Ken Blaze

Margaret Brouwer has earned critical accolades for her music's lyricism, musical imagery and emotional power. Her music has been called "devoid of slickness...true to a vision" (*The New York Times*), "inhabiting its own peculiarly bewitching harmonic world" (*The New York Times*), and "a marvelous example of musical imagery" (*American Record Guide*). Of her 2022 chamber music album *Reactions* (Naxos 8.559904), *EarRelevant* stated: "Brouwer's gift for melody, and her ability to weave together contemporary idioms with lines that allow the instruments to sing, make her a composer for whom chamber musicians (and listeners) should be grateful."

Brouwer's honors include an Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a 2024 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, a Meet The Composer Commissioning/USA Award, Guggenheim Fellowship, Ohio Arts Council Individual Fellowship, Cleveland Prize, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Ford Foundation, Cleveland Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Reviewing Brouwer's 2014 album *Shattered* (Naxos 8.559763), Jordan Borg from *NewMusicBox* wrote, "From the relentless, primal energy of *Shattered Glass* to the naked beauty of *Whom do you call angel now?*, Brouwer's music represents just how uniquely diverse the output and voice of a single composer can be."

The Music Division of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center has established a Margaret Brouwer Collection that will be available for research by scholars, composers and performers.

In the US, Brouwer's music has been performed by many symphony orchestras including those of Detroit, Dallas, Seattle, Rochester, St. Louis, Anchorage, Flagstaff, Maryland, Chicago Grant Park, and Columbus as well as the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, the American Composers Orchestra, and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra; and in the UK by the London, City of Birmingham, City of Cambridge and Manchester Symphony Orchestras, the Liverpool Philharmonic, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and The Hallé.

Her music has been heard at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, Symphony Space, the Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music, the Kennedy Center, Corcoran Gallery, the Phillips gallery, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, as well as at venues throughout Taiwan, France, the UK, Germany, Israel, and Brazil. Dr. Brouwer served as head of the composition department and holder of the Vincent K. and Edith H. Smith Chair in Composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music from 1996 to 2008. Residencies include those at MacDowell, where she has been a Norton Stevens Fellow, and the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center. Recordings of Brouwer's music can be found on the Naxos, New World, CRI, Crystal, Centaur, and Opus One labels.

Rhapsodies

The music in this world premiere recording of five of my orchestral works spans 24 years. *Symphony No. 1* and *Pluto* were composed between 1996 and 1999 during an emotional period for me. Within four years, my husband, then my mother, and then my father passed away. Returning to *Pluto* now, I hear my anger and grief suffered during that time. Those feelings also fit equally well with the musical description of Pluto, the god of death and the underworld.

Listening to *Symphony No. 1 "Lake Voices"* now, I can see that I was replaying my young life. The sounds reflect those I knew growing up in the Dutch/American community of the Holland, Michigan area. Families remained in that Dutch community and the Dutch Reformed Church for several generations. In my large family, my generation was the first to leave the area. The recurring melody in this work is reminiscent of the modal, somber, moody but beautiful church hymns we sang with great gusto, conviction and powerful voices. Overlaying this recurring Dutch hymn-like melody in *Symphony No. 1 "Lake Voices"* is the ever-present sound of the lake. Being near a body of water seems to me to be genetic, loved and needed by the Dutch people. It explains why a large group migrated in the early 1800s to Michigan, a state surrounded by bodies of water just as is the Netherlands.

When composing, I generally work with a musical motif and let it evolve and transform in various ways. Later, I realize how the music reflects my own thoughts and experiences. But two of the works on this album were composed specifically to reflect nature. *Path at Sunrise, Masses of Flowers* mirrors a walk I took each morning on a path winding through a large area where masses of flowers grew, crowded together in a glorious array of color, all reaching for the sun. The other programmatic work, *The Art of Sailing at Dawn*, composed in 2020, returns to my Dutch love of lakes and seas, and aims to capture the joys and surprises of sailing.

Rhapsody, Concerto for Orchestra is the work on this album that is solely about the orchestra – its beauty, its great spectrum of dazzling sounds, and the expertise of the musicians. The first movement of *Rhapsody* is the most recent, finished in late 2021.

The Art of Sailing at Dawn (2020)

For chamber orchestra

Imagine boarding a sailboat at dawn. The water is completely calm. There is hardly a sound except the occasional early morning call of a loon and sound of a ripple breaking on the shore. Leaving the dock, you are barely moving on the calm water. But as the sun rises above the horizon, a little breeze picks up and the boat begins to move more steadily. As the day arrives, the breeze becomes a steady wind, and occasional big waves smash into the boat before everything is calm again. The technical requirements and knowledge it takes to sail a big boat are exhilarating, but are outweighed by the feeling of peace and the emotional response to the beauty and power of the water and open space. It reminds me of the popular 1974 book, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, which demonstrates that rational expertise and zen-like “being in the moment” can harmoniously coexist.

Rhapsody, Concerto for Orchestra (2009, rev. 2021)

I. Regrets

II. Airs and Rhapsodies

III. Dance

Rhapsody, Concerto for Orchestra features principal players, sections, and virtuosic passages for the entire orchestra. I love the orchestra; its beauty, power and excitement. I take so much pleasure in the endless variety of beautiful sounds and colors it can produce. In this work, I immersed myself in these sounds and hope a listener will do the same. Additionally, I am so awed by the virtuosity of orchestral musicians that I gave them a chance to show off. The work goes through a range of emotions, from sad, to romantic, to light-hearted, and in the last movement even sometimes a bit wacky.

Originally commissioned by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in honor of Elaine Lebenbom, the second and third movements remain almost the same as the *Rhapsody for Orchestra* that was premiered by Leonard Slatkin and the Detroit Symphony. However, the first movement, *Regrets*, is completely new. I was not happy with the original first movement, and so composed a completely new movement to begin this work.

Symphony No. 1 “Lake Voices” (1997)

Walking near the lake, there seem to be mysterious messages in the wind about the wonder of the water and its eternal necessity to sustain life; about the lake’s infinite, timeless energy, its sparkling beauty, its calmness, its uncontrollable wildness, its pleasure for people – with images of water and sun, boats and shores filled with sun-bathers – as well as an awareness of the trash along the shore, the pollution in the water and in the air above it. This work is a reaction to these various voices from the lake. Ringing bells are a continuous presence. Perhaps they are ringing to praise the beauty of the lake, and perhaps to toll the alarm, to toll the warning, to call people to action.

Symphony No. 1 is in the form of three connected movements. In the first movement, rhapsodic melodies and sparkling sonorities conjure up images of the lake interspersed with fragments of the melody developed in the second movement. The melody of the second movement is flavored by my own background growing up in the Dutch-American environment of the Great Lakes and the strange mix in the Dutch people of the almost mystical bond with the lake and love of its beauty, juxtaposed against their somewhat reserved, practical, and sometimes rigid side. The last movement is rhythmical and optimistic. *Symphony No. 1* was commissioned by the Akron Symphony Orchestra, and underwritten by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Path at Sunrise, Masses of Flowers (2010)

Path at Sunrise, Masses of Flowers, a one-movement work for orchestra, was commissioned by the Cleveland Women’s Symphony for its 75th Anniversary Concert with a 2009 Commissioning Music/USA Award from Meet The Composer. Visualize walking down a path in the quiet of early morning at sunrise. The sun gradually rises on masses of flowers planted closely, jumbled together in a profusion of vibrant and delicate colors and myriad textures. Picture walking through this beauty with a mix of personal emotions – sadness, acceptance, gratitude – and appreciation for the beauty of the flowers and the sun.

Pluto (1997) (version for orchestra)

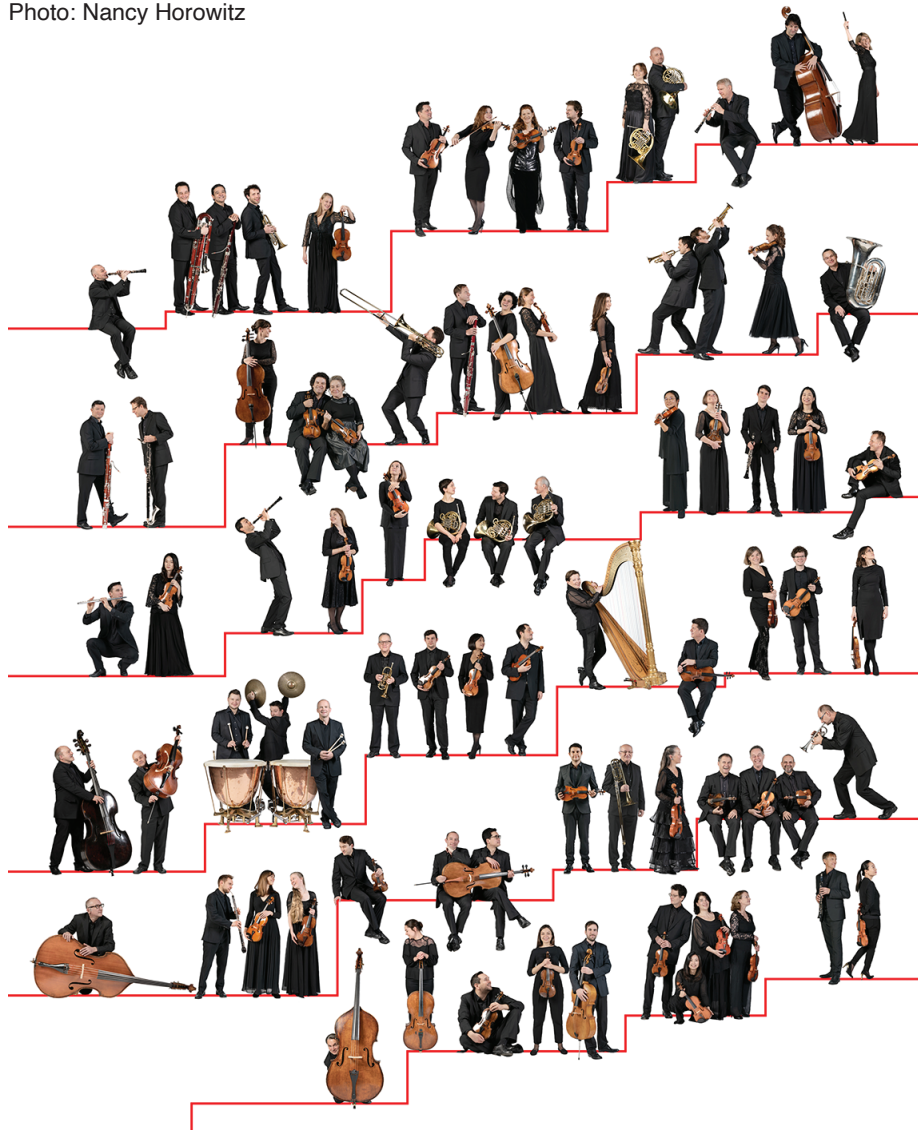
Like the astrological sign, Pluto, Roman god of the underworld, was aggressive, passionate, violent, intense, favoring war and extremes, inexorable but just. When I was composing *Pluto*, images filled my mind of an intense, inexorable, violent, powerful and destructive, but anguished being. A middle section in the music changes mood completely suggesting the time in Pluto’s orbit when it comes close to the restoring warmth of the sun and to the song of the sun spirit, the astrological Pluto’s need for re-creation. Then as the orbit continues, the darkness and despair gradually close in again and the earlier music returns.

Pluto was commissioned by the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra and conductor David Wiley in 1996 as a sequel to *The Planets* by Holst. *The Planets* calls for a women’s chorus and so one version of *Pluto*, the premiered version, also includes women’s chorus and soprano solo in the middle section. I made another version of *Pluto* as well in which the flutes and oboes, instead of women’s chorus, create the aura and restoring warmth of the sun spirit. This non-vocal version is heard here.

Margaret Brouwer

ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra

Photo: Nancy Horowitz



An ensemble of international renown, the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra (ORF Vienna RSO) is a paragon of Viennese orchestral tradition. Known for its exceptional programming, the orchestra combines 19th-century repertoire with contemporary works and rarely performed pieces from other periods. All ORF Vienna RSO performances are broadcast on the radio, and the orchestra performs in two subscription series in Vienna, in the Musikverein Wien and the Wiener Konzerthaus. In addition, it regularly appears at major festivals in Austria and internationally such as the Salzburg Festival, musikprotokoll im steierischen herbst and Wien Modern. The ORF Vienna RSO enjoys a successful collaboration with the MusikTheater an der Wien, and is also equally at home in the film music genre. The orchestra regularly tours internationally, and its discography spans a broad range of cross-genre recordings. Under the leadership of its former chief conductors, which include Milan Horvat, Leif Segerstam, Lothar Zagrosek, Pinchas Steinberg, Dennis Russell Davies, Bertrand de Billy and Cornelius Meister, the orchestra has continuously expanded its repertoire and its international reputation. Marin Alsop has served as the orchestra's chief conductor since 2019.

rso.orf.at

Marin Alsop



Photo: Grant Leighton

One of the foremost conductors of our time, Marin Alsop represents a powerful and inspiring voice. The 2023/24 season marks her fifth as chief conductor of the ORF Vienna RSO; her first as artistic director and chief conductor of the Polish National Radio Symphony; and her first as principal guest conductor of London's Philharmonia Orchestra. She will begin a new position as principal guest conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra in the 2024/25 season. She is also chief conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra residency at the Ravinia Festival. A full decade after becoming the first female conductor of the Last Night of the Proms, Alsop made history again in September 2023, as both the first woman and the first American to guest conduct three Last Nights. In 2021, she assumed the title of music director laureate and OrchKids Founder of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra after a 14-year tenure as music director, and in 2019, after seven years as music director, she became conductor of honour of Brazil's São Paulo Symphony Orchestra (OSESF). Deeply committed to new music, she was music director of California's Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music for 25 years. Recognized with *BBC Music Magazine* "Album of the Year" and Emmy nominations in addition to GRAMMY, Classical BRIT and *Gramophone* awards, Alsop's discography comprises more than 200 titles. The first and only conductor to receive a MacArthur Fellowship, she has also been honored with the World Economic Forum's Crystal Award, among many other awards and academic positions.

www.marinalsop.com

Margaret BROUWER

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| 1 | The Art of Sailing at Dawn (2020) | 6:36 |
| | Rhapsody, Concerto for Orchestra
(2009, rev. 2021) | 14:14 |
| 2 | I. Regrets | 5:41 |
| 3 | II. Airs and Rhapsodies | 4:31 |
| 4 | III. Dance | 4:00 |
| 5 | Symphony No. 1 “Lake Voices” (1997) | 17:19 |
| 6 | Path at Sunrise,
Masses of Flowers (2010) | 8:03 |
| 7 | Pluto (1997) (version for orchestra) | 12:51 |

WORLD PREMIERE COMMERCIAL RECORDINGS



**ORF Vienna Radio
Symphony Orchestra**

Marin Alsop

Recorded: 13–14 2-5 7 and 24 1 6 March 2023
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Engineer: Friedrich Trondl
Editor: Erich Hofmann
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AMERICAN CLASSICS

Margaret Brouwer is a composer renowned for her music’s lyricism, imagery and emotional power. The five premiere recordings on this album span 24 years. Brouwer grew up in a Dutch/American community and her *Symphony No. 1 “Lake Voices”* encodes both a recurring Dutch hymn-like melody and the rhapsodic, sparkling sonorities of a lake vista. *Rhapsody, Concerto for Orchestra* provides dazzling sounds and virtuosic challenges, while *Pluto*, written during a period of loss, offers destructive but also restorative moments. Elsewhere, Brouwer evokes the beauties of nature and sailing at dawn.

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
59:14