

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

SEPTEMBER 2002



AVERY FISHER HALL
AT LINCOLN CENTER
HOME OF THE NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

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NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

It has become a truism that the past year has changed New York City and all who live and work here. Like most New Yorkers, the New York Philharmonic has explored different ways of coming to terms with the changes and terrors inflicted on us. On September 20, 2001, the Orchestra performed Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* on a nationally televised concert commemorating the victims, and in the following months groups of musicians traveled downtown to play for those physically closest to the scene of destruction. And, in the winter, a confluence of those who wanted to respond — incoming Music Director Lorin Maazel, an anonymous donor, the Philharmonic itself — led the Orchestra to approach John Adams, an American composer known for his thoughtful works, often on subjects drawn from the world around us.

The result is *On the Transmigration of Souls*, a meditative “memory space” (as the composer calls it) for those who suffered tragic losses — those who lost their lives, those who lost their loved ones, those who lost their innocence. The Orchestra follows it with Beethoven's defiant exaltation of brotherhood. In Adams's words, his piece is meant “to be in the spirit of those very words of Schiller that will be heard later in the evening — that we are all united by a common bond of humanity.”

On the Transmigration of Souls

JOHN ADAMS

BORN:	February 15, 1947, in Worcester, Massachusetts
RESIDES:	in Berkeley, California
WORK COMPOSED:	between February and July, 2002, on a co-commission from the New York Philharmonic and Lincoln Center's Great Performers series. This work was commissioned with the generous support of a longtime New York family in honor of the heroes and in memory of the victims of the attacks of September 11, 2001.
WORLD PREMIERE:	these performances

John Adams grew up studying clarinet, and become so accomplished that he performed occasionally with the Boston Symphony. At Harvard he studied composition with distinguished teachers such as Leon Kirchner, Earl Kim, Roger Sessions, Harold Shapero, and David Del Tredici. Armed with a copy of John Cage's book *Silence* (a graduation gift from his parents), he left the “eastern establishment” for the relative esthetic liberation of the West Coast, arrived in California in 1971, and has been based in the Bay Area ever since. During the ensuing decade he taught at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and explored an evolving fascination with the repetitive momentum of minimalism.

But by 1981 Adams described himself as “a minimalist who is bored with minimalism.” That was the year he composed *Harmonium*, the first large orchestral work he wrote for the San Francisco Symphony as its composer in residence. Some of his most notable works — including *Harmonielehre*, *Grand Pianola Music*, and the nativity oratorio *El Niño* — were commissioned and premiered by that orchestra; he is currently working on a commissioning project for them for four new works.

In 1985 Adams began a collaboration with the poet Alice Goodman and stage director Peter Sellars that resulted in two operas, *Nixon in China* (1987, based on Richard

Nixon's historic 1972 meeting with Mao Tse-Tung) and *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1990, inspired by the hijacking, five years earlier, of the cruise ship *Achille Lauro*). Both have been widely produced internationally, making them among the most performed recent operas; they reveal Adams's willingness to use his music to address subjects rooted in contemporary life. Despite the heated responses these operas received from some, they were applauded by others for their subtle and non-partisan treatment of humanitarian issues. A third stage work followed in 1995: *I Was Looking At The Ceiling And Then I Saw The Sky*, a "song play" with a libretto by the poet June Jordan. In this work, as in many of Adams's instrumental compositions, one finds the confluence of "popular" and "classical" styles that reflects the breadth of his catholic inspiration and comprehensive language. Another telling example of this trait is his *Naïve and Sentimental Music*, a performance of which (by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting, on the Nonesuch label) is the newest entry into Adams's extensive discography.

A large-scale festival of Adams's music took place at London's Barbican Centre in January 2002. Further festivals will be held at Lincoln Center (March through May 2003) and in Rotterdam (March 2004). In 2003 he will succeed Pierre Boulez as composer in residence at Carnegie Hall. In addition to composition, Adams has grown increasingly involved in conducting, leading many of the world's most distinguished orchestras in programs that mix his own works with compositions by figures as diverse as Debussy, Stravinsky, Ravel, Zappa, Ives, Reich, Glass, and Ellington; in December 1999 New York Philharmonic audiences heard him lead two all-Copland concerts. This followed the Orchestra's dedication of its fifth annual Composer Week to him in May 1997, performing his *Slonimsky's Earbox* and Violin Concerto (with Gidon Kremer as soloist).

INSTRUMENTATION: three flutes and piccolo (with third flute also doubling piccolo), three oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, and contrabass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, two tubas, timpani, glockenspiel, crotales, high triangles, chimes, suspended cymbal, brake drums, piano, celesta, quarter-tone piano, two

harps, and strings, plus children's chorus, four-part mixed adult chorus, and pre-recorded sounds.

References to *The Unanswered Question* by Charles Ives used by permission of Peer International Corporation.

— JAMES M. KELLER, PROGRAM ANNOTATOR

John Adams speaks about the work

John Adams expressed some thoughts about *On the Transmigration of Souls* in a written interview for the New York Philharmonic.

NYP: Did you feel any uncertainty about accepting this commission?

JA: The request to compose this piece came in late January, which meant I had not much more than six months. Normally you begin planning an orchestral work of this scope more than a year in advance. But I didn't require any time at all to decide whether or not to do it. I knew immediately that I very much wanted to do this piece — in fact I needed to do it. Even though I wasn't exactly sure what kind of shape the music would take, I knew that the labor and the immersion that would be required of me would help answer questions and uncertainties with my own feelings about the event. I was probably no different from most Americans in not knowing how to cope with the enormous complexities suddenly thrust upon us. Being given the opportunity to make a work of art that would speak directly to people's emotions allowed me not only to come to grips personally with all that had happened, but also gave me a chance to give something to others.

NYP: How did your visit to the Ground Zero site affect you?

JA: I visited the site about six months after the cleanup began. By then the area resembled just a huge construction project. It was only when one looked closely and noticed the many little shrines and spontaneous memorials and handwritten messages still in evidence that the lingering mystery and somberness of the area began to make itself felt. I had the good fortune to be taken around the area by several policemen who themselves had been right in the midst of the chaos and danger when the towers fell. Even after six months the intensity in their voices while describing the events was palpable.

NYP: How would you characterize the musical style of *On the Transmigration of Souls*?

JA: My desire in writing this piece is to achieve in musical terms the same sort of feeling one gets upon entering one of those old, majestic cathedrals in France or Italy. When you walk into the Chartres Cathedral, for example, you experience an immediate sense of something otherworldly. You feel you are in the presence of many souls, generations upon generations of them, and you sense their collected energy as if they were all congregated or clustered in that one spot. And even though you might be with a group of people, or the cathedral itself might be filled with other churchgoers or tourists, you feel very much alone with your thoughts and you find them focused in a most extraordinary and spiritual way.

I want to avoid words like “requiem” or “memorial” when describing this piece because they too easily suggest conventions that this piece doesn’t share. If pressed, I’d probably call the piece a “memory space.” It’s a place where you can go and be alone with your thoughts and emotions. The link to a particular historical event — in this case to 9/11 — is there if you want to contemplate it. But I hope that the piece will summon human experience that goes beyond this particular event. “Transmigration” means “the movement from one place to another” or “the transition from one state of being to another.” It could apply to populations of people, to migrations of species, to changes of chemical composition, or to the passage of cells through a membrane. But in this case I mean it to imply the movement of the soul from one state to another. And I don’t just mean the transition from living to dead, but also the change that takes place within the souls of those that stay behind, of those who suffer pain and loss and then themselves come away from that experience transformed.

NYP: How difficult was it to incorporate existing text and audio into an original work, especially considering the profoundly intense subject matter?

JA: Well, if you are an experienced composer, you should not have to shy away from considering “the profoundly intense.” I have certainly confronted deep emotions in my music before, certainly in works like *Harmonium*, which has poetry by John Donne and Emily Dickinson, *The Wound-Dresser* with its Whitman texts about the suffering and death of young men and boys during war

time, and in *The Death of Klinghoffer*, my opera about terrorism and the assassination of an elderly American Jew.

Finding the right text to set is half the challenge to creating such a piece. In the case of *Souls* I realized immediately that this event — “9/11” — was already so well documented, the drama so overdescribed, and the images so overexposed that I didn’t really need to worry about an “exposition” of my material. Every listener hearing this piece will already know the story. So, in a way, that kind of “numbing familiarity” gave me a certain freedom to work with the material.

I had no desire to create a musical “narrative” or description. Nothing could be more distasteful and banal. However, something I had seen on an amateur video taken minutes after the first plane had hit the first tower stuck in my mind: it was an image of millions and millions of pieces of paper floating out of the windows of the burning skyscraper and creating a virtual blizzard of white paper slowly drifting down to earth. The thought of so many lives lost in an instant — thousands — and also the thought of all these documents and memos and letters, faxes, spreadsheets, and God knows what, all human record of one kind or another — all of this suggested a density of texture that I wanted to capture in the music, but in an almost freeze-frame slow motion.

So I eventually settled on a surprisingly small amount of text. And this text falls into three categories. One is the simple reading of names, like a litany. I found friends and family members with different vocal timbres and asked each to read from the long list of victims. Then I made a sort of mantra-like composition out of the tape-recorded reading of these names, starting with the voice of a nine-year-old boy and ending with those of two middle-aged women, both mothers themselves. I mixed this with taped sounds of the city — traffic, people walking, distant voices of laughter or shouting, trucks, cars, sirens, steel doors shutting, brakes squealing — all the familiar sounds of the big city which are so common that we usually never notice them.

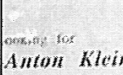
While a recording of the reading of names and the city noises quietly surrounds the audience, the onstage chorus sings texts that I took from missing-persons signs that had been posted by the families of the victims in the area around Ground Zero. These signs, photos of which were taken by Barbara Haws, the New

MISSING



elissa Vincent
28 DOB: 10/24/72
5'5"
170 lbs.
Call 716-671-0688 or
716-746-0044

ooking for
Anton Klein



all, 190 lbs; 35 years
 aring black pants and
 shirt.
 at Marsh and
 on the 9th floor of
 Lorena Klein at
 953 with any
 ou may have.
 Thank you.

MISSING



FITZROY ST. ROSE
An employee of GENERAL TRUCKS
 without his driver's license, 1941, Buick 3
 MAKE BLAKE, known to the community with a personality A
 appears weight 200 lbs, appears height 6' 2"
 WITH ANY INFORMATION to his whereabouts call any of the
 following numbers: 716-671-2112, 716-671-2214, 716-671-2215,
 716-671-2216, 716-671-2217 or 716-671-2218
 Thank you

WE MISS YOU!



MARY LOU HAGUE
 KEELE, BRUYETTE & WOODS
 WTC 2 - 8TH FLOOR
 26 YRS. OLD / 5'6" / 125 LBS.
 PLEASE CONTACT LIZA ADAMS
 304.485.1174

MISSING



Carlos Dominguez / 35 years old
 worked on the 9th floor of WTC 1 for Marsh
 McLennan.
 Extremely overweight appears mainly 6 feet tall
 wearing a navy blue polo shirt, black pants, and
 black backpack like shoes.
 Email:
 2Kcarpeting@earthlink.net with any info about him.
 Haven't been heard from since
 the first crash

MISSING



LUKAS MILEWSKI
 21 YEARS OLD
 WORKS FOR TOWER 1 FOOD SERVICE INC.
 TOWER 1 11TH FLOOR
 WE WANT TO KNOW ANY INFORMATION ABOUT HIM, ABOUT
 PEOPLE WHO WORK THERE, ABOUT PLACES WE CAN GO TO
 FIND OUT SOMETHING.
 PLEASE HELP US HERE! CALL US AT
 718.793.3614
 OR
 917.462.6008

mature voices of an adult chorus. So I used them a lot and I didn't isolate them or give them the usual "innocent" role. In fact they are right there in the thick of things, singing along with the adults and the orchestra. I first used children's choir in my Nativity oratorio, *El Niño*, and they appear there only at the very end, singing a folk-like song about the palm tree in the desert, an archetype of the eternal feminine. It was such a powerful effect to play the children's sound off that of the adults that I determined to take it much further in *Souls*.

JA: I am always nervous with the term “healing” as it applies to a work of art. I am reminded that we Americans can find a lot of things “healing.” These days a criminal sentenced to death is executed and then we speak of “healing.” It’s perplexing. So it’s not my intention to attempt “healing” in this piece. The event will always be there in memory, and the lives of those who suffered will forever remain burdened by the violence and the pain. Time might make the emotions and the grief gradually less acute, but nothing, least of all a work of art, is going to heal a wound of this sort. Instead, the best I can hope for is to create something that has both serenity and the kind of “gravitas” that those old cathedrals possess.

York Philharmonic's Archivist, had tremendous poignancy. Most had been hastily written and photocopied, usually with a snapshot photo along with a physical description and often a heart-wrenching little message at the end, something like "Please come home, Louie. We miss you and we love you." What I discovered about the language of these messages was that it was invariably of the most simple and direct kind. No one stunned by the shock of a sudden loss like this has time or inclination to speak or write with eloquent or flowery language. Rather one speaks in the plainest words imaginable. When we say "words fail" in situations like this, we mean it. So I realized that one of the great challenges of composing this piece would be finding a way to set the humblest of expressions like "He was the apple of my father's eye," or "She looks so full of life in that picture."

JA: It's common to give the children's choir a certain "ethereal" or "angelic" role in a big concert piece. Mahler does that in his Eighth Symphony, and Benjamin Britten takes advantage of their innate "innocence" in his *War Requiem*. I didn't do quite the same thing. I wanted the children's choir not just for these qualities but also because theirs is acoustically and timbrally a very different sound from the

TEXTS

On the Transmigration of Souls

Except where otherwise noted, the text consists of phrases from missing-persons posters and memorials posted in the vicinity of the ruins of the World Trade Center, Lower Manhattan, September and October, 2001.

"Missing . . ."

"Remember . . ."

"we will miss you . . . we all miss you . . .
we all love you."

"I'll miss you, my brother, loving brother."

"It was a beautiful day."

"You will never be forgotten."

"She looks so full of life in that picture."

"I see water and buildings . . ." ¹

"Windows on the World"

"a gold chain around his neck, a silver ring . . .
his middle finger . . . a small gap . . . his
two front teeth . . . a little mole on his left
cheek . . . a wedding band . . . a diamond
ring."

"Charlie Murphy. Cantor Fitzgerald. 105th
Floor. Tower One North. Weight: 180
pounds. Height: 5'11". Eye color: hazel
Hair color: brown. Date of birth: July
ninth, 1963. Please call . . . 'We love you,
Chick.'"

"Louie Anthony Williams. One World Trade
Center. Port Authority, 66th Floor. 'We
love you, Louie. Come home.'"

The sister says: "He was the apple of my
father's eye." ²

The father says: "I am so full of grief. My
heart is absolutely shattered." ³

The young man says ". . . he was tall,
extremely good-looking, and girls never
talked to me when he was around." ⁴

Her sister says: "She had a voice like an
angel, and she shared it with everyone, in
good times and bad." ⁵

The mother says: "He used to call me every
day. I'm just waiting." ⁶

The lover says: "Tomorrow will be three
months, yet it feels like yesterday since I
saw your beautiful face, saying, 'Love you
to the moon and back, forever.'"

The man's wife says: "I loved him from the
start. . . . I wanted to dig him out. I know
just where he is." ⁷

"light . . . day . . . sky . . ."

"My sister."

"My brother."

"I love Dave Fontana."

"My daughter."

"My son."

"It was a beautiful day. . . ."

"I see water and buildings. . . ." ⁸

"I love you."

1 *AA #11 flight attendant Madeline Amy Sweeny

2 sister of Francis Nazario; quoted in the *New York Times's* "Portraits of Grief," February 17, 2002

3 father of Paul Lisson; quoted in the *New York Times's* "Portraits of Grief," February 17, 2002

4 David Wilson speaking of Joshua M. Piver; quoted in the *New York Times's* "Portraits of Grief," February 24, 2002

5 sister of Mary Yolanda Dowling; quoted in the *New York Times's* "Portraits of Grief," September 16, 2001

6 mother of Michael Mullin; quoted in the *New York Times's* "Portraits of Grief," September 15, 2001

7 wife of L. Russell Keene III; quoted in the *New York Times's* "Portraits of Grief," September 17, 2001

8 *AA #11 flight attendant Madeline Amy Sweeny

The Names

John Florio
Christina Flannery
Lucy Fishman
Richard Fitzsimons
David Fodor
Sal A. Fiumefreddo
Carl Flickinger
Eileen Flecha
Jane S. Beatty
Manuel Da Mota
Maurice Barry
James Patrick Berger
Marlyn C. Bautista
Jacquelyn P. Sanchez
Kenneth W. Basnicki
Lt. Michael Fodor
Guy Barzvi
Oliver Bennett
Eric Bennett
Charlie Murphy
Jeffrey Coombs
Benilda Domingo
Manette Marie Beckles
Paul James Battaglia
Thomas J. Fisher
Alysia Basmajian

Ivhan Luis Carpio Bautista
Kalyan K. Sarkar
John Bergin
Mario Santoro
Herman Sandler
Michael Beekman
Andre Fletcher
Bryan Craig Bennett
Inna Basina
Jasper Baxter
Lt. Steven J. Bates
John Santore
Denise Benedetto
Joseph W. Flounders
Jennifer De Jesus
Donna Bernaerts-Kearns
Karleton Fyfe
Kevin D. Marlo
Michael Laforte
David Fontana
Nicholas C. Lassman
Paul Rizza
Donald A. Foreman
Juan Garcia
Alisha Caren Levin
Fredric Gabler

Betsy Martinez
Giann F. Gamboa
Peter J. Ganci
Brian E. Martineau
Grace Galante
James Martello
David S. Berry
Dominick J. Berardi
Alexis Leduc
Brian Magee
Christopher Larrabee
Daniel Maher
Denis Lavelle
Edward J. Lehman
Elena Ledesma
Eugen Lazar
Gary E. Lasko
Hamidou S. Larry
James Leahy
Juanita Lee
Jeannine LaVerde
Jeffrey LaTouche
John D. Levi
John Adam Larson
John J. Lennon, Jr.
Jorge Luis Leon