

Programme Notes

JOHN ADAMS CONDUCTS ADAMS, GLASS AND REICH

.....
FRI 15 OCTOBER 2021 • 20.15



ROTTERDAMS
PHILHARMONISCH
ORKEST

PROGRAMME

conductor **John Adams**
piano **Katia Labèque**
piano **Marielle Labèque**

Steve Reich *1936
Three Movements for Orchestra
[1986]

- quarter note=176
- quarter note=88
- quarter note=176

Philip Glass *1937
Concerto for two Pianos and
Orchestra [2014-15]

- I. –
- II. –
- III. –

Intermission

John Adams *1947
Naive and Sentimental Music
[1999/2021, Dutch premiere revised
version]

- Naive and Sentimental Music
- Mother of the Man
- Chain to the Rhythm

Concert ends at around 22.30

**Most recent performances
by our orchestra:**

Reich Three Movements: first
performance

Glass Concerto for Two Pianos:
first performance

Adams Naive and Sentimental
Music: first performance

cover: *Antelope Canyon*
Photo *Jeremy Bishop*



Philip Glass. Photo Mark Seltzer



WHAT EXACTLY IS MINIMAL?

It has often been said that the term 'minimal music' is misleading and a generalisation. But the label that Steve Reich and Philip Glass acquired more than fifty years ago still attaches to them today, despite their fundamental differences and contrasting way in which each of them developed. The somewhat younger John Adams was initially labelled a minimalist, but he turned out to be a composer whose style is hard to pigeonhole - although definitely with minimalist tendencies. The works on this programme prove how rich, varied and exuberant 'minimal' can be.

Strictly speaking, Reich and Glass were not the founders of a new style. The pioneers were the 'musical gurus' La Monte Young and Terry Riley, who based their compositions on a single note. Riley became an icon of East Coast hippie culture; Reich and Glass ended up in downtown New York. Glass later said that, alongside Riley's influence, the inspiration came 'from outside'. Reich experimented with tape recorders playing in canon or where the same recording begins at slightly different times; he also took an in-depth look at African drumming and traditional Jewish song. Glass, meanwhile, was inspired by Indian music.

Their works – harmonically accessible, and almost hypnotic in their repeated motifs and strict rhythmic pulse –

were a clear statement against the dissonant, hyper-intellectual avant-garde music from Europe. There, composers such as Stockhausen and Boulez were driving ordinary concertgoers out of the halls; Reich and Glass, on the other hand, appealed to a wide, mainly young audience.

Razor-sharp timing

In his early years Reich composed ground-breaking pieces for simple line-ups: a violinist playing a duet with a tape recorder, a group of percussionists or two pairs of clapping hands. For larger pieces he formed his own ensembles, the composition of which varied. His harmonic palette grew along with the line-ups; since the 1990s it is especially the always

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strict rhythmic patterns and the repetitive motifs that are a reminder of his minimalist beginnings. In fact, Reich himself has always preferred the term 'repetitive music' to 'minimal'. And rightly so. There is nothing 'mini' about the sumptuous sounds that he creates by allowing short motifs to overlap.

Another change was Reich's dislike of the traditional symphony orchestra.

This was principally for practical reasons: the metronomic rhythm that he demands is hard to achieve with such large forces. But now that virtually all orchestral musicians have pop music (and sometimes minimal music) in their repertoire Reich can count on razor-sharp timing.

The first rapprochement was the *Three Movements* from 1986 – a symphonic work, even though Reich adapted the set-up of the orchestra according to his needs. The mallet percussion and two pianos are placed directly in front of the conductor, so that the ongoing rhythm of the piece can be achieved as accurately as possible. They are flanked by two string sections that continually echo, overlap and overtake each other. What you hear is still a predominantly Western classical line-up, but with Reich it sounds like a set of exotic instruments from a country that you cannot quite identify...

Sound box

Even more than Reich, Philip Glass built a bridge between classical and pop, for instance by making more frequent use of synthesizers and other electronic instruments. Glass admits that he is equally happy composing

for electronic instruments or for a traditional orchestra, although he has tended more towards classical line-ups over the last 20 years. He certainly does not share Reich's dislike of symphony orchestras: he has so far written twelve symphonies and a variety of concertos. Glass is clearly also more of a theatre man, as witness the operas, ballets and film music he has composed.

Glass composed this *Double Concerto* for the piano duo Labèque, with whom he has worked on numerous occasions. It is music whose creator you can recognise from the very beginning: a mobile mosaic of melodious triads that continually behave slightly differently from what you expect. That whimsicality betrays Glass's familiarity with Indian music, in which repeated melodic patterns gradually change by the omission or addition of a single note.

Those who know his earlier work will notice that the composer sometimes ventures outside his comfort zone in this piece: the harmonies are occasionally harsher than might be expected of him. But the most idiosyncratic element is the 'balance of power' between the pianos and the orchestra. The two sides do not vie with one another (as in a romantic concerto), but the orchestra acts as an enormous sound box that enhances and colours the piano score.

Freedom

As a student, composer/conductor John Adams was strongly attracted to the sound world of Riley, Reich and Glass but his love of jazz and

European classical music was too strong to allow him to steer a purely minimalist course. He regards himself as a typical American composer: one that feels free to draw his material from all stylistic periods and all parts of the world. In *Naive and Sentimental Music* Adams draws his inspiration from a variety of sources.

The title refers to a paper by Friedrich Schiller, who made a distinction between 'naive' and 'sentimental' poetry. The first is objective and exists on its own, while 'sentimental' poets focus on their own personality, their surroundings and their historical context. But how do you create art nowadays that is not coloured by our historical legacy?

In this work, Adams tried to create an unadulterated sound, without echoes of the past or autobiographical elements. A bold undertaking: if you compose for an 'antique' medium such as an orchestra, you cannot of course ignore earlier orchestral composers. But Adams also knew that he could express himself spontaneously and objectively in orchestral music.

That resulted in a piece in which echoes of Anton Bruckner can be heard (in the slow passages of the first movement), in which the orchestration demonstrates Adams's love of jazz and whose final movement appeals to the lover of minimalism. So in the end you do not hear any of the 'usual suspects'. Apparently Adams's naivety overcomes his sentiments, contrary to his own expectations.

Michiel Cleij



John Adams: Photo Musacchio-Ianniello-Pasqualini

John Adams, Conductor

Born: Worcester, USA

Education: conducting and composition at Harvard University with Leon Kirchner, David del Tredici, Roger Sessions

Awards: Erasmus Prize (2019); Pulitzer Prize for Music (2003) for *On the Transmigration of Souls*, for the victims of the 11 September attacks in New York 2001; Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Music, for *Century Rolls* (1998); Grawemeyer Award (1995)

Honorary doctorates: Harvard, Yale, Northwestern University, Cambridge University, Juilliard School of Music, Royal Academy of Music

Guest conductor: Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, orchestras from Seattle, Cincinnati, Atlanta, Toronto

Orchestral works: *Harmonielehre* (1984), *The Chairman Dances* (1985), *Violin Concerto* (1993)

Operas: *Nixon in China* (1985), *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1992), *Doctor Atomic* (2004), *Girls from the Golden West* (2017)

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2021

Katia en Marielle Labèque, Piano duo

Born: Bayonne, France

Education: Conservatoire de Paris

Specialized in: repertoire for four hands and repertoire for two pianos

Breakthrough: 1980, with the CD recording of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* for two pianos
Solo duo with: Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig, Berlin Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, London Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, symphony orchestras from Boston and Chicago

World premieres: works by Thomas Adès, Louis Andriessen, Olivier Messiaen, Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez, Bryce Dessner, Philip Glass, György Ligeti, Nico Muhly

Significant project: Bernstein's *West Side Story* for two pianos and percussion

Early music: on fortepianos with English Baroque Soloists, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Il Giardino Armonico, Musica Antiqua Köln

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 1979



Katia en Marielle Labèque: Photo Umberto Nicoletti

AGENDA

Fri 29 October 2021 • 20.15

Sun 31 October 2021 • 14.15

conductor **Edo de Waart**

bassoon **Pieter Nuytten**

Dvořák Serenade for Winds

Weber Andante e Rondo ungarese

Dvořák Symphony No. 9 'From the New World'

Sat 30 October 2021 • 19.00

Halloween Fright Concert (6+)

conductor **Adam Hickox**

actor **Michel Sorbach**

staging/text **Bart Oomen**

film animation **Sebastiaan de Ruijter**

music by **Mussorgsky, Saint-Saëns** and

Dukas

Thu 4 November 2021 • 20.15

Fri 5 November 2021 • 20.15

Sun 7 November 2021 • 14.15

conductor **Lahav Shani**

cello **Nicolas Altstaedt**

Bloch Schelomo

Mahler Symphony No. 1

Fri 12 November 2021 • 20.15

conductor **Jukka-Pekka Saraste**

soprano **Helena Juntunen**

baritone **Tommi Hakala**

choir **YL Male Voice Choir**

Sibelius Kullervo

Sun 14 November 2021 • 14.15

conductor **Jukka-Pekka Saraste**

soprano **Helena Juntunen**

baritone **Tommi Hakala**

Sibelius Orchestral Songs

Sibelius The Bard

Sibelius Lemminkäinen Suite

Wed 1 December 2021 • 14.00

and 16.00

Sint Sing-Along (3+)

members of the Rotterdam

Philharmonic Orchestra

together with **Hofplein Rotterdam**

Sinterklaas songs

MUSICIANS

Chief Conductor

Lahav Shani

Honorary Conductor

Valery Gergiev

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

First violin

Igor Gruppman,

concertmaster

Marieke Blankestijn,

concertmaster

Quirine Scheffers

Hed Yaron Meyerson

Saskia Otto

Arno Bons

Mireille van der Wart

Shelly Greenberg

Cor van der Linden

Rachel Browne

Maria Dingjan

Marie-José Schrijner

Noëmi Bodden

Petra Visser

Sophia Torrença

Hadewijch Hofland

Annerien Stuker

Alexandra van Beveren

Koen Stapert

Second violin

Charlotte Potgieter

Cecilia Ziano

Frank de Groot

Laurens van Vliet

Tomoko Hara

Elina Staphorsius

Jun Yi Dou

Bob Bruyn

Letizia Sciarone

Eefje Habraken

Maija Reinikainen

Sumire Hara

Wim Ruitenbeek

Babette van den Berg

Melanie Broers

Viola

Anne Huser

Roman Spitzer

Maartje van Rheeden

Galalah Samson

Kerstin Bonk

Lex Prummel

Janine Baller

Francis Saunders

Veronika Lénártová

Rosalinde Kluck

León van den Berg

Cello

Emanuele Silvestri

Joanna Pachucka

Daniel Petrovitsch

Mario Rio

Gé van Leeuwen

Eelco Beinema

Carla Schrijner

Pepijn Meeuws

Yi-Ting Fang

Double bass

Matthew Midgley

Ying Lai Green

Jonathan Focquaert

Robert Franenberg

Harke Wiersma

Arjen Leendertz

Ricardo Neto

Flute

Juliette Hurel

Joséphine Olech

Désirée Woudenberg

Oboe

Remco de Vries

Karel Schoofs

Hans Cartigny

Anja van der Maten

Oboe/cor anglais

Ron Tijhuis

Klarinet

Julien Hervé

Bruno Bonansea

Jan Jansen

Clarinet/

bass clarinet

Romke-Jan Wijmenga

Bassoon

Pieter Nuytten

Marianne Prommel

Bassoon/ contra bassoon

Hans Wisse

Horn

David Fernández

Alonso

Wendy Leliveld

Richard Speetjens

Laurens Otto

Pierre Buizer

Trumpet

Giuliano Sommerhalder

Alex Elia

Simon Wierenga

Jos Verspagen

Trombone

Pierre Volders

Alexander Verbeek

Remko de Jager

Bass Trombone/ contrabass trombone

Ben van Dijk

Tuba

Hendrik-Jan Renes

Timpani/ percussion

Randy Max

Danny van de Wal

Ronald Ent

Martijn Boom

Adriaan Feyaerts

Harp

Charlotte Sprenkels