POCAHONTAS (1939)
[1] Overture 1:59
[5] John Smith is tortured by Indians and saved by Pocahontas 6:25
[6] John Smith presents young Rolfe to Pocahontas. Rolfe and Pocahontas dance 8:06

THE MINOTAUR (1947)
[8] Overture 0:56
SCENE I: King Minos’ Palace in Crete
[9] Queen Pasiphae dresses for her tryst with the sacred bull 4:56
[10] Pasiphae’s dance with the bulls 3:02
SCENE II: Before Labyrinth
[12] Building of the Labyrinth 2:41
[13] Procession and entrance of King Minos 2:07
[14] Sacrifice of the Greek victims 1:29
[15] Ariadne dances with Theseus (Pas de Deux) 4:59
[16] The Labyrinth 2:03
[17] Theseus’ farewell as he enters the Labyrinth 1:33
[18] Ariadne’s thread unwinds 1:15
[19] The Fight with the Minotaur 1:17
[20] Ariadne rewinds her thread to lead Theseus out of the Labyrinth 2:56
[21] Greeks and Theseus emerge from Labyrinth 1:16
[22] Theseus and the Greeks prepare to leave Crete 3:06
TOTAL 65:57
By Elliott Carter

FROM "THE COMPOSER’S CHOICES" (C. 1960)

My first large orchestral work, written in 1938—a ballet on the subject of Pocahontas—is full of suggestions of things that were to remain important to me, as well as of others which were later rejected or completely transformed because they no longer seemed cogent. Some of these features can be observed in the third movement of the ballet, a recording of which you are about to hear. First, the overall style made up of irregular rhythms, dissonant harmony, and a combination of diatonic and chromatic elements has remained fairly constant, although in the years immediately following this work I made a brief excursion into a more diatonic style, and then, after 1946, became increasingly more chromatic and dissonant. The rhythmic structure found in this work was delved into, expanded, and finally completely transformed. The construction of phrases here already shows a tendency to change character quickly, a feature that became much more important in my later works.

This work, now so easy to listen to, was considered difficult to play and to hear at its first performance in New York in 1939, and was received very coldly indeed by the public and the critics. And those colleagues who were my friends and whose opinions I respected were hardly more encouraging. However, the suite from the ballet was given the Juilliard Award for the Publication of American Music in 1941, and several hundred copies of the score and parts were printed only to gather dust on library and warehouse shelves, unused,
until 1959, when the recording was made in Switzerland by the Zurich Radio Orchestra conducted by Jacques-Louis Monod.

FROM “REMEMBERING BALANCHINE” (1991)

I came to know [George] Balanchine through the composer Nicolas Nabokov, a great friend of mine for many years, and through [Pavel] Tchelitchew. I wrote the music for the ballet The Minotaur with the idea that Balanchine would do it, but then in 1947 he went to Paris and John Taras choreographed it instead. I don’t think Balanchine ever liked the music very much—which puzzles me even now because it still sounds so much like his kind of music!

Balanchine and I had talked about the libretto, and he had made many suggestions; it was a collaborative effort. The basic idea was mine, however: to create a kind of balletic picture of the concentration camps. This idea already had a certain currency, because everyone had just become aware, in that period right after the Second World War, of the horrible things that had taken place in the camps. The Minotaur devouring its victims in the labyrinth was of course symbolic of it all. I think [Lincoln] Kirstein wanted Balanchine to do this ballet, and that Balanchine was doing what he thought Kirstein wanted him to do. He did seem to be interested. There was one important moment in the ballet which he invented: when Pasiphae is raped by the bull, she falls over panting, and her heartbeats become the hammering and building of the labyrinth. That transition from one scene to the other I put into the score. This analogy between the heartbeats of the woman who became the mother of the Minotaur and the labyrinthine imprisonment of the Minotaur seemed really quite moving to me.


NOTES

POCAHONTAS is scored for full orchestra and received its premiere on May 24, 1939, conducted by Fritz Kitzinger, at Martin Beck Theater in New York, NY.
The MINOTAUR, scored for full orchestra, was premiered on March 26, 1947, at the Central High School of Needle Trades in New York, NY.

BY DAVID SCHIFF

As a composer, Elliott Carter had a famously late start. While he was in high school in the 1920s he became fascinated with the new music being performed in the concert halls of New York, but he only began to study music seriously after completing his undergraduate study at Harvard. In 1932, when he was twenty-four, he began three years of study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, but he destroyed nearly all the music he wrote for her.

When Carter returned to the USA in 1935 he began to launch a career as a composer through Harvard connections. His classmate Lincoln Kirstein was developing two ballet ensembles: American Ballet, a major company which centered on the choreography of George Balanchine, and its sideline, Ballet Caravan, a touring, training company aimed at developing young talent and young audiences—it debuted at Bennington College. Carter soon became the music director of Ballet Caravan though it is not clear what duties that position entailed; Carter was never a conductor and rarely played piano in public, and only a very small number of his compositions had been performed. Nevertheless, Kirstein (who later wrote that he knew of Carter more as a “classical scholar and mathematician than a composer”) commissioned Carter to compose the score for Pocahontas, one of the three ballets on American themes that Ballet Caravan would begin to take on tour in 1936; the choreographer was Lew Christensen. The other two were Filling Station, music by Virgil...
Thomson, choreography by Christensen, and Yankee Clipper, music by Paul Bowles, choreography by Eugene Loring. On tour all these works were danced to piano accompaniment.

On May 24, 1939, Ballet Caravan made its New York debut, with orchestra. In addition to Pocahontas, the program included choreography by William Dollar set to fifteen of Bach’s Goldberg Variations, as orchestrated by Nicholas Nabokov (who advised Carter on the orchestration of Pocahontas), and Aaron Copland’s Billy the Kid, choreography by Loring. The New York Times reviewer, dance critic John Martin, wrote that Copland had “furnished an admirable score, warm and human, and with not a wasted note about it anywhere.” Billy the Kid soon became Copland’s most frequently performed work. In his review, Martin dismissed the ballet Pocahontas as “modernistic and stuffy” and said that Carter’s music was “so thick it is hard to see the stage through it.” In short, Pocahontas was the young-ish composer’s first big opportunity, and it was his first flop.

A decade later, Carter’s misadventures in the world of dance seemed to repeat themselves. Once again Kirstein conceived the ballet, based on the Greek myth about Theseus and Ariadne, for a new venture, Ballet Society, and commissioned his classically-trained Harvard classmate for the score. (Carter, not really a classical scholar, had taken Latin and Greek courses at Harvard and, while he was pursuing a master’s degree in music at Harvard, before going to Paris, had composed music for a production, in Greek, of Philoctetes by the Harvard Classical Club.) Balanchine was set to be the choreographer, but departed for Paris in the hopes of taking over the Paris Ballet. The Minotaur premiered with choreography by John Taras on March 26, 1947. When things did not work out for Balanchine in Paris, he returned to New York and to Ballet Society, to collaborate with Stravinsky on Orpheus, another work based on Greek myth. It premiered on April 28, 1948, and its successful reception led to the re-fashioning of Ballet Society as The New York City Ballet. The Stravinsky/Balanchine ballet would eventually become a regular offering of the NYCB as part of a Greek trilogy: Apollo, Orpheus, and Agon. The Minotaur was quickly forgotten.
The critical failure of two large-scale ballet scores cast a shadow over Carter’s prospects, but beginning with his Piano Sonata, completed in 1946, his instrumental music began to receive more positive attention, and with his String Quartet No. 1, completed in 1951, he finally began to acquire an international reputation, but in a style that seemed antithetical to the music he had written earlier. His post-1950 style was chromatic, dissonant, contrapuntal, rhythmically complex and untraditional in its forms. Although Carter’s sources were eclectic, drawing on Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Ives, Varèse and Nancarrow, his stylistic synthesis was distinctive. By contrast his earlier music was diatonic and tonal, used such classical forms as the sonata, chaconne and fugue, and was at times so overtly eclectic, with suggestions of Prokofiev, Chabrier, Piston, Fauré, and Copland, that it was hard for listeners to detect a personal voice.

The question thus remains whether the scores for Pocahontas and The Minotaur mark the boundaries of Carter’s belated student explorations, or whether they share important qualities with his later music, which would continue to unfold nearly up to his death in 2012 as he was approaching his 104th birthday. This new recording of the complete scores for both ballets gives us an opportunity to re-consider the disconnects and the links between the late-hatched caterpillar and the long-lived butterfly. It also allows us to re-listen to early Carter without worrying about his later music at all. While Carter’s leap into complexity around 1950 may have reflected a personal crisis, it was part of a seismic shift in European and American music, from neo-classicism to atonality, that impacted the music of composers as different as Stravinsky, Cage, Messiaen, Boulez, Copland, Britten, Shostakovich, Lutosławski, Babbitt, and many others. Carter’s responses to this altered zeitgeist were distinctive, however. He relocated the core of his work within the framework of chamber music, and there he developed techniques that helped shape all of his music, from solo works to extended symphonic compositions, as abstract dialogues; abstract in the sense that they made little use of recognizable, pre-existing material or styles (the way Copland, for instance, used jazz and folk melodies); dialogues in the way they juxtaposed or superimposed gestures that suggested interactive social strategies (or psychological impulses) such as aggression, passivity, isolation, humor, rage, or reconciliation. Rather than presenting these moods separately, as composers had done for hundreds of years before, he would evoke ways in which they were all present simultaneously, with ever-changing outcomes. Carter’s approach to composition therefore was inherently dramatic. The two ballet scores, for highly dramatic stories, already display his dialectic instincts, but within the actual theater of ballet rather than the imaginary theater of chamber music.

As conceived by Kirstein, both ballets depict, more mythologically than historically, a tragic clash of patriarchal cultures (European vs. Native American and Athenian vs. Minoan) in which the female protagonists, Pocahontas and Ariadne, perform heroic acts of salvation only to suffer tragic fates. In his synopsis, Kirstein described Pocahontas as follows:

The character of the young Indian princess Pocahontas was unexpected. Her capricious pity for him in rescuing Smith from the tortures of her kinsmen, her disgust at their savagery and her instinctive feeling for another civilization were something new. And yet the white man’s gifts were scarcely an improvement: firearms and firewater instead of tobacco and tomahawk.

The real John Smith returned to England without Pocahontas, who, in order to escape captivity, was baptized, changed her name to Rebecca and married another Englishman, John Rolfe, with whom she lived in England until her death at age 20 or 21.

In The Minotaur, Ariadne, daughter of King Minos, similarly takes pity on the Greek Theseus and rescues him from sacrifice to the man-eating Minotaur. Once saved, Theseus forgets all about Ariadne. (Not surprisingly, Martha Graham also was drawn to this story. Her ballet Errand into the Maze, music by Menotti, premiered just a month before the premiere of
Minotaur. It remained in Graham’s repertory for years, surviving John Martin’s dismissal of Menotti’s score as “shallow as a dinner plate.”

The cultural clashes enacted in each ballet allowed Carter to draw on the two sharply contrasting styles of modern music that he encountered in his early years: the motoristic primitivism of early Stravinsky (Le Sacre) and Prokofiev (Scythian Suite) that Carter admired in his teens, and the more restrained neo-classicism espoused by his teachers Walter Piston and Nadia Boulanger, and exemplified by works like Stravinsky’s Persephone. The apparent eclecticism of both of Carter’s scores serves to create a stylistic dialogue that illuminates the underlying conflicts of each ballet. When the styles intertwine, as in the darkly menacing pavane at the end of Pocahontas, and the chaconne that unravels, and breaks, like Ariadne’s thread, in The Minotaur, the music attains a tragic intensity.

Like many other ballet composers, Carter fashioned orchestral suites from the original scores in the hopes of bringing the music to the concert hall. In the Suite from Pocahontas, published in 1941 and revised in 1960, he omitted the ambush scene and the extended scene where Smith presents Pocahontas to John Rolfe. For the Suite from The Minotaur, published in 1956, Carter omitted about one third of the original music; perhaps surprisingly he did not include the music for the construction of the Labyrinth, where clashing cross-accents point to the polyrhythmic pursuits of his later music. The complete score for The Minotaur was not recorded until 1990 (by the New York Chamber Symphony conducted by Gerard Schwarz). The complete original music for Pocahontas had never been recorded—until now.

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Composer David Schiff studied with Elliott Carter at the Juilliard School.
He has written books about the music of Carter, George Gershwin and Duke Ellington.
**ARTISTS**

**ELLIOTT CARTER** (December 11, 1908 – November 5, 2012) is internationally recognized as one of the most influential American voices in classical music, and a leading figure of modernism in the 20th and 21st centuries. He was hailed as “America’s great musical poet” by Andrew Porter and noted as “one of America’s most distinguished creative artists in any field” by his friend Aaron Copland. Carter’s prolific career spanned over 75 years, with more than 150 pieces, ranging from chamber music to orchestral works to opera, often marked with a sense of wit and humor. He received numerous honors and accolades, including the Pulitzer Prize on two occasions: in 1960 for his *String Quartet No. 2* and in 1973 for his *String Quartet No. 3*. Other awards include Germany’s Ernst Von Siemens Music Prize and the Prince Pierre Foundation Music Award. Carter was the first composer to receive the United States National Medal of Arts, and is one of a handful of composers inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame. He was recognized twice by the Government of France: being named Commander of the “Ordre des Arts et des Lettres,” and receiving the insignia of Commander of the Legion of Honor in September 2012.

Born in New York City, Elliott Carter was encouraged towards a career in classical music by his friend and mentor Charles Ives. He studied under composers Walter Piston and Gustav Holst while attending Harvard University, and later traveled to Paris, studying with Nadia Boulanger. Following his studies in France, he returned to New York and devoted his time to composing and teaching, holding posts over the years at St. John’s College, the Peabody Conservatory, Yale University, Cornell University, and The Juilliard School, among others. Carter’s early works, such as his *Symphony No. 1* (1942) and *Holiday Overture* (1944), are written in a neoclassical style— influenced by his contemporaries Copland, Hindemith, and Stravinsky. After the Second World War, in works such as his *Cello Sonata* (1948) and *String Quartet No. 1* (1950–51) he began to develop a signature rhythmic and harmonic language, which he continued to refine to the very end of his life. Igor Stravinsky hailed his *Double Concerto for harpsichord, piano, and two chamber orchestras* (1961) and *Piano Concerto* (1965) as “masterpieces.”


Gil Rose is a musician helping to shape the future of classical music. Acknowledged for his “sense of style and sophistication” by Opera News, noted as “an amazingly versatile conductor” by The Boston Globe, and praised for conducting with “admiral command” by The New York Times, over the past two decades Mr. Rose has built a reputation as one of the country’s most inventive and versatile conductors. His dynamic performances on both the symphonic and operatic stages as well as over 75 recordings have garnered international critical praise.

In 1996, Mr. Rose founded the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), the foremost professional orchestra dedicated exclusively to performing and recording symphonic music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Under his leadership, BMOP has won fourteen ASCAP awards for adventurous programming and was selected as Musical America’s 2016 Ensemble of the Year, the first symphony orchestra to receive this distinction. Mr. Rose serves as the executive producer of the GRAMMY® Award–winning BMOPsound recording label. His extensive discography includes world premiere recordings of music by John Cage, Lukas Foss, Charles Fussell, Michael Gandolfi, Tod Machover, Steven Mackey, Evan Ziporyn, and many others on such labels as Albany, Arsis, Chandos, Cantaloupe, ECM, Naxos, New World, and BMOPsound.

In September 2013, he introduced a new company to the Boston opera scene, Odyssey Opera, dedicated to eclectic and underperformed operatic repertoire. Since the company’s inaugural performance of Wagner’s Rienzi, which took the Boston scene by storm, Odyssey Opera has continued to receive universal acclaim for its annual festivals with compelling themes and unique programs, presenting fully staged operatic works and concert performances of overlooked grand opera masterpieces. In its first five years, Mr. Rose has brought 22 operas to Boston, and introduced the city to some important new artists. In 2016 Mr. Rose founded Odyssey Opera’s in–house recording label with its first release, Pietro Mascagni’s
Zanetto, followed by a double disc of one-act operas by notable American composer Dominick Argento in 2018 and the world premiere recording of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco’s The Importance of Being Earnest in 2020.

From 2012 to 2019, he was the Artistic Director of the longstanding Monadnock Music Festival in historic Peterborough, New Hampshire. Mr. Rose conducted several premieres as well as cycles of the symphonies of Beethoven and Mendelssohn. He made his opera stage directing debut in two revivals of operas by Dominick Argento as well as conducting, directing, and producing a production and world premiere recording of Ned Rorem’s opera Our Town in the historic Peterborough Townhouse.

Mr. Rose maintains a busy schedule as a guest conductor on both the opera and symphonic platforms. He made his Tanglewood debut in 2002 and in 2003 he debuted with the Netherlands Radio Symphony at the Holland Festival. He has led the American Composers Orchestra, Warsaw Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra of the Ukraine, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, and National Orchestra of Porto. In 2015, he made his Japanese debut substituting for Seiji Ozawa at the Matsumoto Festival conducting Berlioz’s Béatrice et Bénédict, and in March 2016 made his debut with New York City Opera at the Appel Room at Jazz at Lincoln Center. He has since returned to City Opera in 2017 (as Conductor and Director) in Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall and 2018 conducting a double bill of Rameau’s & Donizetti’s settings of Pigmalione. In 2010, he made his debut conducting the Juilliard Symphony in works of Ligeti and Tippett.

As an educator, he has served on the faculty of Tufts University and Northeastern University, and has worked with students at a wide range of colleges such as Harvard, MIT, New England Conservatory, Carnegie Mellon University, and the University of California at San Diego, among others.

The Boston Modern Orchestra Project is the premier orchestra in the United States dedicated exclusively to commissioning, performing, and recording music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A unique institution of crucial artistic importance to today’s musical world, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP) exists to disseminate exceptional orchestral music of the present and recent past via performances and recordings of the highest caliber.

Founded by Artistic Director Gil Rose in 1996, BMOP has championed composers whose careers span nine decades. Each season, Rose brings BMOP’s award-winning orchestra, renowned soloists, and influential composers to the stage of New England Conservatory’s historic Jordan Hall in a series that offers the most diverse orchestral programming in the city. The musicians of BMOP are consistently lauded for the energy, imagination, and passion with which they infuse the music of the present era.

BMOP’s distinguished and adventurous track record includes premieres and recordings of monumental and provocative new works such as John Harbison’s ballet Ulysses, Louis Andriessen’s Trilogy of the Last Day, and Tod Machover’s Death and the Powers. A perennial winner of the ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, the orchestra has been featured
at festivals including Opera Unlimited, the Ditson Festival of Contemporary Music with the ICA/Boston, Tanglewood, the Boston Cyberarts Festival, the Festival of New American Music (Sacramento, CA), Music on the Edge (Pittsburgh, PA), and the MATA Festival in New York. During its 20th anniversary season, BMOP was named Musical America’s 2016 Ensemble of the Year, the first symphony orchestra in the organization’s history to receive this distinction.

BMOP has actively pursued a role in music education through composer residencies, collaborations with colleges, and an ongoing relationship with the New England Conservatory, where it is Affiliate Orchestra for New Music. The musicians of BMOP are equally at home in Symphony Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and in Cambridge’s Club Oberon and Boston’s Club Café, where they pursued a popular, composer-led Club Concert series from 2004 to 2012.

BMOPsound, BMOP’s independent record label, was created in 2008 to provide a platform for BMOP’s extensive archive of music, as well as to provide widespread, top-quality, permanent access to both classics of the 20th century and the music of today’s most innovative composers. BMOPsound has garnered praise from the national and international press; it is the recipient of a 2020 GRAMMY® Award for Tobias Picker: Fantastic Mr. Fox, nine GRAMMY® Award nominations, and its releases have appeared on the year-end “Best of” lists of The New York Times, The Boston Globe, National Public Radio, Time Out New York, American Record Guide, Downbeat Magazine, WBUR, NewMusicBox, and others.

BMOP expands the horizon of a typical “night at the symphony.” Admired, praised, and sought after by artists, presenters, critics, and audiophiles, BMOP and BMOPsound are uniquely positioned to redefine the new music concert and recording experience.

### FLUTE
- Ashley Addington* [1-2]
- Sarah Brady* [1]
- Rachel Braude (piccolo) [2]
- Jessica Lizak (piccolo) [1]

### OBOE
- Nancy Dimock [1]
- Jennifer Slowik* [1-2]
- Catherine Weinfeld (English horn) [2]

### CLARINET
- Gary Gorczyca (bass clarinet) [2]
- Jan Halloran [1]
- Michael Norsworthy* [1-2]

### BASSOON
- Ronald Haroutunian* [2]
- Jensen Ling [1]
- Gregory Newton [2]
- Margaret Phillips* [1]

### HORN
- Nicholas Auer [1-2]
- Hazel Dean Davis [2]
- Neil Godwin* [1-2]
- Kevin Owen* [2]
- Alex Stening [1]
- Sarah Sutherland [1]

### TRUMPET
- Eric Berlin* [1]
- Adam Gaultille [1]
- Richard Kelley [1]
- Andy Kozar* [2]
- Dana Oakes [2]

### TROMBONE
- Hans Bohn* [2]
- Alexei Dooohovskoy* [1]
- Robert Hoveland [1]

### BASS TROMBONE
- Christopher Beaudry [1-2]
- Kenneth Amis [1]

### PERCUSSION
- Jonathan Hess* [1-2]
- William Manley [1]
- Robert Schulz* [1]
- Matthew Sharrock [1-2]
- Nicholas Tolle (timpani) [1-2]

### PIANO
- Linda Osborn [1-2]

### HARP
- Franziska Huhn [1]

### VIOLIN I
- MaeLynn Arnold [1]
- Gabriel Boyers [1]
- Piotr Buczek [1]
- Natalie Calma [2]
- Benjamin Carson [1-2]
- Sonia Deng [2]
- Gabriela Diaz* [1]
- Tudor Dornescu [1-2]
- Lill Hartunian [1]
- Zenas Hsu [1]
- Susan Jensen [2]
- Nicole Parks [1-2]
- Nivedita Sarnath [1]
- Amy Sims [2]
- Katherine Winterstein* [2]

### VIOLIN II
- Heidi Braun-Hill* [2]
- Piotr Buczek [2]
- Paola Caballero [1]
- Lill Hartunian [2]
- Susan Jensen* [1]
- Annegret Klaua [1]
- Sean Laikin [1]
- Mina Lavcheva [2]
- Judith Lee [1]
- Shadwa Mussad [2]
- Yumi Okada [1]
- Aija Reke [1-2]
- Micah Ringham [1-2]
- Kay Rooney Matthews [1-2]
- Edward Wu [1]
Elliott Carter

Pocahontas
The Minotaur

Producer: Gil Rose
Recording and postproduction engineer: Joel Gordon
Assistant engineer: Peter Atkinson
SACD authoring: Brad Michel

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