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LUKAS FOSS: THE PRAIRIE

LUKAS FOSS b. 1922

THE PRAIRIE

POEM BY CARL SANDBURG

ELIZABETH WEIGLE soprano

GIGI MITCHELL-VELASCO mezzo-soprano

FRANK KELLEY tenor

AARON ENGBRETH baritone

PROVIDENCE SINGERS

BOSTON MODERN ORCHESTRA PROJECT

ANDREW CLARK, CONDUCTOR

THE PRAIRIE (1944)

- [1] I. I Was Born On The Prairie 5:47
- [2] II. Dust of Men 5:38
- [3] III. They Are Mine 8:42
- [4] IV. When The Red And The White Men Met 4:20
- [5] V. In The Dark of A Thousand Years 6:45
- [6] VIa. Cool Prayers 2:46
- [7] VIb. O Prairie Girl 4:04
- [8] VIc. Songs Hidden In Eggs 3:00
- [9] VII. To-Morrow 11:59

TOTAL 53:02

By Lukas Foss

The attempt to develop an oratorio style based on the American soil and spirit is not new, but Carl Sandburg's epic poem, it seems to me, offers new possibilities in its earthy and almost religious approach. It is a new expression of an old faith drawn from the native soil. The protagonist, simply, is the prairie, but through this poem the prairie grows until it becomes the symbol for the all-embracing principle of growth itself.

The opening movement, which has the nature of a prologue, speaks of the prairie as we are accustomed to visualize it. The author, in a pastoral tenor solo, sings of open valleys and far horizons, and the music breathes fresh air. After this pastoral introduction, a fugue is heard in the orchestra, above which the chorus takes up a new theme in the manner of a chorale. This is the voice of the prairie: "I am here when the cities are gone. I am here before the cities come... I am dust of men... I who have seen the red births and the red deaths of sons and daughters, I take peace or war, I say nothing and wait."

As a complete contrast, a folk-like movement follows, but the melodies remain original throughout the work, no native tunes having been used. With the re-entry of the chorus, the prairie becomes "mother of men, waiting." Then the author reaches far back into the past and we see the cities rising on the prairie, out of the prairie, while the chorus chants of the years when the red and the white man met. A male voice calls out: "To a man across a thousand years I offer a handshake; I say to him: 'Brother, make the story short, for the stretch of a thousand years is short.'"

In rugged 5/4 and 7/4 rhythms follows what may be styled the industrial section, ending with a fugue for male voices on the words: "What brothers these in the dark of a thousand

years." A lyrical intermezzo brings us back to the prairie. This consists of a short *a cappella* chorus, "Cool Prayers," a soprano song, "O Prairie Girl," and a *scherzando* duet, "Songs Hidden In Eggs." These are held together by a dreamy little shepherd's lay, a nostalgic woodwind refrain of the prairie.

The tenor's voice introduces the seventh and last section, and everyone joins in the final hymn to the future, expressing the healthy and sunny optimism unique to this country: "I speak of new cities and new people. I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes... I tell you there is nothing in the world, only an ocean of tomorrows." Thus, having opened to us the past and the present, the prairie announces the future, "Tomorrow is a day."

Cited in Robert Bagar and Louis Biancolli, *The Concert Companion*
(New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc.
©1947 by The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York), pp. 267-268.

The Prairie is a cantata based on “*The Prairie*,” a poem found in Carl Sandburg’s collection of American-themed poetry, *The Cornhuskers*. The work was completed in 1943 and was premiered on May 15, 1944 under the baton of legendary American choral conductor Robert Shaw. The piece is scored for chorus, vocal soloists, and orchestra.

By Richard Dyer

The Prairie made Lukas Foss famous and launched the career of one of America’s most distinguished musicians—composer, conductor, pianist, and educator.

Foss was 17 when he first read Carl Sandburg’s poem, and he started composing a secular cantata on this text almost immediately; he wrote most of it in the summers of 1941 and 1942. On October 15, 1943, Serge Koussevitzky conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra in an orchestral suite drawn from the full score; seven months later, on May 15, 1944, Robert Shaw led the premiere of the complete cantata in New York’s Town Hall; after another seven months Artur Rodzinski brought the work to the New York Philharmonic. The work won the New York Music Critics’ Circle Award as the most important new choral work of the year.

Foss has remained fond of this piece ever since. In a 1986 interview with the Oral History of American Music project at Yale University, Foss said, “*The Prairie* is still a favorite work of mine. I’m not ashamed of it even now... it did a lot for me.” And in an essay about his choral music published in 1963, Foss wrote, “[*The Prairie*] was one of those terribly early works where the mature author looks almost with envy at the young author he no longer is, wondering why the work is so much better than ‘he knew how.’”

The Prairie is a work of paradoxes: the work of a young man operating with the self-assurance and technique of an experienced professional; an expression of a love affair with America by a Berlin-born composer who came to this country as a refugee from Hitler’s Germany in 1937, when he was 14; an evocation of an American landscape the composer had not yet seen. It is populist in its reach, but the compositional resources are those of high art, romantic in its attitudes and effect, neo-classical in its disciplines.

The piece also represents a handshake across generations—Sandburg was 44 years older than Foss, and at the apogee of his fame at the time of Foss’s cantata; “*The Prairie*” had been published as far back as 1918 as the first work in a volume of poems called *The Cornhuskers* (the title comes from recurrent and clinching images in “*The Prairie*”). But the second volume of his prize-winning biography of Abraham Lincoln had been published as recently as 1939, and the handsomely bound set was part of the furnishings of every cultivated home in America.

The originality of the work lies in its complete assimilation of diverse influences. Reporting on the New York Philharmonic performance *Time Magazine* glibly quipped, “Foss’s music is far from Sandburg’s prairie: it is modern, glittering, sophisticated, plainly rooted in Europe. Critics were somewhat baffled last week by the cantata which mixed Foss champagne with Sandburg cornbread...”

Hindemith is definitely one of the influences, but Hindemith was in America when Foss was studying with him. (“In a way I had to study with him in order to overcome his influence,” Foss once said to this writer.) Stravinsky was also in America (but Foss’s constantly shifting meters in this piece derive from the music Stravinsky wrote for Diaghilev). And the style, voice, and sound of Aaron Copland smile benevolently over the piece from its opening fanfare to the closing peroration that returns to it. Foss never formally studied with Copland but knew him well and admired him intensely; during the time he was working on *The Prairie*, he conducted Copland’s ballet *Billy the Kid* at Tanglewood.

In a moving interview with Vivian Perlis for the Yale Oral History Project, Foss talked about how he just wanted to be one of the [American] boys. "I felt like a refugee, but then a refugee learns to call anything his home, wherever he is. So America very quickly became my home, and I am sure Aaron had something to do with it, and Carl Sandburg... My *Prairie* is very Coplandesque—actually that whole period, from age 19 to age 24—in those years I think the stamp of Aaron is stronger than Hindemith... I fell in love with America and why did I fall in love with America? It wasn't just the landscape obviously. It was people like Aaron."

Foss was born Lukas Fuchs, and his musical life began when someone gave him an accordion at the age of 5. At 7 he started studying piano and soon acquired virtuosic skills. At 8 he started composing his first opera; at 10, a solo cantata in French. By then his family had fled to France, where he studied piano, flute, composition, and orchestration. In 1937, Foss entered the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia where he studied composition, piano, and, with Fritz Reiner, conducting.

In 1940, along with Leonard Bernstein, four years his senior, he was in the first class at what is now called the Tanglewood Music Center, the Boston Symphony Orchestra's summer academy for advanced musical study. Paul Hindemith was his composition teacher, and Foss almost immediately became a protégé of Koussevitzky. The young composer was very excited one day when he went to get a haircut, and the barber told him he had just cut Koussevitzky's hair, and the maestro had remarked that he had two students that he particularly loved, "One is Apollonian, the other Dionysian." In an interview in 1989, Foss said, "To this day, I don't know for sure which one was which. I imagine, though, I was the Apollonian one because in those days I was very quiet and shy. Lenny was never shy!"

The Prairie was Foss's first major work; he wrote some of it during a residency at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, the rest in Monterey, Massachusetts.

His first task was to create a libretto: boldly he cut more than 80 of Sandburg's 143 lines, including all of Sandburg's direct references to music, presumably because he didn't want to quote "Mighty Lak a Rose," "The Ole Sheep Done Know the Road," "Yankee Doodle," or "Turkey in the Straw." He also did some reordering, and organized the text into seven sections, which would define the musical units; he also divided up the text among the chorus and four soloists.

He did this without consulting Sandburg, and when the work was well underway, friends later advised him that he had better do so. Sandburg responded with pleasure, writing, "You have revitalized the old poem," and told his publisher, "Give the young man a break. It seems he has approached the music in the same sporting way in which I wrote the poem." The delighted Sandburg introduced Foss at a fundraising dinner as a "young demon welter-weight composer," and in 1961 appeared onstage with Foss, reading passages from the poem before excerpts from the cantata were sung. "In my many subsequent dealings with poets and librettists I have not always met with Sandburg's gallantry," Foss wrote.

Foss thinks of himself as a vocal composer, writing for singers and choruses, and creating singing lines for instruments. "Words help me," he wrote. "They suggest a meaning and a form, they set a task for me. They give me ideas, much in the way tone-rows sometimes give ideas to the dodecaphonic composer... What attracted me to music in the first place was no mere fascination with sound, but rather people, playing and singing." *The Prairie* is abundant in inspiration, challenge, and reward, and constantly varied in its sounds, strategies, and choices; it is at once intimately personal and proudly proclamatory.

Three important composers were among the first reviewers of *The Prairie*. Virgil Thomson wrote, "[*The Prairie*] showed musicianship, imagination, and direct expressive powers of no mean order," and placed the work's musical style in the context of works by Haydn, Hindemith, and Weill. "Mr. Foss's language is elegant, scholastic, dainty. It is

dry and clean and pleasant, and it is adjusted for precise depiction rather than for emotional excitement." Irving Fine, writing in the periodical *Modern Music*, wrote, "Though exception can be taken to such technical details as propulsive *ostinati*, repetitions, and frequent squareness of phrasing, they seem minor beside the work's generous emotion and its extraordinary wealth of invention... at its best, the work, besides being impressive, achieves an individual and sensitive lyricism." And Arthur Berger, reviewing the published score, wrote, "*The Prairie* is already a familiar affair. The repetitiveness of its motives, the recurrence of its melodic devices (e.g. the syncopated third at phrase-endings), made it familiar, in fact, after the first performance... Much of the writing is clean, and when examined in detail does not crumble away like the *al fresco* attempts of so many others. The less appealing parts of the work are those which are forced. The young composer has inherited some of the rhetorical tricks which sprang, in their originators, from a concern with audience persuasion. Foss himself, I believe, is guiltless of such insincere designs on his listeners... In the tenor aria after the first recitative, or the alto's solo in Part III, he shows a soft lyric inspiration and a personal style of which we may expect him to become more keenly aware in the future, and to develop fruitfully."

Another important composer, Yehudi Wyner, only 15 at the time, was in the audience at the New York Philharmonic premiere and still recalls the excitement it stirred in the audience and in himself. "It brought me into cognizance of a whole new aesthetic. I was no red-blooded radical, and while I adored Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, other new music was incomprehensible to me. *The Prairie* led me to a passionate desire to study with Hindemith, but the lasting effect was that this piece was written by a young guy who was so incredibly accomplished—the craftsmanship, the complication, the richness, these were over the top."

Of course no one could have predicted from *The Prairie* the many different directions Foss's inquisitive musical mind would pursue over the next six decades both in his com-

positions and in other dimensions of his incredibly productive musical life. The cantata itself, however, has had at best a half-life; it didn't become an American classic like Copland's ballets, although it should have, and it has never entered the repertory, although choruses have sometimes programmed the one piece Foss published separately, "Cool Prayers." It had to wait until 1976 to achieve its first and until now its only recording (Foss conducted).

Sixty-four years into its history *The Prairie* now sounds like a period piece and Sandburg's text, in particular, feels like a liability. Some critics were complaining about the text even when the piece was new, and today Sandburg's reputation is in (perhaps temporary) eclipse—his once much-admired words now seem to bear the same relationship to the great poetry of his time as Norman Rockwell's popular illustrations do to the great painting of his time. Aspects of the text have dated: Sandburg's depiction of Native Americans was considerably more advanced than Hollywood's was in the same era, but now it feels embarrassing if not politically incorrect. Open-hearted patriotism of the kind that flourished during the world war at the time Sandburg wrote the poem and during the next world war that was in progress as Foss composed, is no longer in fashion—but that could be our loss, and it is nice to be reminded of the faith of our fathers. Foss himself described a later work, the *American Cantata*, written for the bicentennial celebrations in 1976, as "a kind of lover's quarrel with America."

And while the period-piece score certainly belongs to a now-vanished era of music history, it also transcends that era. Today, one is repeatedly surprised at the fertility of its invention, its freshness and charm, its variety, its profound belief not only in what it asserts, in what it stands for, but also, in what it actually is.

THE PRAIRIE

Words adapted from *The Prairie* by Carl Sandburg

[1] I. I WAS BORN ON THE PRAIRIE

I was born on the prairie and the milk of its wheat, the red of its clover, the eyes of its women, gave me a song and a slogan.

Here the water went down, the icebergs slid with gravel, the gaps and the valleys hissed,

and the black loam came, and the yellow sandy loam.

Here now a morning star fixes a fire sign over the timber claims and cow pastures, the corn belt, the cotton belt, the cattle ranches.

Here the gray geese go five hundred miles and back with a wind under their wings honking the cry for a new home.

Here the water went down, the gaps and valleys hissed.

Here the black loam came and the yellow sandy loam.

Here a morning star fixes a fire sign over the timber claims.

Here I know I will hanker after nothing so much as one more sunrise or a sky moon of fire doubled to a river moon of water.

The prairie sings to me in the forenoon and I know in the night I rest easy in the prairie arms, on the prairie heart.

[2] II. DUST OF MEN

I am here when the cities are gone.

I am here before the cities come.

I nourished the lonely men on horses.

I will keep the laughing men who ride iron.

I am dust of men.

I am dust of your dust, as I am brother and mother

To the worker in flint and clay. The singing women and their sons a thousand years ago

Marching single file the timber and the plain.

I hold the dust of these amid changing stars.

I last while old wars are fought, while peace broods mother-like,

While new wars arise and the fresh killings of young men.

I fed the boys who went to France in great dark days.

I who have seen the red births and the red deaths of sons and daughters.

I take peace or war, I say nothing and wait.

[3] III. THEY ARE MINE

Have you seen a red sunset drip over one of my cornfields, the shore of night stars, the wavelines of dawn up a wheat valley?

Have you heard my threshing crews yelling in the chaff of a strawpile and the running wheat of the wagonboards,

my cornhuskers, my harvest hands hauling the crops, singing dreams of women, singing dreams of worlds, horizons?

They are mine, the threshing crews eating beefsteak, the farmboys driving steers to the railroad cattle pens.

They are mine, the crowds of people at a Fourth of July basket picnic,

Listening to a lawyer read the Declaration of Independence,

Watching the pinwheels and Roman candles at night.

The young men and women two by two hunting the bypaths and kissing bridges.

They are mine, the horses looking over a fence in the frost of late October

Saying good-morning to the horses hauling wagons of rutabaga.

They are mine, the old zigzag rail fences, the new barbwire.

They are mine.

I am the prairie, mother of men, waiting.
Rivers cut a path on flat lands.
The mountains stand up.
The salt oceans press in
And push on the coastlines.
The sun, the wind, bring rain
And I know what the rainbow writes across the east or west in a half-circle:
A love-letter pledge to come again.

[4] IV. WHEN THE RED AND THE WHITE MEN MET

Out of prairie-brown grass crossed with a streamer of wigwam smoke—out of a smoke
pillar, a blue promise
—out of wild ducks woven in greens and purples—
Here I saw a city rise and say to the peoples round world: Listen, I am strong, I know
what I want.
Out of log houses and stumps—canoes stripped from tree-sides—flatboats coaxed with
an ax from the timber claims.
The streets and the houses rose
In the years when the red and the white men met. A thousand red men cried and went
away to new places for corn and women: a million white men came and put up
skyscrapers,
Threw out rails and wires, feelers to the salt sea: now the smokestacks bite the skyline
with stub teeth.

[5] V. IN THE DARK OF A THOUSAND YEARS

To a man across a thousand years I offer a handshake.
I say to him: Brother, make the story short, for the stretch of a thousand years is short.
What brothers these in the dark?
What eaves of skyscrapers against a smoke moon?
These chimneys shaking on the lumber shanties
When the coal boats plow by on the river—

The hunched shoulders of the grain elevators—
The flame sprockets of the sheet steel mills
And the men in the rolling mills with their shirts off
Playing their flesh arms against the twisting wrists of steel:
What brothers these in the dark of a thousand years?

[6] VIa. COOL PRAYERS

After the sunburn of the day
Handling a pitchfork at a hayrack,
After the eggs and biscuit and coffee,
The pearl-gray haystacks
In the gloaming
Are cool prayers
To the harvest hands.

[7] VIb. O PRAIRIE GIRL

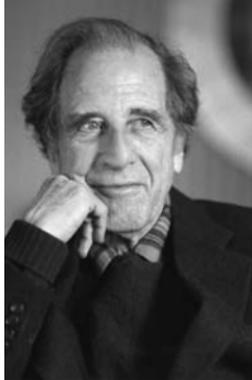
Spring slips back with a girl face calling always: "Any new songs for me? Any new
songs?"
O prairie girl, be lonely, singing, dreaming, waiting—your lover comes—your child comes
—the years creep with toes of April rain on new-turned sod.
O prairie girl, whoever leaves you only crimson poppies to talk with, whoever puts
a good-by kiss on your lips and never comes back—
There is a song deep as the falltime redhaws, long as the layer of black loam we go to,
The shine of the morning star over the corn belt, the wave line of dawn up a wheat
valley.

[8] VIc. SONGS HIDDEN IN EGGS

Look at six eggs
In a mockingbird's nest.
Listen to six mockingbirds
Flinging follies of O-be-joyful

Over the marshes and uplands.
 Look at songs
 Hidden in eggs.

- [9] VII. TO-MORROW
 O prairie mother, I am one of your boys.
 I have loved the prairie as a man with a heart shot full of pain over love.
 Here I know I will hanker after nothing so much as one more sunrise
 Or a sky moon of fire doubled to a river moon of water.
 I speak of new cities and new people.
 I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes.
 I tell you yesterday is a wind gone down,
 A sun dropped in the West.
 I tell you there is nothing in the world
 Only an ocean of to-morrows,
 A sky of to-morrows.
 I am a brother of the cornhuskers who say at sundown:
 To-morrow is a day.



DAREN HAGEN

Lukas Foss has shown himself to be one of that rare breed—an all-around musician, enjoying equally stellar reputations as a composer, conductor, pianist, educator, and spokesman for his art. The prestigious awards he has received emphasize his importance as one of the most brilliant and respected personalities in American music. Among his many honors are two Guggenheim fellowships, the New York Music Critics' Circle Award (for *The Prairie*, *Concerto No. 2* for piano, and for *Time Cycle*), a residency at the American Academy in Rome, and a Fulbright Scholarship.

As Music Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Foss has been an effective champion of living composers and has brought new life to the standard repertoire. The adventurous mix of traditional and contemporary music that he programs and conducts with the Brooklyn Philharmonic at the Brooklyn Academy of Music was described in 1986 by *The New York Times* as “the most engrossing and unusual programs in town... Our musical life would be richer if Lukas Foss... could hire himself out as a sort of ‘programmer at large.’ He seems incapable of a mechanical idea.”

In 1937, as a fifteen-year-old prodigy, Lukas Foss came to America to study at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music. By that time, he had already been composing for eight years, starting with his first piano teacher, Julius Herford, in Berlin. He had also studied in Paris with Lazare Levy, Noel Gallon, Felix Wolfes, and Louis Moyse, after his family fled Nazi Germany in 1933. At Curtis, his teachers included Fritz Reiner (conducting) and Isabelle Vengerova (piano). At age 15, G. Schirmer published his first work, a series of piano pieces written mostly

on the New York subway. By age 18, the young musician had graduated with honors from Curtis, and was headed for advanced study, in conducting, with Serge Koussevitzky at the Tanglewood Music Festival and in composition with Paul Hindemith at Yale University.

In 1953, Foss was named to succeed Arnold Schoenberg as professor of composition at the University of California at Los Angeles. In 1957, in search of the spontaneous expression that lies at the root of all music, he founded the Improvisation Chamber Ensemble, a foursome that improvised music in concert, working not from a score but from Foss's ideas and visions. The effects of these experiments soon showed in his composed works, where Foss began probing and questioning the ideas of tonality, notation, and fixed form. Even time itself came up for scrutiny in the 1960 work *Time Cycle* for soprano and orchestra, a setting of texts about time by Auden, Housman, Kafka, and Nietzsche, that was first performed by Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic, with interludes by Foss's Improvisation Chamber Ensemble. At the premiere, Mr. Bernstein, in an unprecedented gesture of respect, performed the entire work twice that same evening. *Time Cycle* received the New York Music Critics' Circle Award for 1961, and was recorded on the CBS label. Foss's compositions prove that a love for the past can be reconciled with all sorts of innovations. Whether the musical language is serial, aleatoric, neoclassical, or minimalist, the "real" Lukas Foss is always present. The essential feature in his music is the tension, so typical of the 20th Century, between tradition and new modes of musical expression. This tension is most explicit in such works as *Baroque Variations for Orchestra* (1967), which "deconstructs" pieces by Handel, Scarlatti, and Bach. It has received frequent international performances and has had a strong influence on younger composers. On the other hand, traditionalism is not absent in such experimental works as *Echoi* (1961–63), which, along with Foss's *Paradigm* and *Solo Observed*, is considered one of the major contemporary works for chamber ensemble.

Foss's ideas, and his compelling way of expressing them, have earned him continued respect as an educator as well. He has taught composition at the Tanglewood Music Festival, and has been composer-in-residence at Harvard University, the Manhattan School of Music, Carnegie

Mellon University, Yale University, and Boston University. In 1983, he was elected to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, of which he also served as Vice Chancellor. The holder of eight honorary doctorates, he has been in constant demand as a lecturer and in 1986, at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, he delivered the prestigious Mellon Lecture. Foss has appeared as guest conductor of such major American orchestras as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, and the San Francisco Symphony. Abroad, he has led the Berlin Philharmonic, the Leningrad Symphony, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Santa Cecilia Orchestra of Rome, and the Tokyo Philharmonic, among others.



Elizabeth Weigle, soprano, has earned critical acclaim for her unique vocal beauty, savvy musicianship, and dramatic skill, which she lends to a wide variety of musical styles ranging from the Baroque through the 21st Century. She has collaborated with some of the finest contemporary music ensembles in the United States, including the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Speculum Musicae, New Music Consort, and Kristjan Järvi's Absolute Ensemble. With the latter, she performed and made a world debut recording of the chamber music version of Mahler's Symphony No. 4, and also premiered Charles Coleman's *Nine By Dickinson* (another work written for her) at New York's Merkin Concert Hall.

Her other new music performances include Oliver Knussen's *Hums and Songs of Winnie the Pooh* on the Making Music series at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall—a work she has also sung at the Tanglewood Music Festival. Ms. Weigle was a featured soloist at the Bowdoin Music Festival, where she gave the world premiere of Vineet Shende's, *Sonetos de Amor*, (which she recently recorded), as well as Harbison's *Simple Daylight* and Berio's *Falksongs*.

On the operatic stage, Ms. Weigle received critical acclaim for her role as Pat Nixon in John Adams' *Nixon in China* with Opera Boston and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, where she was hailed by *The Boston Herald* as "a perfect Pat Nixon." *The New York Times* has also praised her "impressive performance as the Governess" in Benjamin Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*. Her other operatic roles include the world premiere of Emma in Richard Wilson's *Aethelred the Unready* with members of the American Symphony Orchestra at Merkin Hall, Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* (Chautauqua Orchestra), Despina in *Così fan Tutte* (Chautauqua Opera), Singer No. 1 in Conrad Susa's *Transformations* (Center for Contemporary Opera, New York), and Barbarina in *Nozze di Figaro* (Virginia Opera). Ms. Weigle has recorded for the Nonesuch, Erato, and Albany labels.



LESA CROSEY

Gigi Mitchell-Velasco, mezzo-soprano, has received praise from the public and critics alike for her interpretations of Wagner, Mahler, and Strauss. *The New York Times's* Anthony Tommasini wrote that she sang with a "dark-hued sound and elegance," and the *Wall Street Journal* called her "the most finished artist, sensitive to every nuance of the text." A protégé of Christa Ludwig, Gigi Mitchell-Velasco is a two-time winner of the Robert Lauch Memorial Grant of the New York Wagner Society and the recipient of the 1997 American Wagner Association Award at the Liederkranz Foundation Competition for Wagnerian Voice. Recent years have heard her at Carnegie Hall for Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with Helmuth Rilling and the Orchestra of St. Luke's; singing the Beethoven *Missa Solemnis* for a debut with the Phoenix Symphony and for a return to the Milwaukee Symphony with Andreas Delfs; Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 for debuts with the San Francisco Symphony with Michael Tilson Thomas and the Brooklyn Philharmonic with Michael Christie; Bernstein's *Jeremiah Symphony* with Andrew Litton and the Dallas Symphony; Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* with Benjamin Zander and the Boston

Philharmonic; Mahler's Third Symphony with Zander and the Simón Bolívar Youth Symphony Orchestra in Venezuela; and in many works with Hans Graf and the Houston Symphony, among others. Opera roles include Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde* with the Florentine Opera, Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Minnesota Opera, *Carmen* with Prague State Opera, Dorabella in Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* and Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* with the Toledo Opera, and Federica in *Luisa Miller* with Opera Boston and Washington Concert Opera.



KENDRA COLTON

Frank Kelley, tenor, has performed in concert and opera throughout North America and Europe. His notable engagements have included the PBS broadcasts of *The Marriage Of Figaro* and *Così fan Tutte* directed by Peter Sellars; Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and at Opera de Lyon, *Das Kleine Mahagonny* at the Next Wave Festival; and Handel's *L'Allegro il Penseroso ed il Moderato* for Serious Fun at Lincoln Center. He performed *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the Boston Opera Theater, *Così fan Tutte* at Pepsico Summerfare; *Stephen Climax* at the Brussels Opera; Pang in *Turandot* with the Cleveland Orchestra, and *Turandot*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and *Die Zauberflöte* with San Francisco Opera. Mr. Kelley has appeared as Goro in *Madama Butterfly*; as Monastatos in *Die Zauberflöte*; as Dr. Blind in *Die Fledermaus*; as Spoletta in *Tosca* with the Boston Lyric Opera; as Raoul de Gardefeu in *La Vie Parisienne* with Opera Boston; and as Monastatos with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis.

Other highlights include Stravinsky's *Pulcinella Suite* with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, as Master of Ceremonies in *the Queen of Spades* with the National Symphony Orchestra, Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beata Vergine* with the National Arts Centre Orchestra, the St. John Passion with Emmanuel Music and the Berkshire Choral Festival, and *Messiah* with the Richmond Symphony and International Music Foundation in Chicago. Mr. Kelley is featured on three Deutsche Harmonia Mundi CD's with the ensemble Sequentia: *Aquitania*, *Shining*

Light, and Saints; a Teldec release of Stravinsky's *Renard* with Hugh Wolff and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra; and Kurt Weill's *Das Kleine Mahagonny* with Kent Nagano, available on London videotape and on CD from Erato.



SUSAN WILSON

Aaron Engebretth, baritone, praised by *The Boston Globe* for his “beauty of voice and eloquence,” has a wide-ranging career as a performer. He has appeared as a soloist with the Tanglewood Music Festival, the Ravinia Music Festival, Opera Boston, the Terezin Chamber Music Foundation, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and the Monadnock Music Festival. He is a frequent soloist with top early music organizations such as American Bach Soloists and the Handel and Haydn Society. A committed interpreter of contemporary music, Mr. Engebretth has collaborated with composers Nicolas Maw, Daniel Pinkham, Lukas Foss, John Deak, and Ned Rorem—most recently in preparation of the Boston premiere of Rorem’s evening-length song cycle, *Evidence of Things Not Seen* with the Florestan Recital Project. Mr. Engebretth has performed a variety of opera roles, from Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* to Schaunard in *La Bohème*, and has appeared with Keith Lockhart, conductor of the Boston Pops, at WCRB’s Concerts at Copley Square, performing works of Richard Rogers, with Lockhart at the piano.



DANN WISTEDT

Andrew Clark, artistic director of the Providence Singers, has been recognized by Chorus America as one of our country’s most promising young conductors, “enjoying extraordinary rapport, respect, trust, and affection with his singers”, and leading “cohesive and exciting” and “amazingly polished” performances praised for their “tremendous invigoration” [*The Boston Globe, Providence Journal, Worcester Telegram & Gazette*].

An advocate of the music of our time, Mr. Clark has commissioned numerous composers, presented over twenty world premieres, and conducted important contemporary and rarely heard pieces in addition to many performances of well-known choral-orchestral masterworks.

Under his leadership, the Providence Singers was selected by the National Endowment for the Arts to host one of seven American Masterpieces choral festivals in 2007 and received the 2008 Jabez Gorham Award from the Arts & Business Council of Rhode Island for “unwavering commitment to excellence, significant impact in the community, and successful organizational development.”

In addition to his work with the Providence Singers, Mr. Clark serves as music director of the Worcester Chorus, one of the oldest and most celebrated choral arts organizations in the United States, regularly conducting performances in Worcester’s historic Mechanics Hall. He has appeared at other prestigious venues including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Cathédrale Notre Dame de Paris, and in Vienna, Budapest, Madrid, Seville, Sorrento, St. Petersburg, Montreal, and throughout the United States.

Mr. Clark has collaborated with renowned organizations including the Kronos Quartet, the Pittsburgh and New Haven Symphony Orchestras, the Boston Pops, Opera Boston, Rhode Island Philharmonic, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Boston Children’s Chorus, Newport

Baroque Orchestra, and the Newport Jazz Festival, working closely with Dave Brubeck, conductors Mariss Jansons, Neville Marriner, Helmuth Rilling, Keith Lockhart, Larry Rachleff, Gil Rose, and others.

Active as a music educator, Mr. Clark serves as director of choral activities at Tufts University, overseeing a robust and vibrant program that has tripled in size during his tenure. As a distinguished faculty member of the “Notes from the Heart” Music Camp in Pittsburgh, Mr. Clark teaches annually at a summer program for children with disabilities and chronic illness supported by the Woodlands Foundation and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. He regularly appears as a guest conductor, adjudicator, and clinician and was the founding Music Director of the Junior Providence Singers, a high school choral education ensemble.

Mr. Clark received degrees from Wake Forest and Carnegie Mellon Universities, having studied with Grammy-award winning conductor Robert Page, as well as Jameson Marvin, Dale Warland, Vance George, Brian Gorelick, David Efron, Gunther Schuller, William Weinert, among others. He previously served on the conducting staff of Harvard and Clark Universities and as assistant conductor of the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh and the Boston Pops Holiday Chorus. He is a member of the national music honor society, Pi Kappa Lambda.

The **Providence Singers** celebrates the choral art through concerts of masterworks and current works, new music commissions, education programs, and creative collaborations.

Founded in 1971, the Providence Singers is a 100-voice chorus based in Providence, Rhode Island. The ensemble performs a broad spectrum of choral music, from 17th- to 20th-century landmarks to contemporary works and world premieres. The Providence Singers advances the choral tradition through its commitment to new music commissions, with support of its Wachner Fund for New Music.

The Providence Singers performed with Dave Brubeck at the 50th Anniversary Newport Jazz Festival and premiered Brubeck’s *The Commandments* at Lincoln Center. Other collabora-

tions include Terry Riley’s *Sun Rings* with the Kronos Quartet at Providence’s FirstWorks Festival, and performances with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, and Newport Baroque Orchestra. The Providence Singers performs regularly as guest artist with the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra.

The National Endowment for the Arts selected the Providence Singers to host an American Masterpieces Choral Festival—one of seven such festivals held nationwide in 2007—and provided additional support to make this recording of Lukas Foss’s *The Prairie*.

The **Boston Modern Orchestra Project** (BMOP) is widely recognized as the premiere orchestra in the United States dedicated exclusively to commissioning, performing, and recording music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Founded in 1996 by Artistic Director Gil Rose, BMOP’s mission is to illuminate the connections that exist naturally between contemporary music and contemporary society by reuniting composers and audiences in a shared concert experience. In its first ten seasons alone, BMOP programmed over 50 concerts of contemporary orchestral music; commissioned more than 20 works and presented over 40 world premieres; released 13 world premiere recordings; and collaborated with Opera Boston to produce staged performances of contemporary operas including the Opera Unlimited festival of contemporary chamber opera.

In addition to its regular season at Boston’s Jordan Hall, the orchestra has performed in major venues on both the East and West Coasts and collaborated with internationally based artists and organizations. A nine-time winner of the ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming of Orchestral Music and recipient of the prestigious John S. Edwards Award for Strongest Commitment to New American Music, BMOP has appeared at Tanglewood, the Festival of New American Music (Sacramento, CA), and Music on the Edge (Pittsburgh, PA).

In 2008 BMOP launched its signature record label, BMOP/sound. Additional BMOP recordings are available from Albany, New World, Naxos, Arsis, Oxingdale, and Chandos. BMOP CD’s are regularly reviewed by national and international publications including *Gramophone*,

Fanfare, *BBC Music*, *American Record Guide*, *The Chicago Tribune* (Best CD's of 2004), *Time Out New York* (Best CD's of 2004), *The Boston Globe* (Best CD's of 2003), and *The New York Times* (Best CD's of 2003).

Composers are at the core of BMOP's mission, and BMOP has hosted a Composer in Residence each season since 2000. In recognition of the importance of this position, Meet The Composer and the League of American Orchestras awarded BMOP one of six three-year Music Alive grants for a collaboration with composer Lisa Bielawa.

Dedicated to discovering and advocating for the next generation of composers and audiences, BMOP is committed to encouraging and extending the new music community. Beyond the concert hall, BMOP's trend-setting Club Concerts bring "the music formerly known as classical" to downtown venues, and its in-depth outreach programs provide mentors and workshops for teenage composers in underserved communities.

BMOP's greatest strength is the artistic distinction of its musicians and performances. Each season, Gil Rose gathers together an outstanding orchestra of dynamic and talented young performers, and presents some of the world's top vocal and instrumental soloists. *The New York Times* says: "Mr. Rose and his team filled the music with rich, decisive ensemble colors and magnificent solos. These musicians were rapturous—superb instrumentalists at work and play."

Lukas Foss

The Prairie

Poem by Carl Sandburg

Producer	Gil Rose
Recording	Joel Gordon
Editing and Mastering	Joel Gordon and David Corcoran

The Prairie was recorded on March 15, 2007 at Mechanics Hall (Worcester, MA). This recording was made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. *The Prairie* is published by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI). All rights reserved.

Providence Singers

Andrew Clark, Artistic Director
Allison McMillan, Executive Director

BMOP

Gil Rose, Artistic Director
Catherine Stephan, Executive Director



BMOP



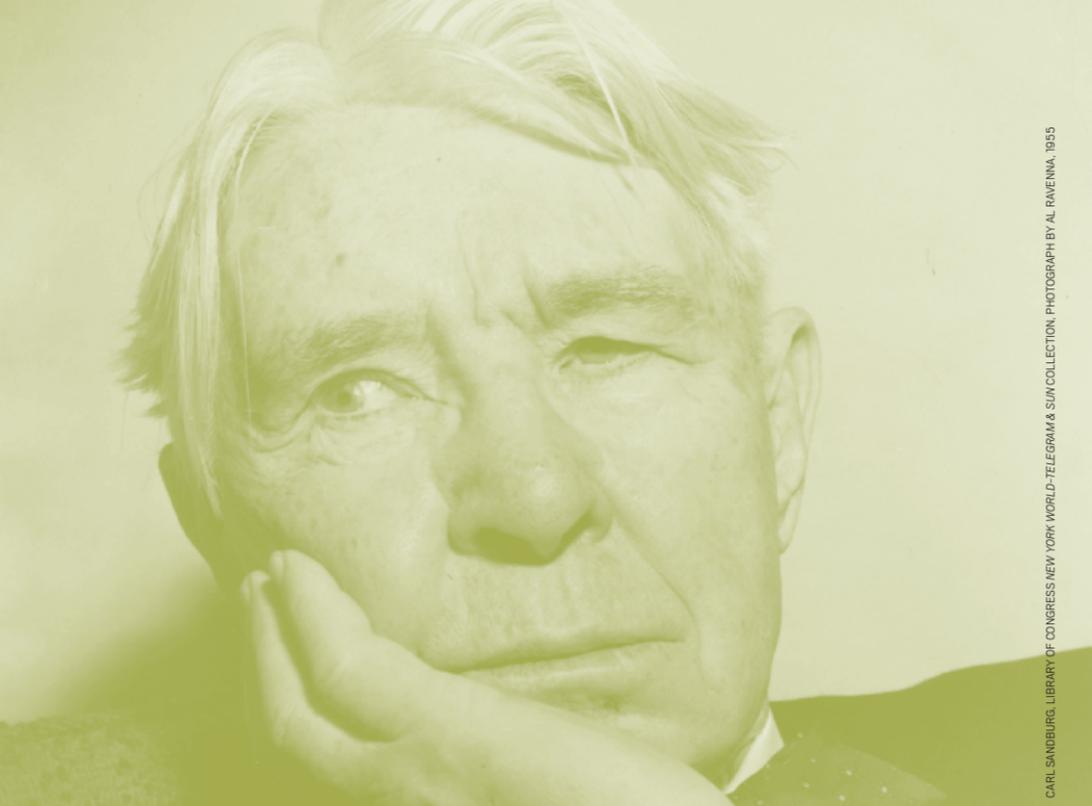
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