



BMOP
sound

ROBERT CARL: WHITE HERON

WHAT'S UNDERFOOT | ROCKING CHAIR SERENADE |
SYMPHONY NO. 5 "LAND"

ROBERT CARL b. 1954

WHITE HERON

WHAT'S UNDERFOOT

ROCKING CHAIR SERENADE

SYMPHONY NO. 5, "LAND"

BOSTON MODERN ORCHESTRA PROJECT

Gil Rose, conductor

[1] **WHITE HERON** (2012) 9:00

[2] **WHAT'S UNDERFOOT** (2016) 16:13

[3] **ROCKING CHAIR SERENADE
FOR STRING ORCHESTRA** (2013) 12:36
SYMPHONY NO. 5, "LAND" (2013)

[4] I. Open Prairie 3:04

[5] II. High Plains 5:40

[6] III. A. Facing Mountains 12:17

[7] III. B.1 Shimmering Mists 1:43

[8] III. B.2 Wildflower Meadow 2:52

[9] III. B.3 Storm Fronts 0:29

[10] III. C. Scaling 0:48

[11] IV. Above the Tree Line 1:54

[12] V. Land Beyond 3:15

TOTAL 59:52

By Robert Carl

The works on this program all deal with *space*. It can be concrete/geographical. Symphony No.5, “Land”, comes from the experience of driving across the American midland from the Great Plains to the Rocky Mountains above the treeline. *White Heron* emerges from close observation of avian wildlife in the Florida Keys. *Rocking Chair Serenade* is an elegy to soft front-porch conversation and communion in the Appalachian Mountains, both of my youth and the site of its premiere.

But they also deal with a more metaphorical space, that in which the sounds resonate. For the past two decades I’ve been exploring a personalized *harmony* in all my pieces, one that is modeled on the harmonic series. By creating vertical “ladders” of the twelve chromatic pitches—voiced similarly to the series, and based on different fundamentals—I’ve been able to create a “resonant space” in the music. In it, sounds have room to breathe, and even dense and complex textures do not feel cloudy and self-cancelling. Instead, they vibrate. While all the works on this program follow this principle, *What’s Underfoot* is the most direct and radical. In it the underlying overtone series is gradually revealed, moving from the highest register to the lowest.

Above all, I hope this space is one in which the listener can feel freedom, and be amplified. If there is exhilaration or a gentle transcendence, then I’ve done my job.

WHITE HERON, scored for full orchestra, was premiered on March 17, 2012, conducted by Edward Cumming, at the Klein Memorial Auditorium in Bridgeport, CT.

WHAT'S UNDERFOOT, scored for chamber orchestra, received its premiere on December 7, 2016, Edward Cumming, conductor, at the Lincoln Theater, University of Hartford, in Hartford, CT.

ROCKING CHAIR SERENADE for string orchestra was premiered on August 4, 2013, with Larry Alan Smith conducting, at the Dunlop Pavilion in Wintergreen, VA.

SYMPHONY NO. 5, "LAND", scored for full orchestra, was premiered on December 13, 2013, conducted by Edward Cumming, at the Lincoln Theater, University of Hartford, in Hartford, CT.

By Daniel Morel

Robert Carl's music defies categorization. It is expressive. It is intellectual. At times it is philosophical. It is all these things outside any box, label, or *-ism*. He draws on seemingly disparate influences to craft an open musical language that favors cohesiveness over any single method. This language gives equal weight to moments of sublime beauty and angular dissonance. Throughout each work (including those on this album), every moment remains meaningfully connected, as aspects of a greater whole.

Carl's approach to cohesiveness reflects a lifetime of experiences both scholarly and aesthetic. Currently the Program Chair of Composition at The Hart School, Carl is a prolific writer penning reviews for *Fanfare* Magazine and books on 20th and 21st century aesthetics. He is an avid student of history and philosophy. His musical influences span Charles Ives to George Rochberg, Iannis Xenakis, and Ralph Shapey (among *many* others). This

multi-faceted background mirrors the contrasting ideas nevertheless shaping his works' deep connections.

His music for the past two decades has examined ways to create unity through "harmonic ladders," networks of vertical scales arranged in a registration analogous to their pitches' position in the harmonic series. Carl wields this framework in a sculptural manner, crafting music with physical dimension. These musical spaces reveal themselves facet by facet. The works play with a sense of time and strike a balance between process and spontaneity. This album showcases those musical forms on an orchestral scale, turning temporal sculpture into vivid images. Its pieces, all written between 2012 and 2016, not only display his tendencies for integrating harmony and form, but do so with precision and mastery. They showcase a range of harmonic ladders as concrete visuals, abstract imagery, and profound links to the philosophical.

* * *

White Heron (2012) [1] is perhaps the most impressionistic work on this album, portraying images within an exploration of harmonic ladders. The work is based on Carl's impressions of an island rookery during a visit to the Florida Keys; more specifically, the activities of one lone heron inhabiting a nearby pool. Nature seemingly wrote the work herself in the quick thirteen days it took Carl to organize thoughts onto paper.

The work recalls Messiaen through a generous mix of birdsong, natural images, and strong harmonic language. Cormorants, pelicans, and other birds appear in and out of wafting and oscillating textures. The titular heron enters and departs through hazes of string *glissandi*. Doppler-style effects give the birds motion through the course of the piece. A network of overtones gradually reveals itself below these images. Harmonies and images all become facets of one sculpture moving through time.

One of Carl's more recent works, *What's Underfoot* (2016) [2] takes a more abstract approach to spatialized form. Written in memoriam for maestro Gustav Meier, it features a harmonic progression that gradually reveals its form iteratively. It begins with music high in the atmosphere and moves downward through a series of cycles to build a profound sense of physical space. Carl has stated the piece "began as a processional, the idea being a piece of stately and deliberate tread that would grow with a sense of mounting gravity and intensity."

The piece opens with those stately rhythms in a steadily descending pattern, regularly interrupted by fluttering and undulating gestures. As each cycle repeats, it expands to fill a more defined space. Through each extension, a nearly invisible harmonic framework crystalizes to reveal a grand structure of overtones and motives. The piece revels in Carl's affinity for cumulative development — a perfect device to bring musical sculptures into focus. The stasis and uncertainty of the work's opening melts into a lush weight of harmonic patterns. Yet both the opening and close (and all cycles between) are on equal footing as facets of one connected whole.

Carl's *Rocking Chair Serenade* (2013) [3] fuses imagery and musical space. This serenade for strings was commissioned by The Wintergreen Music Festival, nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. It rhapsodizes on a truly Southern fixture from Carl's youth—the patio rocking chair—through a mix of thorny gestures and Copland-esque harmonies. Just as in *What's Underfoot*, Carl transforms harmonic ladders into an audible sculpture, this time with bucolic sentiment.

The serenade takes the form of a series of variations, each reflecting on the rocking chair theme. The mind is free to wander across elaborations of a spacious theme gently moving up and down. Variations reflect on what Carl calls the "inhalation/exhalation, or rocker's oscillation" at the core of this serenade. This image might remain static if not for the spatial form Carl adopts. Each variation reveals sides to a greater whole. Large, rising intervals

transform into layers of independent lines. Rhythmic pulses weave in and out of vantage points. Swaying melodies with clear forward motion alternate with the stasis of floating trills. All musical elements coalesce in the final moments of the serenade. Independent lines converge into one final variation where free-flowing lines slow to match the flow of a yet-unseen main motive. After revealing the cumulative whole, the serenade concludes with the rocking chair in slow, gentle decay.

The aptly named *Symphony No. 5, "Land"* (2013) [4-12] merges Carl's temporal sculptures with his interest in nature. The symphony takes its inspiration from a wide expanse of geography, traversing the plains of the American Midwest into the Rocky Mountains. Carl takes the trip one transcendental step further as he muses on the power of such mighty spirits to move the traveler beyond reality itself.

The work is divided into named sections (Open Prairie, High Plains, Facing Mountains, Shimmering Mists, Wildflower Meadow, Storm Fronts, Scaling, Above the Tree Line, Land Beyond) that correspond to shifts in landscape—segments that blend as seamlessly as the actual geography. It opens with tectonic percussion moving arrhythmically under wave-like gestures. Rising trumpet motives appear as mountains rise in approach. Insistent and chattering percussion give way to a transluscent glow upon reaching the mountains. Pastoral woodwind fragments layer in aleatoric repetition as the visceral ground gives way to a dreamlike landscape. Delicate utterances herald an ethereal space as the journey ends with delicate celeste accompaniment. Though a direct journey, the symphony retains a spatial form. Each segment fills a space within an emerging whole, introducing new vantage points to recurring material in this trip through geographic and philosophic space.

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Daniel Morel is a Kansas City-based composer and educator currently teaching at Avila University. His research interests include American composers of the late 20th and 21st century.



Robert Carl's music concentrates on solo piano, chamber, orchestral, vocal/choral, and electroacoustic media. Its aim is to create a sense of space that provides the listener with a sense of freedom and openness.

He has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Chamber Music America, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters (the 1998 Charles Ives Fellowship as well as a 2016 Arts & Letters Award). Residencies include MacDowell, Yaddo, UCross, Djerassi, Millay, Bogliasco, Camargo, Copland House, Tokyo Wonder Site, and Bellagio. He lived in Japan for three months as an Asian Cultural Council Fellow in 2007. New World Records has released three CDs of his works (string chamber music; electroacoustic pieces inspired by Japan; and large ensemble/orchestral). Upcoming projects include *Harmony*, an opera based on the meeting of Charles Ives and Mark Twain, with libretto by Russell Banks.

His works are published by American Composers' Edition (www.composers.com), Boosey and Hawkes, and Northeastern. He has written works for soloists such as Robert Black, contrabass; Katie Lansdale, violin; John Bruce Yeh, clarinet; and pianists Kathleen Supové, Moritz Eggert, and Aron Kallay. A sampling of ensembles who have presented his music includes: Prism Saxophone Quartet, Ensemble 2e2m, the Miami and Arditti string quartets, Chicago Pro Musica, Locrian Chamber Players, Ensemble Échappé, and Counter)induction. His music has been performed internationally in such cities as Berlin, Venice, Paris, London, Seoul, Tokyo and Melbourne, and in such venues as IRCAM, Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Hall, Miller Theater, Carnegie Recital Hall, Symphony Hall (Chicago), Tanglewood, the Guggenheim/Bilbao, as well as universities and conservatories throughout the US.

Carl received his musical training at Yale, Penn, and the University of Chicago. In college he was actually a history major, but an extensive encounter with the music of Charles Ives

during the centennial birthyear of 1974–75 gave him the courage to choose music as a career. He also studied in Paris during 1980–1 as a Lurcy Fellow at the Conservatoire Nationale Supérieure and the Sorbonne. He regards his primary teachers to be Jonathan Kramer, George Rochberg, Ralph Shapey, and Iannis Xenakis.

He writes regularly on new music in a variety of forums and magazines (above all *Fanfare Magazine*), and is the author of *Terry Riley's In C* (Oxford University Press). In 2016 Bloomsbury Press released Jonathan Kramer's posthumous text *Postmodern Music, Postmodern Listening*, which Mr. Carl edited. Bloomsbury has most recently published a book of his essays titled *Music Composition in the 21st Century: A Practical Guide to the New Common Practice*.

Throughout his career he has pursued a parallel stream of electroacoustic composition, often using the program Max to create interactive creative environments. With his wife Karen McCoy, he has created listening environments and sound art. He also performs on and writes for the Japanese *shakuhachi* flute.

Carl regards his work as a teacher as complementary and critical to his creative practice, one that has continually enriched his imagination and technique through encounters with emerging composers. He has taught for over three decades at the Hartt School, University of Hartford, where he is chair of Composition.



ROCKY MOUNTAINS. PHOTO BY ROBERT CARL



LIZ LINDER

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 BMOP/sound 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 BMOP/sound.

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 2019, 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.

BMOP/sound, 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. BMOP/sound 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 BMOP/sound are uniquely positioned to redefine the new music concert and recording experience.

FLUTE

Sarah Brady* [1-2, 4]
Rachel Braude (piccolo) [1-2, 4]
Jessica Lizak [1, 4]

OBOE

Laura Pardee
(English horn) [1, 4]
Jennifer Slowik* [1-2, 4]
Catherine Weinfield [1, 4]

CLARINET

Amy Advocat [1, 4]
Gary Gorczyca [1, 4]
Jan Halloran* [1, 4]
Michael Norsworthy [2]

BASSOON

Ronald Haroutunian* [1-2, 4]
Adrian Morejon [1, 4]
Margaret Phillips
(contrabassoon) [1, 4]

SAXOPHONE

Sean Mix (alto) [4]
Philipp Staeudlin (soprano) [2]

HORN

Alyssa Daly [1, 4]
Neil Godwin [1-2, 4]
Clark Matthews [1, 4]
Kevin Owen* [1, 4]

TRUMPET

Eric Berlin [1, 4]
Terry Everson* [1, 4]
Richard Kelley [2]
Dana Oakes [1, 4]

TROMBONE

Hans Bohn* [1, 4]
Alexei Doohovskoy [1, 4]

BASS TROMBONE

Christopher Beaudry [1-2, 4]

TUBA

Kenneth Amis [1, 4]

PERCUSSION

Jonathan Hess [4]
Craig McNutt (timpani) [1-2, 4]
Robert Schulz* [1-2, 4]
Matthew Sharrock [1, 4]
Nicholas Tolle [1, 4]

HARP

Ina Zdorovetchi [1]

PIANO

Linda Osborn [2, 4]

VIOLIN I

Piotr Buczek [1, 4]
Sonia Deng [1, 4]
Gabriela Diaz* [1, 3]
Tudor Dornescu [1, 4]

Susan Jensen [2-3]
Mina Lavchecha [3]
Jae Young Cosmos Lee [1, 4]
Shaw Pong Liu [1, 4]
Yumi Okada [3]
Nicole Parks [1, 3-4]
Amy Sims [1, 4]
Megumi Stohs [1, 4]
Katherine Winterstein [1, 4]

VIOLIN II

Colleen Brannen [1, 4]
Heidi Braun-Hill* [1, 4]
Paola Caballero [2]
Julia Cash [1, 4]
Lilit Hartunian [1, 3-4]
Zenas Hsu [1, 4]
Annegret Klaua [1, 4]
Alexandra Labinska [1, 4]
Judith Lee [1, 4]
Annie Rabbat* [3]
Micah Ringham [3]
Kay Rooney Matthews [1, 3-4]
Nivedita Sarnath [1, 3-4]
Klaudia Szlachta [3]

VIOLA

Joan Ellersick* [1, 3-4]
Nathaniel Farny [1, 3-4]
Noriko Futagami [1, 3-4]
Lauren Nelson [1, 4]
Dimitar Petkov [1, 4]

Emily Rideout [1, 4]
Emily Rome [1, 4]
Peter Sulski [1-4]

CELLO

Miriam Bolkosky [1, 4]
Nicole Cariglia [1, 4]
Derry Dolezal [3]
Ariel Friedman [3]
Katherine Kayaian [1, 4]
Velleda Miragias [1, 3-4]

Rafael Popper-Keizer* [1, 3-4]
David Russell [1, 4]
Aron Zelkowicz [2]

BASS

Anthony D'Amico* [1, 3-4]
Scot Fitzsimmons [1, 4]
Kate Foss [1, 4]
Robert Lynam [1, 4]
Bebo Shiu [2-3]

KEY

[1] White Heron
[2] What's Underfoot
[3] Rocking Chair
[4] Symphony

*Principals

Robert Carl

White Heron
What's Underfoot
Rocking Chair Serenade
Symphony No. 5, "Land"

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

All works on this disc are published by American Composers Alliance (composers.com).

White Heron was recorded March 21, 2017, at Jordan Hall, Boston, MA. *What's Underfoot* was recorded May 8, 2019, at Jordan Hall. *Rocking Chair Serenade* was recorded June 4, 2018, at Distler Hall, Tufts University, Somerville, MA. *Symphony No. 5, "Land"*, was recorded March 21, 2017, at Jordan Hall.

This recording was made possible in part by the Alice M. Ditson Fund; the Fuller Faculty Development Fund of the Hartt School, University of Hartford; and an anonymous donor.

Robert Carl won an Arts and Letters Award in Music in 2016 from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. This has made possible, in part, the recording of *White Heron*.

The following is thanked for providing the ideal circumstances for composition of *Symphony No.5, "Land"*: Ragdale Foundation, Lake Forest, IL. The composition is dedicated to the Land Institute, Salina, Kansas, and to director emeritus, Wes Jackson.

The following are thanked for commissioning these works:

White Heron: Greater Bridgeport (CT) Symphony Orchestra,
Gustav Meier, music director
Rocking Chair Serenade: Wintergreen (VA) Music Festival,
Larry Alan Smith, Director
What's Underfoot: Foot in the Door, Hartt School,
Glen Adsit and Edward Cumming, directors

—Robert Carl



Cover image: *Great white heron*, photo by Melissa McMasters

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