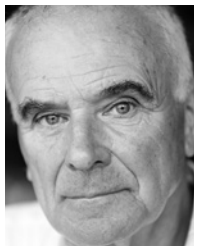
# The New Brandenburgs

## BACH REIMAGINED

FRIDAY **JANUARY 22, 2016** 8:00

KERNIS

WAGNER



DAVIES

THEOFANIDIS

HARTKE

MORAVEC

PHOTO CREDITS: KERNIS, Richard Bowditch; HARTKE, Robert Millard

# The New Brandenburgs

FRIDAY **JANUARY 22, 2016** 8:00

JORDAN HALL AT NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY

PRE-CONCERT TALK HOSTED BY ROBERT KIRZINGER AT 7:00

**STEPHEN HARTKE** A BRANDENBURG AUTUMN (2006)

I. Nocturne: Barcarolle
II. Scherzo: Colloquy
III. Sarabande: Palaces
IV. Rejouissance: Hornpipe

**CHRISTOPHER THEOFANIDIS** MUSE (2007)

I. brilliant, fiery
II. with a light touch, ornate
III. willful, deliberate

**MELINDA WAGNER** LITTLE MOONHEAD: THREE TRIBUTARIES (2008)

I. Little Prelude (with Rills)
II. Moon Ache
III. Fiddlehead: Scrubby and impertinent

Gabriela Diaz, violin

INTERMISSION

**AARON JAY KERNIS** CONCERTO WITH ECHOES (2009)

I. Lontano
II. Slowly
III. Aria—dolente, grazioso

**PETER MAXWELL DAVIES** SEA ORPHEUS (2009)

Angela Kim, piano

Sarah Brady, flute

Gabriela Diaz, violin

**PAUL MORAVEC** BRANDENBURG GATE (2008)

I. ♩ = 144 — II. Pesante — III. ♩ = 180

Gabriela Diaz, violin

**GIL ROSE,** Conductor

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CLIVE GRAINGER

## THIS EVENING'S PERFORMERS

**FLUTE**
Sarah Brady
Rachel Braude

**OBOE**
Jennifer Slowik
(English horn)
Laura Pardee Schaefer
(English horn)
Elizabeth Weinfield
(English horn)

**CLARINET**
Michael Norsworthy

**BASSOON**
Ronald Haroutunian

**FRENCH HORN**
Whitacre Hill
Alyssa Daly

**TRUMPET**
Terry Everson

**PERCUSSION**
Robert Schulz

**HARPSICHORD/CELESTA**
Raymond Chow

**PIANO**
Angela Kim

**VIOLIN I**
Gabriela Diaz
Piotr Buczek
Zoya Tsvetkova
Gabriel Boyers
MaeLynn Arnold

**VIOLIN II**
Heidi Braun-Hill
Colleen Brannen
Micah Ringham
Klaudia Szlachta

**VIOLA**
Joan Ellersick
Peter Sulski
Noriko Herndon
Emily Rome

**CELLO**
Rafael Popper-Keizer
David Russell
Kate Kayaian
Nicole Cariglia

**BASS**
Anthony D'Amico
Bebo Shiu

# PROGRAM NOTES

By Robert Kirzinger

J.S. Bach was a completist; whatever interested him in music, he delved into it until he was sure he had mastered that style or genre. He took this approach throughout his life, culminating in such works as the encyclopedic B minor Mass, the exhaustive study of canon and counterpoint in *The Art of the Fugue*, and the dizzying display of technique that is *The Goldberg Variations*. His four-plus year-long cycles of cantatas incorporate virtually every current, and many past, genres and compositional modes; he explored music for solo instruments in depth with the cello suites and the sonatas and partitas for solo violin. And so on. The *Brandenburg* Concertos, so called because he sent them as a gift to Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, in 1721, are essentially the cream of Bach's exploration into the important Baroque genre of the concerto grosso, concertos for multiple instruments and ensemble (both large and small). The six, for various combinations of instruments, are thought to have been written mostly through the decade of the 1710s. The *Brandenburg*s have come for many to symbolize the height of Bach's achievement as an instrumental composer.

Beginning in 2006, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra acknowledged the *Brandenburg*s' iconic status by commissioning six new chamber-orchestra pieces from major composers taking inspiration from Bach's originals. The six composers were Paul Moravec, Stephen Hartke, Melinda Wagner, Christopher Theofanidis, Aaron Jay Kernis, and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies (the sole non-U.S. composer), whose keyboard concerto *Sea Orpheus* was the last premiered, in early 2010. Each composer was "assigned" a particular *Brandenburg* (with its particular instrumentation, for the most part) for a model.

### STEPHEN HARTKE (b. 1952)
A Brandenburg Autumn (2006)

Stephen Hartke grew up in Manhattan, where he was intensely involved in music as a boy chorister. His continuing interest in Renaissance and other early music can be traced to that experience. He studied at Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of California—Santa Barbara, and was for many years a member of the music faculty at the University of Southern California. He recently took up the post of Professor and Chair of Composition at Oberlin Conservatory. He was a recipient of the Rome Prize and has been recognized by the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and Glimmerglass Opera, and his music has been recorded extensively. His 2009 opera *The Greater Good* won the inaugural Charles Ives Opera Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and he has fulfilled commissions from such diverse performers as the New York Philharmonic, the Hilliard Ensemble, and the Library of Congress.

Hartke's music encompasses a wide range of influences both technical and cultural, including Renaissance polyphony, rock music, and folk music. His work is notable for its directness and clarity of expression, and often its humor. The Orpheus Chamber Orchestra asked him to write his piece after Bach's *Brandenburg* No. 1, which is scored for three oboes (Hartke has them doubling English horns), bassoon, two horns, solo piccolo violin

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(omitted in Hartke's piece), harpsichord, and strings. He wrote the piece, serendipitously, in the very environs of Brandenburg as a Fellow of the American Academy in Berlin. Although, like Bach, Hartke structures his piece in four movements, their tempos and moods don't correspond. There is, though, some correspondence in the relationships between the concertante instruments and the large string body—horns are sometimes solo, sometimes orchestral; oboes and bassoon are treated both independently and as a group, and the harpsichord plays both doubling and solo roles.

The composer writes,

> *[T]he piece emerged as something of a musical diary of my impressions of living not far from the palace of Charlottenburg where the dedicatee of Bach's Brandenburgs himself lived. The area of Brandenburg itself is, in fact, a land of lakes, and my studio was quite close to the Wannsee, the lake that borders on western Berlin as well as Potsdam, the capital of Brandenburg. The first movement—Nocturne: Barcarolle—is a musical sketch of the lake, even incorporating suggestions of the sound of halyards striking against the masts of the sailboats moored at a nearby marina. The second movement is a more playful piece—Scherzo: Colloquy—about conversation and, more particularly, the speech rhythms and dynamic of a dinner table discussion among scholars. The third movement—Sarabande: Palaces—is the most autumnal of the movements, being very much about my strolling through the parks of Potsdam admiring the many Hohenzollern palaces and other buildings there. Lastly, the fourth movement—Rejouissance: Hornpipe—was inspired by a desire to hear three English Horns playing in unison fortissimo, and thus it begins, setting off a celebratory dance that I hope is reminiscent in spirit of the more outdoor sort of orchestral pieces of the High Baroque.*

### **CHRISTOPHER THEOFANIDIS** (b. 1967)
Muse (2007)

Christopher Theofanidis was born in Dallas and attended the University of Houston, the Eastman School of Music, and Yale University, where he now teaches. He was also a Fellow of the Tanglewood Music Center, and has taught at Juilliard and the Peabody Conservatory. Theofanidis was composer in residence with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and has had his work played by that ensemble (his violin concerto for Sarah Chang), Dallas Symphony Orchestra (his cello concerto for Nina Kotova), Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (his Symphony), National Symphony Orchestra, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Houston Grand Opera, and San Francisco Opera, among many others.

*Muse*—referring to Bach himself as muse—is based on *Brandenburg* No. 3, for strings and harpsichord, with the violins, violas, and cellos divided into three parts each. In effect, it's a concerto for the entire string orchestra, the soloists emerging from and folding back into the ripieno seamlessly. Theofanidis uses the same ensemble makeup as Bach, and adheres to what he calls "the general sound world" of Baroque harmony and rhythm. He writes, "The first movement has a running sixteenth note figure, which is actually a minor triple-meter version of the main melodic line in the first movement of the Bach. This is balanced by a short motive of three repeated notes followed by a single lower note. The second movement is highly ornate with a long-lined melody always in the background.

The third movement is based on one of my favorite Bach chorale tunes (though he himself adapted it from a Medieval period chant), Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland."

### **MELINDA WAGNER** (b. 1957)
Little Moonhead: Three Tributaries (2008)

Melinda Wagner won the Pulitzer Prize in 1999 for her Concerto for Flute, Strings, and Percussion. Born in Philadelphia, she began her musical life as a pianist. She attended Hamilton College and earned graduate degrees in composition from the University of Chicago under Shulamit Ran and the University of Pennsylvania under George Crumb and Richard Wernick. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra commissioned her piano concerto *Extremity of Sky* for Emanuel Ax, as well as two other works; the New York Philharmonic commissioned her trombone concerto for its principal, Joseph Alessi. Wagner has taught at Brandeis University, the University of Pennsylvania, Syracuse University, Swarthmore, and Hunter College, among others, and was composer-in-residence at the University of Texas.

*Little Moonhead: Three Tributaries*, based on Bach's *Brandenburg* No. 4, takes its quizzical title and movement headings from the translation of Bach's name as "brook." Bach's original was for a solo group of violin and two recorders plus a small string body and continuo. Wagner's piece is for solo violin and two flutes plus strings and harpsichord/celesta. In the first movement, Little Prelude (with Rills), the violin is a clear soloist, with the two flutes functioning primarily as part of the ripieno. The violin solo, with its sustained notes broken up by long runs of thirty-second notes, seems directly inspired by Bach. The orchestral texture, particularly the shimmering harmonic arpeggios, is illustrative and evocative; many of the accompaniment fragments foreshadow or echo the violin's motifs. The second movement, Moon Ache, is slow and features the two flutes as soloists along with the solo violin. The keyboard, mostly harpsichord in the first movement, is celesta throughout the second, a significant change in timbre. The reference for Fiddlehead, the third movement, is evident; the orchestral string sections join heartily in the soloist's show-off maneuvers, although a brief few measures of calm state Bach's signature—B-flat, A, C, B (BACH in German note names)—as a fitting goad for the fast coda.

### **AARON JAY KERNIS** (b. 1960)
Concerto with Echoes (2009)

Aaron Jay Kernis's music was first performed by the New York Philharmonic when he was twenty-three, since which time he has become one of the most often performed composers in the country. He won the Pulitzer Prize in music in 1998 for his String Quartet No. 2, *musica instrumentalis*, and in 2002 he won the Grawemeyer Award for his *Colored Field* for cello and orchestra. Kernis studied at the San Francisco Conservatory, Manhattan School of Music, and Yale University, where he has taught for many years, and was in residence at Northwestern University as the recipient of the Nemmers Prize. He was also a Rome Prize winner. Kernis has had a long affiliation with both the Minnesota Orchestra and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. Commissions have come from such organizations as the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and San Francisco Symphony, as well as individual artists such as Dawn Upshaw and Renée Fleming.



Kernis wrote his *Concerto with Echoes* in 2009 as a response to Bach's *Brandenburg* No. 6, which is scored for two violas, two violas da gamba, cello, bass viol, and harpsichord. Kernis translated this to a modern group of violas, cellos, and double basses, maintaining that group for the first movement. He adds metallic percussion, oboes, bassoons, horns, and trumpet for the second and third movements. Unlike Bach, Kernis uses changing tempos and abrupt contrasts, but the essential contrapuntal textures of his piece recall his Baroque predecessor. Kernis's own comments appear below.

*The essential element in the Sixth Brandenburg Concerto that inspired this work comes from its very first measure—the opening passage with two spiraling solo violas, like identical twins following each other breathlessly through a hall of mirrors—the echoing of the title. Also in mind were other works of Bach's that I think of constantly, such as the Ricercar, keyboard Toccatas, C minor Organ Passacaglia, etc. But it also echoes other recent work of mine and reminiscences of other composers I love who also paid homage to Bach in their music.*

*Each of the Brandenburgs is exceptional in its use of instruments, and this concerto mirrors the Sixth by using only violas, celli and basses, while gradually adding reeds and horns into a loop back to the sound world of First Brandenburg Concerto (and extending it with trumpet and percussion).*

*The first movement begins with a soft introduction which lays out some of the important building blocks of the concerto's harmony, followed by a fiery, toccata-like virtuosic display. The lines in the movement are constantly mirrored and layered in an often dense maze of sound.*

*The heart of the piece, the slow movement, is essentially a Passacaglia built on slowly moving bass lines, mirrored layers of melody and open harmonic spaces. Strongly consonant in nature, its harmonies are built in imitative spirals, while the more angular climax uses compressions of the work's opening harmonies.*

*Rather than closing with a faster dance movement, the brief, slow Aria suggests a courtly dance, and is expressive and pensive, ending with a sigh rather than a flourish.*

### **PETER MAXWELL DAVIES** (b. 1934)
Sea Orpheus (2009)

The prolific and distinguished English composer Peter Maxwell Davies is among the most important figures in concert music in the past half-century. His half-dozen operas include *Tavener*, composed for the Royal Opera House–Covent Garden, and several pieces for children; his musical theater work *Eight Songs for a Mad King* is a much-studied and imitated repertoire classic. A longtime resident of the Orkney Islands off the coast of Scotland, he was appointed Master of the Queen's Music in 2004. He has also been a busy conductor. Maxwell Davies's catalog comprises well over 300 opus numbers; he has added greatly to the orchestral repertoire with his ten *Strathclyde Concertos* as well as ten substantial symphonies, and he wrote ten string quartets for the Naxos label.

Maxwell Davies's *Sea Orpheus* springs from Bach's *Brandenburg* Concerto No. 5, a concerto for flute, violin, harpsichord, and an orchestra of strings with continuo. *Sea Orpheus* is score for flute, violin, piano, and strings. Another impetus for the piece is the poem of the same name by the Orcadian (Orkney-based) poet George Mackay Brown

(b. 1921). According to the composer, the piece is based musically on the Gregorian chant "Tantum ergo sacramentum," and also includes quotes from Bach's *Art of Fugue* and *Musical Offering*. A solo cello begins the first movement, alluding to but not stating the chant melody. The movement alternates fast and slow sections, and features the soloists one by one—flute, then violin, then piano. The piano also has a substantial cadenza in three parts: first left hand, then right, then both together. The second, slow movement is for the three soloists without orchestra. The finale is mostly fast; the violin and flute soloists usually play together as a duo, and the pianist only as soloist (albeit accompanied); two slow sections interrupt the flow.

## **PAUL MORAVEC** (b. 1957)
### Brandenburg Gate (2008)

Paul Moravec attended Harvard University as an undergraduate and received his doctorate from Columbia University. In 1984 he traveled to Rome for the academic year as a recipient of the Rome Prize. He has been Artist-in-Residence with the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and has taught at Harvard, Columbia, Dartmouth, and Hunter College. He is University Professor at Adelphi University, where he has been a faculty member since 1987. He won a Pulitzer Prize in 2004 for his *Tempest Fantasy*, for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano. BMOP recorded his *Northern Lights Electric*, *SempreDiritto!*, Clarinet Concerto, and *Montserrat*: Concerto for Cello and Orchestra for CD, released in 2012 on the BMOP/sound label.

Whether in works with text, for the stage, or in apparently more abstract instrumental music, Paul Moravec has a strong bent towards narrative. As the composer has written, "[M]y own music seems to involve some physical, tangible catalyst." Opera has occupied Moravec increasingly in the past few years. His opera based on Stephen King's *The Shining* will be premiered at the Minnesota Opera this coming May. Bach's *Brandenburg* No. 2, the impetus for Paul Moravec's *Brandenburg Gate*, is scored for a concertino group of recorder, oboe, trumpet, violin, and strings with continuo. Moravec replaces the recorder and oboe with flute and clarinet/bass clarinet.

Moravec writes of his piece:

*The Brandenburg Concertos are among Bach's most joyous creations. As part of the "New Brandenburg" series, I wanted to project a similar quality of convivial energy. The title,* Brandenburg Gate*, suggests a portal through which we enter Bach's world of exuberant invention. It also refers to the actual monument in Berlin, which I personally associate primarily with the astonishing images of the opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. It seemed a joyous moment indeed not only for Berliners, but for all of us watching on television around the world. Among other things, this piece evokes the spirit of that historic moment, and does not intend to describe the events literally.*

*There are three movements in this piece—fast-slow-fast—and they are played attacca, that is, without interruption between the movements. The name Bach, B-A-C-H, can be represented in German musical notation as B-flat – A – C – B-natural. Bach himself used this device occasionally in his own music, and various composers since then have followed his lead in tribute to the master. This piece is, among other things, a musical meditation and elaboration on the motive. As the B-A-C-H motive is a chromatic four-pitch collection, it well suits my characteristically chromatic harmonic language. Occasionally, the motive serves as the foundation of various twelve-tone rows treated in the general context of my own particular tonality.*

Brandenburg Gate *is dedicated with great admiration and affection to the amazing musicians of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.*



*© Robert Kirzinger 2016.* *Composer and writer Robert Kirzinger has been the primary annotator for the Boston Modern Orchestra Project since 2006. He is on the staff of the Boston Symphony Orchestra as a writer, editor, and lecturer, and has taught writing at Northeastern University. He holds degrees in music composition from Carnegie Mellon University and the New England Conservatory.*

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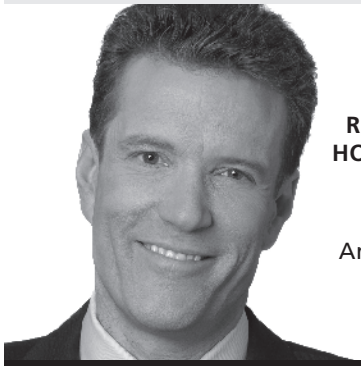

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## GIL ROSE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

LIZ LINDER

Gil Rose is a conductor helping to shape the future of classical music. His dynamic performances and many 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's unique programming and high performance standards have attracted critical acclaim.

As a guest conductor on both the opera and symphonic platforms, he made his Tanglewood debut in 2002 and in 2003 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 the National Orchestra of Porto and made his Japanese debut in 2015 substituting for Seiji Ozawa at the Matsumoto Festival conducting Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict*.

Over the past decade, Mr. Rose has also built a reputation as one of the country's most inventive and versatile opera conductors. He recently announced the formation of Odyssey Opera, an inventive company dedicated to presenting eclectic operatic repertoire in a variety of formats. The company debuted in September 2013 to critical acclaim with a 6-hour concert production of Wagner's *Rienzi*. Subsequent presentations have included concert performances of Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* and Massenet's *Le Cid*, along with two critically acclaimed Spring Festivals of staged opera. Prior to founding Odyssey Opera he led Opera Boston as its Music Director starting in 2003, and in 2010 was appointed the company's first Artistic Director. Mr. Rose led Opera Boston in several American and New England premieres including Shostakovich's *The Nose*, Donizetti's *Maria Padilla*, Hindemith's *Cardillac*, and Peter Eötvös's *Angels in America*. In 2009, Mr. Rose led the world premiere of Zhou Long's *Madame White Snake*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2011.

Mr. Rose and BMOP recently partnered with the American Repertory Theater, Chicago Opera Theater, and the MIT Media Lab to create the world premiere of composer Tod Machover's *Death and the Powers* (a runner-up for the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in Music). He conducted this seminal multimedia work at its world premiere at the Opera Garnier in Monte Carlo, Monaco, in September 2010, and also led its United States premiere in Boston and a subsequent performance at Chicago Opera Theater.

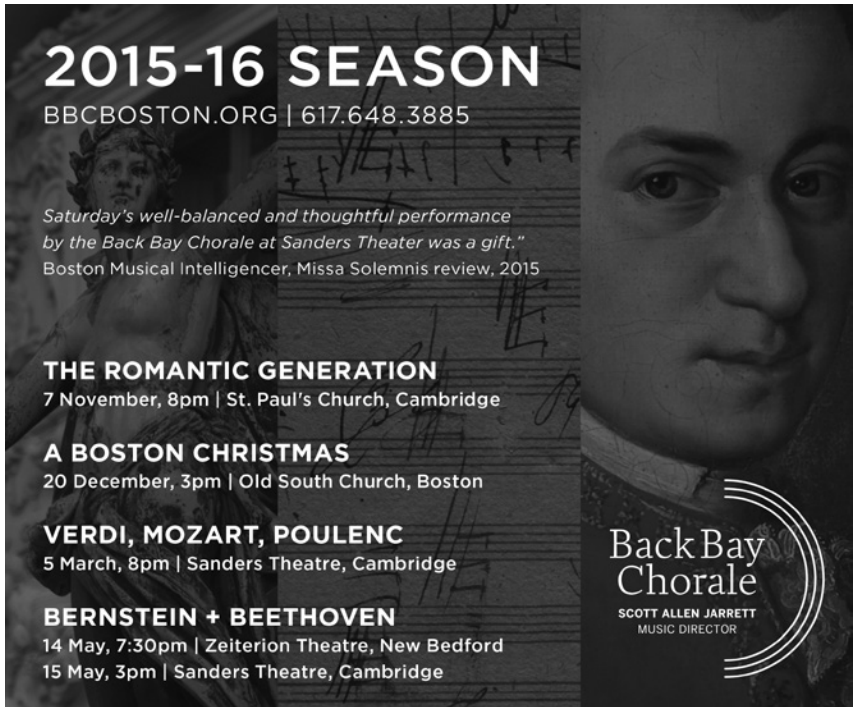
An active recording artist, Gil Rose serves as the executive producer of the BMOP/sound recording label. His extensive discography includes world premiere recordings of music by John Cage, Lukas Foss, Charles Fussell, Michael Gandolfi, Tod Machover, Steven Mackey, Evan Ziporyn, and many others on such labels as Albany, Arsis, Chandos, ECM, Naxos, New World, and BMOP/sound.

He has led the longstanding Monadnock Music Festival in historic Peterborough, NH, since his appointment as Artistic Director in 2012, conducting several premieres and making his opera stage directing debut in two revivals of operas by Dominick Argento, as

well as conducting, directing and producing the world premier recording of Ned Rorem's opera *Our Town*.

He has curated the Fromm Concerts at Harvard three times and served as the first curator of the Ditson Festival of Music at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art. As an educator Mr. Rose served five years as director of Orchestral Activities at Tufts University and in 2012 he joined the faculty of Northeastern University as Artist-in-Residence and Professor of Practice.

In 2007, Mr. Rose was awarded Columbia University's prestigious Ditson Award as well as an ASCAP Concert Music Award for his exemplary commitment to new American music. He is a three-time Grammy Award nominee.



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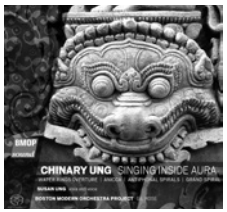


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[1038]

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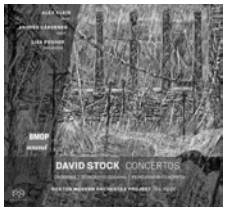

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[1048]

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