Augusta Read Thomas
Selected Works for Orchestra
NI6258
CD Release Date
6th January 2014

Published by G. Schirmer Inc
Released by Nimbus Alliance
Augusta Read Thomas (born in 1964 in Glen Cove, New York) was the Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1997 to 2006. In 2007, her Astral Canticle was one of the two finalists for the Pulitzer Prize in Music. Thomas has also been on the Board of Directors of the American Music Center since 2000, as well as on the boards and advisory boards of several chamber music groups. She was elected Chair of the Board of the American Music Center, a volunteer position that ran from 2005 to 2008. She is University Professor (one of six University Professors) at The University of Chicago. Augusta was MUSICALIVE Composer-in-Residence with the New Haven Symphony, a national residency program of The League of American Orchestras and Meet the Composer.
Among today's composers, Thomas has remained consistent in blazing her own path. In this she has undoubtedly been aided by her cosmopolitan training, having studied with, among others, Alan Stout (Northwestern University, 1983-87), Oliver Knussen (Tanglewood, 1986, 1987, 1989) and Jacob Druckman (Yale University, 1988), as well as one final year in London at the Royal Academy of Music (1989). Her stature as a widely respected composer and teacher has been forged by a 9-year stint as Mead Composer in Residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and lengthy posts at the Eastman School of Music and Northwestern University prior to her present distinguished appointment as one of only six "University" Professors at the University of Chicago. Her music has travelled worldwide over the years through the advocacy of figures such as Mstislav Rostropovich, Pierre Boulez, Daniel Barenboim, Christoph Eschenbach, Oliver Knussen, Esa Pekka Salonen and Sir Andrew Davis among many others. But names, appointments and honours in themselves cannot give an indication of what Thomas' music sounds like. And the music itself defies any easy verbalisation. Divining influences can give some indication as long as it is borne in mind that knowledge of said influences is no substitute for listening to the actual music. Thomas' long-standing study of Jazz has imparted a sense of rhythm notable for its combination of drive and elasticity. Figures as diverse as Byrd, Bach, Chopin, Mahler, Debussy, Berg, Stravinsky, Berio, Knussen, George Benjamin, Ellington, Coltrane and Dutilleux certainly furnish clues as to how Thomas' music has attained its formal fluidity, a lyricism high-flown and diaphanous by turns, a harmonic language that can move between tart, flavoursome dissonance and warm consonance with an enviable naturalness, and an orchestrational instinct of pyrotechnic virtuosity.

© Paul Pellay, 2013
Augusta Read Thomas
Selected Works for Orchestra
Nimbus Alliance CD Release

Total Playing Time: 79 minutes 50 seconds
NI 6258
1 CD Set

Recommended Retail Price: £14.99
UPC: 0710357625824

Track Listing:

1. Aureole for orchestra (2013) - DePaul University Symphony
   Conductor Cliff Colnot

2-5. Words of the Sea for orchestra (1995) - Chicago Symphony Orchestra
   Conductor Pierre Boulez (Live concert performance)

6-7. In My Sky at Twilight for soprano and ensemble (2002) - Christine Brandes, soprano and
   Chicago Symphony Orchestra
   Conductor Pierre Boulez

   Symphony Orchestra
   Conductor Oliver Knussen

9. Terpsichore’s Dream for chamber orchestra (2007) - Chamber Orchestra
   Conductor Cliff Colnot

10. Silver Chants the Litanies for French horn & 18 players (2004) - Greg Heustis, horn and
    Southern Methodist University Wind Ensemble
    Conductor Jack Delaney

For more information contact: Amy Verheyden - marketing@wyastone.co.uk - 01600 890 007
www.wyastone.co.uk - www.musicsalesclassical.com - www.augustareadthomas.com
Augusta Read Thomas
Selected Works for Orchestra

 Appropriately, this collection begins with the most recent work on this CD. A sparky curtain-raiser, *Aureole* unquestionably lives up to its title with its shimmering colours and luminous sonorities. Opening the work are bold, fanfaresque flares, which transform and progress into fast, animated music. The mood is playful and buoyant, and attempts to temper the high spirits by means of more lyrical episodes ultimately fail to still the revelries. The ending seems to revert to the opening intensity, but the smile in the harmonies deter one from taking it all too seriously, which, one suspects, was Thomas' intention all along!

If *Aureole* gives us Thomas' most recent musical snapshot, the earliest work here demonstrates both how Thomas' language has evolved and, paradoxically, how consistent it has remained. A weightier, more dramatic proposition, *Words of the Sea* already presents Thomas' glinting, diamond-bright sound world fully grown. Each one of its 4 movements takes as its starting point a phrase from Wallace Stevens' long poem *The Idea of Order at Key West*, resulting in a tumultuously multifaceted orchestral seascape covering a wide range of moods and emotions.

The voice is as dominant a presence in Thomas' oeuvre as the orchestra, and *In My Sky at Twilight* for soprano and chamber orchestra reveals her imagination at full stretch. Thomas' own description of her music in general, "lyricism under pressure", is succinctly apt in summing up *In My Sky at Twilight*. It is best viewed as a dream sequence with the music constantly changing moods and colours during its stream-of-consciousness journey, before it finally winds down to the rapt stillness of its closing bars.

The concerto form has occupied Thomas throughout her career, and the present CD contains two such works. *Carillon Sky* is the more recent of the two. Bell-like sonorities have long been a hallmark of Thomas' music, and, as the title reveals, this work's sonic firmament is populated with them. The forces required are comparatively modest (14 players including the soloist), and that makes it one of many works of Thomas' to simultaneously inhabit the realms of orchestral and chamber music to the point where it turns into a hybrid that resists pigeonholes. The solo violin is very much a voyager in the glistening, airborne sonic environment conjured in this taut 8-minute concerto.

*Words of the Sea* is a commanding demonstration of the sheer sense of power that Thomas can summon from a large orchestra; the later *Terpsichore's Dream*, on the other hand, is a fine example of the almost limitless variety of light and shade Thomas can draw from more modest orchestral resources. Evoking Greek mythology's muse of the dance, the work is really an abstract ballet, with all the colour and fluidity that such a concept implies.

Rounding off this CD is the other concertante work included here, *Silver Chant the Litanies*. Requiring 18 players alongside the solo horn, it veers between orchestral and chamber music in much the same way as *Carillon Sky* does. It is, however, a very different proposition from the later piece, its environment tougher and grainier in sound, the emotions punchier. *Silver Chant the Litanies* is a result of Thomas' long-standing and deeply personal engagement with the past. It is dedicated to the memory of Luciano Berio. But Berio is not the only composer being paid tribute to here. Less directly, the shade of Gustav Mahler is also summoned; Mahler plays as central a role in Thomas' compositional makeup as it did in Berio's. If Berio's kaleidoscopic sense of instrumental colour plays a guiding role in this work's highly charged orchestration, Mahler's spirit surely informs the solo writing for that most quintessentially Mahlerian of instruments, the horn. It is through this more oblique and subliminal approach that Thomas enables the past to actively colour her music.

© Paul Pellay, 2013

For more information contact: Amy Verheyden - marketing@wyastone.co.uk - 01600 890 007
www.wyastone.co.uk - www.musicsalesclassical.com - www.augustareadthomas.com
Augusta Read Thomas

Coming Soon

The present CD, Selected Works for Orchestra, is the first in a series presenting the music of the composer Augusta Read Thomas on Nimbus Alliance.

The second CD release in Spring 2014 will include the following repertoire:

- **Scat** for oboe, string trio and piano
- **Six Piano Etudes** for solo piano
- **Double Helix (Mansueto Tribute)** for 2 violins
- **Ring Flourish Blaze** for piccolos and brass
- **A Circle Around the Sun** for piano trio
- **Pilgrim Soul** for English Horn and 2 Violins
- **Traces** for solo piano in 5 movements
- **Toft Serenade** for violin and piano
- **Starlight Ribbons** for solo piano

The third CD release will feature the world premiere and first recording of the Saxophone Concerto *Prisms of Light* recorded with William Boughton and the New Haven Symphony Orchestra in February 2014.

For more information contact: Amy Verheyden - marketing@wyastone.co.uk - 01600 890 007

www.wyastone.co.uk - www.musicsalesclassical.com - www.augustareadthomas.com

With soloists Mathieu DuFour and Robert Chen at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s world premiere of Astral Canticle, in June 2006. Photo © Dan Rest
Content

1. Augusta Read Thomas Biography
2. The Music
3. Augusta Read Thomas, Selected Works for Orchestra - CD Release
4. Selected Works for Orchestra
5. Coming Soon
6. Photographs and Logos
7. Contact information and useful links
‘Bliss out to Ms. Thomas's transfixing shimmer’
- The New York Times

For more information contact:

Amy Verheyden
Nimbus Records
Wyastone Leys
Monmouth
NP25 3SR

marketing@wyastone.co.uk
01600 890 007
www.wyastone.co.uk