Composer, conductor, and creative thinker - John Adams occupies a unique position in the world of American music. His works, both operatic and symphonic, stand out among contemporary classical compositions for their depth of expression, brilliance of sound, and the profoundly humanist nature of their themes. Over the past 30 years, Adams’s music has played a decisive role in turning the tide of contemporary musical aesthetics away from academic modernism and toward a more expansive, expressive language, entirely characteristic of his New World surroundings.

Born and raised in New England, Adams learned the clarinet from his father and played in marching bands and community orchestras during his formative years. He began composing at age ten and heard his first orchestral pieces performed while still a teenager. The intellectual and artistic traditions of New England, including his studies at Harvard University and attendance at Boston Symphony Orchestra concerts, helped shape him as an artist and thinker. After earning two degrees from Harvard, he moved to Northern California in 1971 and has since lived in the San Francisco Bay area.

Adams taught at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music for ten years before becoming composer-in-residence of the San Francisco Symphony (1982-85), and creator of the orchestra’s highly successful and controversial “New and Unusual Music” series. Many of Adams’s landmark orchestral works were written for and premiered by the San Francisco Symphony, including Harmonium (1981), Grand Pianola Music (1982), Harmonielehre (1985), My Father Knew Charles Ives (2003) and Absolute Jest (2012).

In 1985, Adams began a collaboration with the poet Alice Goodman and stage director Peter Sellars that resulted in two groundbreaking operas: Nixon in China (1987) and The Death of Klinghoffer (1991). Produced worldwide, these works are among the most performed operas of the last two decades. Five further stage collaborations with Sellars followed: the 1995 “songplay”, I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky, with a libretto by June Jordan; El Niño (2000), a multilingual retelling of the nativity story; Doctor Atomic (2005), about J. Robert Oppenheimer and the creation of the first atomic bomb; A Flowering Tree, inspired by Mozart’s Magic Flute and premiered in Vienna in 2006, and the Passion oratorio The Gospel According to the Other Mary (2012).

Girls of the Golden West, Adams’ newest opera about the California Gold Rush, will premiere in November of 2017 at the San Francisco Opera.

John Adams turns seventy in February of 2017, and his music will be heard that year throughout the U.S. and Europe. Orchestras and opera companies in London, Berlin, New York, St. Louis, Stockholm, Los Angeles, Amsterdam and San Francisco will focus on his work and tour it internationally. In December Adams will conduct his oratorio El Niño with the LSO in London and Paris, and later lead a complete concert performance and recording for Nonesuch Records of his 2005 opera, Doctor Atomic at the Barbican Centre with the BBC Symphony.
Recent works include *Scheherazade.2*, a “dramatic symphony” for violin and orchestra, written for the American violinist Leila Josefowicz; *Absolute Jest*, for string quartet and orchestra; and Second Quartet, composed for the St Lawrence String Quartet. Adams’ newest release on Nonesuch is *Scheherazade.2* with Josefowicz and the St. Louis Symphony under David Robertson.

Both Harvard and Yale universities have conferred honorary doctorates on Adams, as have Northwestern University, the Juilliard School and Cambridge University in England. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California honored him with the Governor’s Award for his distinguished service to the arts in his adopted home state. His Violin Concerto won the 1993 Grawemeyer Award, and *On the Transmigration of Souls*, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic to commemorate the first anniversary of 9/11, received the 2003 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

John Adams is a much sought-after conductor, appearing with the world’s major orchestras in programs combining his own works with a wide variety of repertoire ranging from Beethoven and Mozart to Ives, Stravinsky, Carter, Zappa, Glass and Ellington.

He has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the BBC Symphony and the London Symphony.

In the current season, Adams appears with the Berlin Philharmonic, Suisse Romande Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony and Los Angeles Philharmonic.

For the past six years he has been Creative Chair of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. For the 2016-17 season he also serves as Composer-in-Residence with the Berlin Philharmonic.

Through his conducting and commissioning of new works, Adams has become a significant mentor of the younger generation of American composers. The Pacific Harmony Foundation, created with his wife, the photographer Deborah O’Grady, supports commissions and performances of new works and musical education initiatives throughout the country. Adams’ educational activities reach from the local (the John Adams Young Composers program in his hometown of Berkeley, California) to the international (directing the Juilliard and Royal Academy of Music orchestras at Avery Fisher Hall and the BBC Proms).

John Adams is also a highly esteemed and provocative writer. He is a frequent contributor to the New York Times Book Review and has written for The New Yorker and The London Times. *Hallelujah Junction*, Adams’s much praised volume of memoirs and commentary on American musical life, won the Northern California Book Award for Creative Nonfiction and was named one of the “most notable books of the year” by The New York Times. The official John Adams website is [www.earbox.com](http://www.earbox.com).

August 2016