

Please note: Background material begins on page 2

For immediate release

***YOUNG AMERICA* -- A NEW CD OF GORDON GETTY'S CHORAL WORKS --
IS RELEASED ON THE PENTATONE LABEL**

***YOUNG AMERICA* INCLUDES FIVE WORKS FOR CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA
PERFORMED BY THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY AND CHORUS
CONDUCTED BY MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS; THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL
ORCHESTRA WITH THE ERIC ERICSON CHAMBER CHOIR,
CONDUCTED BY ALEXANDER VEDERNIKOV; AND VOCAL SOLOISTS**

In *Young America*, a new CD on the PentaTone label (PentaTone Classics 5186 040), composer Gordon Getty has set the poetry of Stephen Vincent Benét, Poe, Tennyson, Housman and Shakespeare to music, marrying the richness of the words to the melodic and harmonic language he has developed over forty-plus years.

Young America includes five works for chorus and orchestra, performed by the San Francisco Symphony and chorus conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, and the Russian National Orchestra with the Eric Ericson Chamber Choir, Stockholm, conducted by Alexander Vedernikov, with vocal soloists including Lisa Delan, soprano; Vladimir Chernov, baritone; Pavlo Hunka, bass-baritone; Gunnar Birgersson, baritone; and Mats Carlsson, tenor.

The works are as follows:

Young America (2001), a cycle of six movements for chorus and orchestra, to texts by the composer and Stephen Vincent Benét; *Three Welsh Songs* for chorus and orchestra (arranged by Gordon Getty, with new English lyrics by Gordon Getty); *Annabel Lee* for male chorus and orchestra (poem by Edgar Allan Poe); *Victorian Scenes* for chorus and orchestra (poems by Tennyson and Housman); and "Jerusalem" (Act II, scene 7, of the opera *Plump Jack*) for soloists, chorus and orchestra.

Young America and *Annabel Lee* are performed by the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas; *Three Welsh Songs*, *Victorian Scenes*, and *Jerusalem* are performed by the Russian National Orchestra and the Eric Ericson Chamber Choir, Stockholm, conducted by Alexander Vedernikov. Soloists in *Jerusalem* are Lisa Delan, soprano; Vladimir Chernov, baritone; Pavlo Hunka, bass-baritone; Gunnar Birgersson, baritone; and Mats Carlsson, tenor. All works were recorded in 2003 and 2004. The Executive Producer of the CD is Job Maarse. The total playing time is 63 minutes and 02 seconds. This is a Superaudio CD (Hybrid Multichannel), playable on all SACD and conventional CD players.

Young America brings together Getty's complete choral works, with the exception of the cantata *Joan and the Bells* (to the composer's own libretto about the execution of Joan of Arc, recorded by the Russian National Orchestra, Eric Ericson Chamber Choir, and soloists Lisa Delan and Vladimir Chernov, with Alexander Vedernikov conducting, released on PentaTone PTC 5186 017).

Background Information on the Composer and the Works

Poetry has always been a strong source of inspiration for Getty. Most of his compositions (which are published by Rork Music and distributed by Theodore Presser Company) involve the voice; he has also written a number of works for chamber ensembles and for solo piano.

In an interview with James Keller, who wrote the liner notes for this CD, Gordon Getty described his identity as a composer: "I've attended quite a few composers' conferences where one encounters people working in a wide variety of styles, sometimes in a path populated by very few practitioners and an audience to match. I'm the only guy at those gatherings who is writing classical music in a nineteenth-century idiom. Others avoid it like the plague... My style is undoubtedly tonal, though with hints of atonality such as any composer my age would likely use to suggest a degree of disorientation. But I'm strictly tonal in my approach. Whatever it was that the great Victorian composers and poets were trying to achieve, that's what I'm trying to achieve."

"Sentiments and ideals are what move me... If music doesn't come clearly from the heart, and if it doesn't tap into some shared sentiment with the audience, I'm really not interested in writing it."

In a 2005 story about Getty in the British newspaper *The Guardian*, Michael Tilson Thomas, Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony and a long-time friend, said that Getty's style refers back to that of early American composers. "Gordon writes long lines of harmony," Tilson Thomas says, "and then there is an almost spoken level of voices on top of that -- a kind of free declamation. These harmonies and melodies come through in a very clear way -- there is nothing murky about his music, even though his harmonies and transpositions of the notes can be very surprising."

In excerpts from his liner notes to *Young America*, Gordon Getty writes: “Poetry is meant to be cryptic. If you understand everything, I have failed. ‘Hark the Homeland’ is modelled on the opening pages of *John Brown’s Body*, and is my homage to this neglected master. Both the words and the music of ‘Daughter of Asheville’ are meant to sound as if they might have come from the Civil War. What can we guess of Janet Alicia and her dancing partner? I think he is telling us that he died in the Battle of the Wilderness, with her name on his lips. I would conjecture that she died generations later, in a world of motorcars and relativity, surrounded by their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, with his ring on her finger. Now they dance, with the merry and brave, seeing only each other, into a dawn past reach.

“Benét’s great miniature [which closes this cycle] reverses the time-line, and takes us back to the forest primeval in which ‘Hark the Homeland’ began. What an ear! The unexpected spondee in ‘all lost wild America,’ and the warmth and wit of the whole, make the piece a prize in any company.

“I always wanted to sing ‘All Through the Night,’ [one of the pieces in *Three Welsh Songs*] and bought an anthology including it. The English translation given there may have been faithful to the Welsh, for all I know, but was pretty clumsy after the first four lines. The arrangement was plain, with a nice use of parallel thirds in lines five and six. I kept the four good lines and the parallel thirds, and the glorious tune itself, and otherwise started from scratch. ‘Welcome Robin’ and ‘Kind Old Man’ were in the same anthology, again with simple accompaniments. ‘Welcome Robin’ already had a charming text, and needed only more harmony and counterpoint. ‘Kind Old Man’ is a wonderful nonsense song, alternating between doleful and lively refrains. I added still more nonsense to the words, and hammed up the slow parts with barbershop melisma and melodrama.

“‘All Through the Night,’ of course, is the closer. I intended the text as a lyric, with a common touch, rather than a stand-alone poem. I chose hymn-like harmonies, more or less inevitably, but added a counter-melody in broken chords to bring out the bardic potential.

“The poem *Annabel Lee* is a unique challenge. Critics will not need their spectacles to find its faults of taste. But any who are not moved by it might as well give up reading poetry, or at least romantic poetry. It invites us to re-examine our prejudices against sentimentality. It puts us through the wringer, like it or not. Mawkish and melodramatic, towering and harrowing, it will not leave us in peace.

“In *Victorian Scenes*, accompaniments were an afterthought, evolving bit by bit from discreet pitch cues to full melodic partners with lives of their own. In source and spirit, all six are campfire songs. So it shouldn’t seem surprising that all the poems are resonant of nature, and that they were chosen from an age when ‘natural philosophy’ and melancholy were the special genius of English verse.

“*Plump Jack* is about the opposite trajectories of Hal and Falstaff in the *Henriad*. The text is by Shakespeare as far as I could make it, with some additions by me to stitch together the parts that I chose. The ‘Jerusalem’ scene shows Henry IV’s collapse after hearing the news of his victory over the Percys. Hal enters in time to be reconciled with his dying father.”

Gordon Getty was exposed to the love of music mainly by his mother, Ann Rork, in their home in San Francisco. Legendary opera singers as Licia Albanese and Ferruccio Tagliavini gave recitals there, feeding the imagination of the young Gordon.

Getty, born in Los Angeles in 1933, studied piano with Robert Vetleson and voice with Easton Kent during his formative years. He majored in English Literature at the University of San Francisco, and went on to study voice and music theory at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he composed his first piano and choral works. He sang bass-baritone roles with small opera companies, but realized that his vocal talent was not sufficient to support a successful career as an opera singer. After military service, he began an involvement in the family businesses which continues to this day, and, through the Ann & Gordon Getty Foundation, has been powerfully involved in supporting performing and educational organizations active in the advancement of arts and culture.

In the early 1960s, Getty studied at the San Francisco Conservatory, studying music theory with Sol Joseph. Since the 1980s, he has produced several compositions, beginning with *The White Election* (1981), a frequently-performed cycle for solo singer and piano, setting thirty-two poems by Emily Dickinson (the recording is available on the Delos label). In 1987, he unveiled his opera *Plump Jack*, an operatic interpretation (to his own libretto) of Shakespeare's character, Falstaff.

Gordon Getty's works have been performed in venues including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, Kennedy Center, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion of the Los Angeles Music Center, London's Royal Festival Hall, Vienna's Brahmssaal, and Moscow's Tchaikovsky Hall and Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, Guggenheim Museum, National Gallery of Art (in Washington, D.C.), Pierpont Morgan Library, St. George's Chapel of Windsor Castle, at concert halls at Harvard and Yale Universities, and at the Aspen and Spoleto Festivals. His works have been performed by the San Francisco Symphony conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra conducted by André Previn, Kirov Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, London Philharmonia (with London Voices), at Cal Performances (in Berkeley, California) conducted by Charles Ketcham, Los Angeles Master Chorale and Sinfonia, Puerto Rico Symphony, and the Russian National Orchestra conducted by Mikhail Pletnev.

In 1986, Gordon Getty was honored as an Outstanding American Composer at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and, in 2003, he was awarded the Gold Baton of the American Symphony Orchestra League.

On October 16, 2005, Gordon Getty's "Ancestor Suite" will premiere in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory with the Russian National Orchestra conducted by Mikhail Pletnev. "Ancestor Suite" is a ballet suite based on Edgar Allen Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher."

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION:

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