

Overture Plump Jack

Says Getty: “My opera *Plump Jack* tracks the fictional career of Falstaff in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV (Parts One and Two)* and *Henry V*, setting the original text where practical. Falstaff brews merry mischief with the scapegrace Prince Hal, to the despair of king and court, but is banished ‘Not to come near my person by ten mile’ when Hal becomes King Henry the Fifth. The overture is a synopsis of this story, quoting scenes of Falstaffian high jinks and of courtly grief by turn, along with a few idyllic episodes, interrupted by occasional distant fanfares warning of the banishment. If this last idea was filched from Beethoven’s *Leonore Overture No. 3*, then so much the better for its pedigree. At last the overture brings us to the banishment in full fortissimo, with the king’s baleful sentence, and then closes with Falstaff’s appeal for Hal’s heart and ours: ‘No, my good lord ... banish Plump Jack, and banish all the world.’”

Ancestor Suite

A ballet loosely based on Edgar Allan Poe’s 1839 short story, *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Says Getty: “Eddie Poe has arrived at Usher House to visit his old school-chum Roderick Usher and his twin sister Madeline. A ball has been organized in his honor. The dancers are the spectral ancestors of the Usher line, led by the founder of the Covenant that has given them immortality, Lord Primus Usher. Poe and Roderick watch. Madeline enters in her nightclothes. She is mad, but pure, like Ophelia; she has refused to sign the Covenant. The ancestors, apart from Primus, shrink back in terror. Madeline gives Poe a flower, and dances with Roderick (the ‘Madeline’ section). The ancestors clap soundlessly. She then dances with Poe (in ‘Ewig Du’), but begins hearing a wilder tune, and dances to it alone. She falls at a climax, and Primus indicates that she is dead.”

Tiefer und Tiefer (“Deeper and Deeper”)

Says Getty: “*Tiefer und Tiefer* means deeper and deeper. The words fit the tune and spirit of the piece, first composed for piano about 20 years ago, but came to me with the descending bass line in the second part. Sometimes we make fun of serious things.”

Homework Suite

Says Getty: “The five pieces comprising *Homework Suite* were written while I was studying at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in 1961 and 1962. They weren’t actually homework assignments, but more in the nature of voluntary work. I wasn’t aware of the echoes of Chopin in ‘Ghost Waltz’ and ‘Night Horses’ until a few years later. In truth, they don’t bother me.

“My teacher at the Conservatory was the renowned Sol Joseph. I was lucky. These compositions, and everything I have written since, bear something of his mark. Yes, and Chopin’s too, for although Mr. Joseph was and is of the twelve-tone persuasion, he taught us the old masters with instinct and conviction. I would like to be able to report what grade he gave these efforts, but it wasn’t his practice to grade them. They were published by Belwin, now Belwin-Mills, in 1964.”

The Fiddler of Ballykeel (for string orchestra)

Says Getty: “My own patronymic ancestors appear to have come from a suburb of Belfast called Ballymoney. Since ‘The Fiddler of Ballymoney’ by Getty might raise unintended nuances, I moved my ancestors a few miles away to Ballykeel.”

Raise the Colors (C major).

Says Getty: “My own music finds its home in a vague and settled past. Although I prefer the path less traveled when other things are equal, a V-I cadence is what I write when so advised by the wiggles on the line. I hanker back to the previous three centuries, when all composers spoke much the same musical language at a given time, and each stood apart mainly in what he had to say in it. There is still plenty to be said in C major.”

About Gordon Getty

Gordon Getty, born in Los Angeles in 1933 and residing in San Francisco since 1945, studied piano with Robert Vetleson and voice with Easton Kent during his formative years. As a student at the University of San Francisco he majored in English Literature. His first published piece was the a cappella chorus *All Along the Valley* (1959). In the early 1960s, he enrolled at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, studying music theory with Sol Joseph, and there composed the *Homework Suite* (1964) for solo piano.

Since the 1980s, he has produced a steady stream of compositions, beginning with *The White Election* (1981). Recorded by the late soprano Kaaren Erickson, this cycle has been performed at several venues including Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall; the Pierpont Morgan Library (in New York); the Kennedy Center and National Gallery of Art (in Washington, D.C); the Hermitage Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia; and, on April 18, 2009, at the First Congregational Church in Amherst, Massachusetts, in a concert performed by Lisa Delan and pianist Kristin Pankonin presented by the Emily Dickinson Museum. In February, 2010, Mikhail Pletnev joined Lisa Delan as pianist when Cal Performances presented *The White Election*.

In 1984, Gordon Getty unveiled his opera *Plump Jack*, an operatic interpretation (to his own libretto) of Shakespeare’s outrageous but poignant character, Falstaff. Following premiere performances by the San Francisco Symphony, *Plump Jack* was revived in semi-staged concert versions by the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic, and, most recently, in London, by the London Philharmonia with London Voices and an international cast of soloists. The work will also be performed in Munich in May, 2011, by the Munich Radio Orchestra conducted by Ulf Schirmer. The work will be released in a new recording on the PentaTone Classics label in 2011.

Most of Getty’s compositions, which are published by Rork Music and distributed by Theodore Presser Company, involve the voice. His *Victorian Scenes* (1989) and *Annabel Lee* (1990) are choral settings -- with orchestra or, optionally, piano -- of poems by Tennyson, Housman, and (in the latter work) Poe. Both were premiered by the Los Angeles Master Chorale and Sinfonia at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion of the Los Angeles Music Center. The San Francisco Symphony and the Men of the San Francisco Symphony Chorus performed *Annabel Lee* in both 1998 and 2004, conducted on those

occasions by Michael Tilson Thomas. Getty's *Young America* (2001), a cycle of six movements for chorus and orchestra to texts by the composer and by Stephen Vincent Benét, was also performed and recorded in 2004 by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting. *Young America* was released (on PentaTone Classics) in 2005 on Getty's choral music CD, which also includes his *Victorian Scenes*, *Annabel Lee*, *Three Welsh Songs* (1998), and *Jerusalem* (a choral extract from *Plump Jack*).

Getty's cantata *Joan and the Bells* (1998), to the composer's own libretto about the execution of Joan of Arc, was released in 2003 in a critically acclaimed recording by the Russian National Orchestra, Eric Ericson Chamber Choir, and soloists Lisa Delan and Vladimir Chernov, with Alexander Vedernikov conducting (PentaTone Classics). *Joan and the Bells* was performed in 2004 in St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle (England) under the baton of Mikhail Pletnev. Since its premiere in 1998, *Joan and the Bells* has been performed extensively throughout the U. S., Europe and Russia.

Getty's non-vocal compositions include works for orchestra, chamber ensembles and for solo piano. His music has been performed in such prestigious venues as New York's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, London's Royal Festival Hall, Vienna's Brahmsaal, and Moscow's Tchaikovsky Hall, as well as at the Aspen and Spoleto Festivals. The Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow presented the premiere of Getty's *Ancestor Suite* in September, 2009, with Alexei Osetrov conducting the Russian National Orchestra. The ballet suite, choreographed by Vladimir Vasiliev, was performed by Members of the Bolshoi Ballet and received a standing ovation.

Mr. Getty has been widely applauded for his creative and philanthropic achievements and has received honorary doctorates from the University of Maryland, Pepperdine University, the University of California at San Francisco, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and the Mannes College of Music in New York. In 1986 he was honored as an Outstanding American Composer at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and, in 2003, was awarded the Gold Baton of the American Symphony Orchestra League.

Of his compositions, Getty has said: "My style is undoubtedly tonal, though with hints of atonality, such as any composer would likely use to suggest a degree of disorientation. But I'm strictly tonal in my approach. I represent a viewpoint that stands somewhat apart from the 20th century, which was in large measure a repudiation of the 19th, and a sock in the nose to sentimentality. Whatever it was that the great Victorian composers and poets were trying to achieve, that's what I'm trying to achieve."

About Academy of St. Martin in the Fields

Sir Neville Marriner says that the small ensemble he founded in 1958 "had no intention of giving any concerts or continuing forever." Happily, whatever the initial intention, 50 years on, the Academy is firmly established as one of the world's leading chamber orchestras and, according to *The Times* journalist Richard Morrison, "As you travel round the globe, the Academy's name has an aura possessed by no other British orchestra."

Formed from a group of leading London musicians and working without a conductor, the Academy gave its first performance in its namesake church on 13th November 1959. Its debut recording just two years later, had “...precision, care, consummate musicianship and more sense of style than all other chamber orchestras in Europe put together” (Denis Stevens).

Demand for the Academy, particularly in the recording studio, soon began to grow, as did the size of the orchestra and the repertoire it performed. Eventually Sir Neville was forced to put down his violin and take up the conductor’s baton, but the collegiate spirit and flexibility of the original small, conductorless ensemble remains an Academy hallmark. Today the Academy performs in combinations ranging from a chamber group to a symphony orchestra.

Known for its superlative performances and award-winning recordings, the Academy maintains a busy, high-profile international concert schedule, and alongside its performances with Sir Neville Marriner and Kenneth Sillito, collaborates with some of today’s most thrilling musicians, including Murray Perahia, Joshua Bell, Julia Fischer, Julian Rachlin, Janine Jansen and Anthony Marwood.

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For additional information, interview access, CDs and photos, please contact Nancy Shear Arts Services, Press Representative, at 212/496-9418, sheararts@nancyshear.com and www.nancyshear.com. Thank you.