

The American **John Corigliano** continues to add to one of the richest, most unusual, and most widely celebrated bodies of work any composer has created over the last forty years. Corigliano's scores, now numbering over one hundred, have won him the Pulitzer Prize, the Grawemeyer Award, three Grammy Awards, and an Academy Award ("Oscar") and have been performed and recorded by many of the most prominent orchestras, soloists, and chamber musicians in the world. Attentive listening to this music reveals an unconfined imagination, one that has taken traditional notions like "symphony" or "concerto" and redefined them in a uniquely transparent idiom forged as much from the post-war European **avant garde** as from his American forebears.

Perhaps one of the most important symphonists of his era, Corigliano has to date written three symphonies, each a landscape unto itself. Scored simultaneously for wind orchestra and a multitude of wind ensembles, Corigliano's ambitious, extravagant, and grandly barbarous *Symphony No. 3: Circus Maximus* (2004) was commissioned by the University of Texas at Austin Wind Ensemble, who presented it on their 2008 tour in Europe and gave its New York première in 2005 at Carnegie Hall. Naxos releases its stereo recording of *Circus Maximus* in January 2009, and has chosen the work as its début recording in its upcoming Blu-Ray format. *Symphony No. 2* (2001), a rethinking and expansion of the surreal and virtuosic *String Quartet* (1995), was introduced by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 2000 and earned him the 2001 Pulitzer Prize in Music. *Symphony No. 1* (1991), commissioned by Meet the Composer for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra when he was composer-in-residence, channeled Corigliano's personal grief over the loss of friends to the AIDS crisis into music of immense power, color, drama, and scope: performed worldwide by over 150 orchestras and twice recorded, this symphony earned him the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition.

Corigliano's theatricality, at once thoughtful and innate, has vivified his eight concerti: his most recent concerto is *Conjurer* (2008), for percussion and string orchestra. Commissioned by an international consortium of six orchestras for Evelyn Glennie, *Conjurer* was introduced by the Pittsburgh Symphony in the 2007-2008 season, when the orchestra designated him its Composer of the Year. For Joshua Bell, Corigliano composed *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra: The Red Violin* (2005.) Developed from the themes of the score to the François Girard's film of the same name, which won Corigliano the Oscar in 1999, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* was introduced by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, under Marin Alsop and recorded by them in 2007. *Vocalise* (2000), an unusual single-movement wordless concerto for voice, orchestra, and electronics, was commissioned for the millennium by the New York Philharmonic: Kurt Masur led Sylvia McNair in the work's première. Guitarist Sharon Isbin and the St. Paul Chamber Symphony under Hugh Wolff introduced *Troubadours* in 1994: flutist James Galway and the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Myung-Whun Chung gave the first *Pied Piper Fantasy* in 1982. Corigliano's kinetic and elegant *Piano Concerto* (1967) in which Victor Alessandro led Hilde Somer and the San Antonio Symphony was his first essay in the genre; but the composer credits his first two concerti for solo winds with changing both his art and his career. It was during the composition of the *Oboe Concerto* (1975; Humbert Lucarelli, oboe; Kazuyoshi Akiyama,

American Composers Orchestra) and, especially, the Clarinet Concerto (1977) that he first used the “architectural” method of composing which empowers him to forge a strikingly wide range of musical materials into arches of compelling aural logic: the première of the Clarinet Concerto, with Stanley Drucker and the New York Philharmonic under Leonard Bernstein, was by contemporary accounts the musical event of the year.

While he has composed three large-scale works for voice and orchestra, Corigliano’s lone opera to date is *The Ghosts of Versailles* (1991), which counterposes the fiction of Mozart and Beaumarchais with the Reign of Terror to create a richly multilayered meditation on the need for, and costs of, personal and social change. The Metropolitan Opera’s first commission in three decades, *The Ghosts of Versailles* succeeded brilliantly with both critics and audiences: the season it opened, Corigliano was elected to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and *Musical America* named him its first-ever “Composer of the Year.” After triumphs in Chicago, Houston, and Hannover, Germany, *The Ghosts of Versailles* returned to the American stage in a newly orchestrated smaller version in June 2009: first scheduled by the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the production includes stops in Vancouver and the Wexford Festival on a lengthening list of future engagements.

Corigliano’s two other major vocal works show a comparably lavish and powerful sense of vocal theatre. *Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan* (2000) boldly refashions texts by the iconic songwriter into a compelling monodrama, by turns savage, yearning, and hallucinatory; begun as a song cycle for piano and soprano in 2000, Corigliano rescored the piece for full orchestra and amplified soprano in 2004. Its Naxos recording, on which JoAnne Falletta leads the Buffalo Philharmonic, was released in September 2008 and garnered Grammys both for the work itself and for its leading interpreter, the soprano Hila Plitmann. *A Dylan Thomas Trilogy* (1960, rev. 1999) revisits and combines three of Corigliano’s earlier settings of this poet — *Fern Hill* (1960), *Poem in October* (1970), and *Poem on His Birthday* (1976) — with the late Author’s Prologue into a “memory play in the form of an oratorio.” Scored for boy soprano, tenor, baritone, chorus, and orchestra, *A Dylan Thomas Trilogy* was recorded in spring 2008 with Leonard Slatkin conducting Sir Thomas Allen and the Nashville Symphony and Chorus: it was released by Naxos in November 2008.

Corigliano is one of the few living composers to have a string quartet named for him: its young players banded together after an Indiana University performance of his *String Quartet* (1995,) which Corigliano wrote as a valedictory commission for the Cleveland Quartet and which won him that year’s Grammy Award for best contemporary composition. His first chamber score, his *Violin Sonata* (1964) is now a standard of the American violinist’s repertory, having been performed hundreds of times and recorded dozens since the Spoleto Festival awarded the piece first prize in its inaugural Chamber Music Competition: his newest is *Winging It: Improvisations for Solo Piano* (2008), was introduced by Ursula Oppens in February 2009. It joins in his keyboard catalogue the virtuoso showpieces *Etude Fantasy* (1976) and *Fantasia on an Ostinato* (1985) for solo piano, and the unique *Chiaroscuro* (1997), for two pianos tuned a quarter-tone apart. In August, the 2009 première in Sydney, Australia, of Corigliano’s new arrangement of *Mr. Tambourine Man*

(2009) for voice and Pierrot ensemble, which, like the version of Poem on His Birthday for tenor and eight instruments (1970), casts these orchestral pieces for chamber ensemble with no loss of force. Phantasmagoria (2000), revisits themes from The Ghosts of Versailles for cello and piano; Fancy on a Bach Air (1996) varies Bach for solo cello. His earliest songs form the cycle The Cloisters, (1965) written with William M. Hoffman, who also wrote the libretto to The Ghosts of Versailles: his latest are a trio of Cabaret Songs to the lyrics of opera composer-librettist Mark Adamo (End of the Line, Marvelous Invention, and Dodecaphonia (or, They Call Her Twelve-Tone Rose) introduced by William Bolcom and Joan Morris.

Corigliano serves on the composition faculty at the Juilliard School of Music and holds the position of Distinguished Professor of Music at Lehman College, City University of New York, which has established a scholarship in his name. Born in 1938 to John Corigliano Sr., a former concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic, and Rose Buzen, an accomplished pianist and educator, Corigliano has lived in New York City all his life: for the past fourteen years he and his partner, the composer-librettist Mark Adamo, have divided their time between Manhattan and Kent Cliffs, New York.