



## John Oliver, composer

*Combining familiar musical materials and techniques with new inventions, Oliver aims for a visceral yet intelligent music that engages the audience's perception of sound and culture.*

John Oliver's "wonderfully, creative music" (Fanfare) displays "a delicate yet often complex sense of beauty" (Musicworks). Winner of the **Classical Composition of the Year Award** at the 2013 Western Canadian Music Awards for his orchestral composition *Forging Utopia*, he has received high praise for the breadth of his creative output, from orchestral and chamber music, to intercultural works, electroacoustic music, and opera. Oliver's work with diverse cultures during the past decade lead the Georgia Straight to conclude that his composition *Eagle Flies to Mountain* "deserves to become an intercultural standard."

John Oliver believes music should resonate with the whole listener: mind, body, and soul. His fascination with cultural and musical icons is in evidence throughout his work, as is his love of sonic density, acquired early on in the electronic music studios of McGill University. Throughout the diversity of his work, one hears a passion for music that engages and challenges a wide audience of music lovers.

John Oliver came to international attention early in his career when he won six composition prizes for five compositions ranging from chamber to orchestral to electroacoustic music, including the **Luigi Russolo Audience Prize** (Italy) and the **Grand Prize** at the 8th CBC National Young Composers' Competition for his live electroacoustic work *El Reposo del Fuego*, which its dedicatee, Sergio Barroso, performed worldwide for many years. Commissions and performances flowed from the Canadian Opera Company, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Vancouver New Music, St. Lawrence String Quartet, Turning Point Ensemble, New Music Concerts, and the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec, among others. Oliver has been composer-in-residence at the Canadian Opera Company (1990-91), Vancouver Opera (1991-95), Music in the Morning (1993-95), Vancouver Chamber Music Festival (1995), the Windsor Canadian Music Festival (2007), and Vancouver's Sonic Boom Festival (2014). Two solo releases in 2012 celebrate the breadth of Oliver's music: *Time is Dust*, a DVD-audio disc of Oliver's immersive electroacoustic music, and the CD *Forging Utopia: Orchestral Music by John Oliver*.

Oliver also conducts and performs contemporary music. Oliver has performed as guitarist in solo, chamber and orchestral settings with the Little Giant Chinese Orchestra (Taiwan), the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Borealis String Quartet, Vancouver Chinese Music Ensemble, François Houle, Paul Dolden, Mei Han, Jeremy Berkman, Sergio Barroso, and others, and has appeared at music festivals and concert series of New Music Concerts, Vancouver New Music, Groundswell, Upstream, New Works Calgary, Music in the Morning and others. Oliver studied classical guitar with R. Jordan, G. Sakellariou & G. Biberian.

As an electronic musician, Oliver writes and performs music for live instruments with computer and audio processing, as well as works for "fixed media". In 2005, Oliver was honoured with a *Portrait Concert* of his electroacoustic music hosted by the *Réseau des art médiatiques* in Montreal during their **Akousma2** Festival, where Oliver performed live to 28 loudspeakers. Oliver currently works in duos with poets, singers, and instrumentalists, transforming their sound in real-time.

Oliver was educated at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the University of British Columbia and McGill University. His principal composition teachers were John Adams, Stephen Chatman, and Bruce Mather.

His music appears on CDs from Red Shift Records, empreintes DIGITALEs, earsay, Centrediscs, ZaDiscs, and others.

## JOHN OLIVER DISCOGRAPHY

- Visitations*, solo CD, musique concrète, independent, 2018  
*Unseen Rain*, on *EAST*, Redshift Records, 2018  
Oliver accompanies singer Will George on classical guitar  
*Birds of Paradise Lost* on *Israfel* Redshift Records, 2015  
*Flight 182 Meditations*, with Poet Renée Sarojini Saklikar, earsay, 2015  
*Eternity Gaze* on *PEP* Piano-Erhu Project, Volume 1, 2014  
*A Dream of Africa* on *Gathering* Red Chamber Ensemble, Za Discs 2014  
*Birds of Paradise Lost* on *Krishna's Flute* earsay, 2013  
*Eagle Flies to Mountain* on *Bamboo Shoots in Spring* BC Chinese Music Ensemble, 2013  
*Forging Utopia: Orchestral music by John Oliver* Centrediscs, 2012  
“four powerful orchestral works”  
– David Olds on Forging Utopia CD, The Wholenote  
*Time is Dust: Immersive Music by John Oliver* DVD-audio, earsay, 2012  
*Purple Lotus Bud* on *Outside the Wall: Mei Han* Za Discs N-12, 2005  
“Playful and stirring” – Mack Hagood, The Far East Audio Review.  
*Dust* on *François Houle: Double Entendre*, earsay, 2005  
*Various Works* on *STRUCTURAL DAMAGE: Live at the Lux* earsay 2001  
*Unseen Rain* performed by *Judith Forst/CBC Radio Orchestra*, CBC Records, 2000  
*scintilla* performed by Oliver on *Harangue 2*, earsay 1998  
*Icicle Blue Avalanche*, solo CD, earsay 1998  
“one of the most viscerally dramatic discs I've heard in quite a while ... huge slabs of extremely solid music.”  
-George Zahora, Splendidezine.com  
*Copper Flying* performed by Oliver on *Harangue 1*, earsay 1998  
“...a most effective and evocative piece.”  
-Robert Cummings, Computer Music Journal, summer 1999  
*Before the Freeze*, on *Before the Freeze* McGill Records 1991  
*Marimba Dismembered* on *Electro Clips*, Empreintes DIGITALes 1990  
*El Reposo del Fuego* on *Sergio Barroso* (SNE) 1989  
“...dramatic and emotional.” -Ottawa Citizen.  
Grand Prize winner, 8th CBC Radio Young Composers' Competition.

## PRESS QUOTES

- “one of the most promising orchestral composers of today.”  
– Gapplegate Classical-Modern Music Review
- “A tour de force of orchestral writing, this work is a delightful listening experience.”  
– Elaine Keillor, CAML Review of Forging Utopia  
“four powerful orchestral works”  
– David Olds on Forging Utopia CD, The Wholenote  
“...wonderfully creative music...”  
– Lynn Bayley, Fanfare  
...dramatic and emotional.  
– Ottawa Citizen
- Much food for thought, and for the ears.  
– Globe and Mail
- ...a delicate yet often complex sense of beauty  
– Musicworks
- ...ingenious...superb...delightful...marvelous...extraordinary...  
– Victoria Times-Colonist
- Guacamayo...a colorful, fascinating fantasia on Mayan legends.  
– The New Yorker
- Both intellectually stimulating and a great deal of fun, “Eagle Flies to Mountain” deserves to become an intercultural standard.  
– The Georgia Straight