

UCLA PHILHARMONIA

PRESS QUOTES

Musically and dramatically, Tod Machover's "Schoenberg in Hollywood" has Schoenbergian denseness along with new-world electronics. Machover is particularly effective in evoking both the trauma and the exhilaration in Schoenberg's spiritual progress as he reinvents himself after horrors of World War I, in which he fought, and again when confronted with new horrors of World War II...The commanding performance by the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music ensemble, conducted by Neal Stulberg, makes the high-low dichotomy irrelevant, leading us to a profound middle ground."

Mark Swed

Los Angeles Times

UCLA Philharmonia members and alumni

UCLA Nimoy Theater

May 2025

...In the evening, Neal Stulberg led UCLA Philharmonia in an intense, brilliant, riveting performance of Mahler's most agitated symphony, the 80-minute Sixth (known as "The Tragic").

Mark Swed

Los Angeles Times

UCLA Philharmonia

Walt Disney Concert Hall

March 2025

...Neal Stulberg, a compelling champion of music obscure and neglected, proved himself just as charismatic an interpreter of music far better known. With the UCLA Philharmonia attentively following his baton, he led a performance of Mahler Sixth Symphony that trusted the score to convey its bitterness and ghoulish humor without needing to resort to interpretive exaggerations. Stulberg's smartly-paced interpretation, free of put-on angst, neatly framed the music's blend of drama and classical restraint. He also allowed space for his wind soloists to blossom in their solo parts, with English hornist Adelle Rodkey and bassoonist Davis Lerner especially standing out.

Néstor Castiglione

bachtrack.com

UCLA Philharmonia

Walt Disney Concert Hall

The UCLA Philharmonia and the entire performance (of Ian Krouse's *Armenian Requiem*) is led by Neal Stulberg in a work that still has me reeling after listening to it three times...This work is definitely worth the effort. The sound is excellent: full and spacious with great stereo definition. Highly recommended to all choral buffs and people who need proof that there still are composers who can summon the heights and depths of humanity in their music.

American Record Guide

UCLA Philharmonia, Lark Mastersingers, Tziatzan Treble Choir

September/October 2019

Ian Krouse's powerful *Armenian Requiem*, commissioned by Vatsche Barsoumian's Lark Music Society, draws on traditional liturgical chant and poetry to make a powerful case for redemption through music...With the composer producing, conductor Neal Stulberg's command of the assembled forces – including many of LA's finest musicians, such as the UCLA Philharmonia's concertmaster Movses Pogossian – brings with it the assurance of authority.

Gramophone

UCLA Philharmonia, Lark Mastersingers, Tziatzan Treble Choir

June 2019

Ian Krouse's *Armenian Requiem* calls for very large forces and outstanding performers. The UCLA Philharmonia, based in Los Angeles, sounds like nothing short of a high ranking American professional orchestra. Equally incisive is the large chorus using the much acclaimed Lark Master Singers, and they too have a very demanding role to fulfill. Of the soloists I have to point to the admirable tenor, Yeghishe Manucharyan, in his exacting role, and Shoushik Barsoumian's soprano effortlessly soaring on high in the Fourth Interlude. For the conductor, Neal Stulberg, it must have been a very challenging assignment, which he commandingly dispatches. I do not want to exaggerate the place that this work could hold in the future, but it has deeply impressed me, the recording team, who have captured the very wide dynamic, deserving of an award.

David Denton

Denton's Review Corner

UCLA Philharmonia, Lark Mastersingers, Tziatzan Treble Choir

March 2019

What I found fascinating about the Hear Now orchestra program, a

first for the Hear Now festival and a promising new collaboration with UCLA Philharmonia, is just how radically different it was from another recent concert by another school orchestra, the Ensemble at CalArts, which centered on abstract Minimalists and Conceptualists of a variety specially adaptable to our artistic environment.

On the other hand, the four pieces (selected from 23 submissions) played in Schoenberg Hall by the excellent student orchestra, keenly and convincingly conducted by Neal Stulberg, were maximal. All had extra-musical content. Show business peeked through on occasion, as did an evocation of L.A.'s rich musical history.

William Kraft's *Settings from 'Pierrot Lunaire'* for soprano and orchestra was commissioned as part of the 1994 celebrations for the 75th anniversary of Arnold Schoenberg's revolutionary *Pierrot Lunaire*. This was the first public performance of his later full orchestral version.

Earlier performances I've heard of the original could sound on the gnarly side, but soprano Justine Aronson dramatically and gratifying juiced it up, while Stulberg paid the kind of loving attention to detail that revealed hidden instrumental treasures.

Mark Swed
Los Angeles Times
UCLA Philharmonia
April 2016

...this compact disc (*Eric Zeisl*) is invaluable. It will bring to a new generation an appreciation of music that needs to be far better known. ...conductor Neal Stulberg takes the young players of the UCLA Philharmonia through a riveting reading.

Bitterlich's "Dead Sinners" inspired Zeisl to write music that eerily suggests lost, hapless souls in torment, and Stulberg takes the UCLA Philharmonia impressively through its doom-laden measures...And in the final movement, the players do wonders in focusing on Zeisl's many evocations of spiritual anguish.

Throughout Zeisl's *Concerto Grosso*, soloist Antonio Lysy is in impressive form, the solo line beautifully shaped and confidently stated, his bowing a model of its kind. Certainly, both soloist and UCLA Philharmonia respond to Neal Stulberg's direction in a consistently meaningful way. Horns are especially fine.

Whether articulating the nimble, darting utterances that make of the central scherzo a rather wild and perhaps drunken dance – or articulating the variations that comprise the finale with complete

mastery - it's clear that all concerned are at the top of their game.

I hope this fine recording is heard by many. It certainly deserves to be.

Neville Cohn
Ozartsreview.com
(Australian online independent music review journal)
UCLA Philharmonia
October 2015

Ian Krouse's *Armenian Requiem*, which is cast in a very traditional idiom, is heartfelt, bold, richly expressive, but also makes virtuosic demands on its performers. He was fortunate to have at his disposal a group of performers like the UCLA Philharmonia and its conductor Neal Stulberg. Theirs is a formidable instrument, capable of not only stop-on-a-dime corporate finesse, but also solo playing of profound character. Every technical hurdle that the score dropped in their path they leaped over with aplomb.

Ted Ayala
Crescenta Valley Weekly
UCLA Philharmonia, Lark Mastersingers, Tzlatzan Treble Choir
April 2015

Much of the heavy lifting (in the Sono Luminus CD "Poems and Prayers" featuring music of Mohammed Fairouz) is done by university-level forces: the UCLA Philharmonia, Chorale, and University Chorus. They have clearly risen to the protean demands placed on them, performing with sturdy musicianship and considerable emotive power. Conductor Neal Stulberg has an impressively sure grasp of this challenging and multi-layered work, imposing discipline where it's needed, and unleashing chaos where it's demanded.

Joshua Rosenblum
Opera News
UCLA Philharmonia, UCLA Chorale, UCLA University Chorus
December 2014

The UCLA student forces do an admirable job in this difficult music navigated with authority by conductor Stulberg, while Sono Luminus has recorded it brilliantly.

Stephen Ritter

Audiophile Audition
UCLA Philharmonia, UCLA Chorale, UCLA University Chorus
August 2014

UCLA has a remarkable arts program that includes an orchestra and chorus. In December 2013, they presented a festival on their campus called "Listening to the Other: Mideast Musical Dialogues." This featured a performance by about 250 members of their chorus and orchestra, plus soloists, all conducted by UCLA Professor Neal Stulberg, and two of the works can be heard on this new disk. Music is by Arab-American composer Mohammed Fairouz. Born in 1985, Fairouz studied with Gunther Schuller and György Ligeti. The third of his four symphonies, called *Poems and Prayers*...surely is an impressive musical statement of considerable power, and the performance received here obviously is dedicated. The orchestra and chorus are superb, and the rich recording captures the big sound impressively. The disk opens with a clarinet concerto entitled *Tahrir* composed for David Krakauer. It is a wild, highly rhythmic piece with exciting dance interludes. It, too, is given a rousing performance. This is a most unusual recording, highly recommended.

Classical CD Review
UCLA Philharmonia, UCLA Chorale, UCLA University Chorus
July 2014

In Mohammed Fairouz' Symphony No. 3, subtitled "Poems and Prayers," (Sono Luminus CD+ Blu-ray Audio DSL- 92177), the massed choral forces of UCLA make a spectacular impression...the conducting is terrific here, the orchestral contributions superb. Some might raise their brows at collegiate forces coupled with such a highly charged subject matter. I did, and I stand corrected. This is a triumph, and arguably important on many levels.

Brian Wigman
Classical.net
UCLA Philharmonia, UCLA Chorale, UCLA University Chorus
July 2014

The CD 'Zeisl' (Yarlung Records 96820) is an all-around magnificent release...it's fitting that UCLA Philharmonia, for its first commercial venture, has chosen to present world premiere recordings of works by a composer whose legacy is bound up with the émigré community of Los Angeles artists. Performances and recording are fantastic. This calls for the most urgent recommendation possible..."

Jerry Dubin
Fanfare Magazine
UCLA Philharmonia
March/April 2014

Mohammed Fairouz's Symphony No. 3 (*Poems and Prayers*), which was conducted with fervent intensity by Neal Stulberg, begins with a massive choral outpouring of the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead. In the three movements that follow, Fairouz turns to Palestinian poets Mahmoud Darwish and Fadwa Tuqan and Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai, whom he separates by choral interludes from the Kaddish calling for peace "upon all of Israel" before saying Amen...The symphony, which was recorded for a Sono Luminus CD release, came as the culmination of a week-long series of concerts and lectures organized by the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music titled *Listening to the Other: Mideast Musical Dialogues*.

Mark Swed
Los Angeles Times
UCLA Philharmonia, UCLA Chorale, UCLA University Chorus
December 2013

Eric Zeisl, one of those composers who had to leave Nazi Austria and was able to settle in the United States, never received the recognition he deserved. This is the first CD reserved exclusively for Zeisl's orchestral compositions. It presents three very different orchestral works, each strong in its own way, ravishly played by UCLA Philharmonia.

Remy Franck
pizzicato.com
UCLA Philharmonia
October 2013

In Opera UCLA's production of Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* at Schoenberg Hall, designer Cameron Mock's stark scenes and lighting had three oversized abstract crosses leaning on their sides, suggesting the martyrdom to come. Peter Kazaras's austere staging, Neal Stulberg's well-coached orchestra, and Caitlin Talmage's mixed-periods costumes inspired solid performances from the student cast."

Rodney Punt
LA Opus
Opera UCLA and UCLA Philharmonia
March 2011

Music Director Neal Stulberg's conducting of the UCLA Philharmonia (in Jonathan Dove's *Flight*) kept the pace moving at quicksilver tempi, with exceptional precision and clarity on the part of the orchestra. The storm music shook the hall with wonder. The confidence level of the singers must have been high on Friday night, as the production's vocalism was uniformly secure and its theatrical timing impeccable in a tricky, mercurial score.

Rodney Punt
LAOpus.com
Opera UCLA and UCLA Philharmonia

I was tremendously impressed with UCLA Philharmonia--- amazed, really. The group plays with power, zest, panache, precision, buoyancy. The dynamic fluctuations were full- range;; hardly a loud/ soft situation, but representing all various subtleties in between. The way the music was couched, and then sprung, in the Beethoven 4 was just a thrill. I can't remember the last time I was so delighted by that symphony. ...As for the Zappa (*Dupree's Paradise*), it was just spiffy. Boffo. First-rate. That wonderfully goofy and weirdly textured piece was rendered with great spirit, cohesion, technical aplomb. I don't think it would be going out on any limb at all to say that Frank would have been very, very pleased.

Rip Rense
The Rip Post
UCLA Philharmonia
March 2006

All else pales before *The Marriage of Figaro*. Those kids at UCLA really got it right...Peter Kazaras brought the school's opera program into its own with an astonishing *Falstaff* a couple of years ago; *Figaro* was even better. The musical ensemble was a joy to watch (Kazaras' doing) and to hear (Neal Stulberg's razor- sharp baton) ...Two performances remain, this Friday and Sunday, crammed into UCLA's Schoenberg Hall. There are two casts, and Neal Stulberg assures me that the second ensemble is every bit as fine as the group I saw. Since he is, himself, responsible for the magic of this truly splendid event, I tend to believe him. Halos are in order, all around.

Alan Rich
soiveheard.com
Opera UCLA and UCLA Philharmonia
February 2009

Neal Stulberg conducted the UCLA Philharmonia with strong conviction, thus enabling a clean clarity of sound and rhythmically well- paced orchestration that was stylistically bona fide Mozart. His firm hand gave the young artists structure and guidance.

Carie J. Delmar
operaonline.us
Opera UCLA and UCLA Philharmonia
February 2009