

GEORGE CRUMB EDITION

GEORGE CRUMB

Voices from the Morning of the Earth
(American Songbook VI)

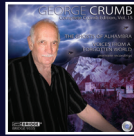
premiere recording

An Idyll for the Misbegotten

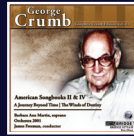
The Sleeper



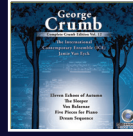
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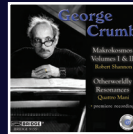
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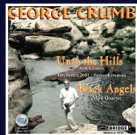
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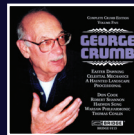
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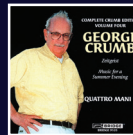
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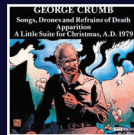
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Complete Crumb Edition, Vol. 17

Voices from the Morning of the Earth (2008)

(American Songbook VI) (49:41)

for two solo voices (male & female), amplified piano and percussion quartet

- 1 My Lord, What a Beautiful Morning! (6:56)
- 2 A Mountaineer's Sad Song (6:10)
- 3 Weep, All Ye Little Rains (4:36)
- 4 Dry Bones (Humoresque Macabre) (2:59)
- 5 Put My Little Shoes Away (from the Ozarks) (4:02)
- 6 Blowin' in the Wind (Bob Dylan) (5:45)
- 7 When the Saints Go Marching In (3:32)
- 8 Goodbye, Old Paint (4:40)
- 9 O Peter, Go Ring-a dem Bells (2:36)
- 10 Where Have All the Flowers Gone? (Pete Seeger) (8:18)

Ann Crumb, soprano • Randall Scarlata, baritone

Orchestra 2001

William Kerrigan, percussion • David Nelson, percussion

Susan Jones, percussion • Angela Zator Nelson, percussion

Marcantonio Barone, piano

James Freeman, conductor

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A frequent performer of new music, he has given world premieres of Ned Rorem, George Crumb, Richard Danielpour, Christopher Theofanidis, Thea Musgrave, Mohammed Fairouz, Daron Hagen, Samuel Adler, and Paul Moravec. He has received many awards and honors, such as Young Concert Artists, *Das Schubert Lied*, Joy in Singing, The Naumburg Competition, The International Brahms Competition, and the Alice Tully Vocal Arts Debut Recital Award. Mr. Scarlata also received a Fulbright Grant to study in Vienna, Austria. He currently serves on the faculty of SUNY Stony Brook and at West Chester University.

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David Starobin (*An Idyll for the Misbegotten; The Sleeper*)

Engineers: Adam Abeshouse (*Voices from the Morning of the Earth*)

Michael Grace (*An Idyll for the Misbegotten*); Doron Schächter (*The Sleeper*)

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Executive producers: Becky and David Starobin

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Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA

An Idyll for the Misbegotten was recorded November 18, 2002

California State University, Chico

The Sleeper was recorded July 28, 2013; Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA

The Music of George Crumb is published by C.F. Peters Corp. (BMI)

11 **An Idyll for the Misbegotten** (1986) (11:43)

(Images III) for amplified flute and percussion

Rachel Rudich, flute

David Colson • Paul Herrick • A.J. Matthews, percussion

12 **The Sleeper** (1984) (4:50)

for mezzo-soprano & amplified piano

Ann Crumb, soprano

Marcantonio Barone, piano



Voices From The Morning Of The Earth: A Cycle of American Songs from North and South, East and West (2008) is the sixth of seven *American Songbooks* that occupied George Crumb for most of the millennium's opening decade. The complete set is:

“Dedicated to my wife Elizabeth who taught me many beautiful old songs and to my daughter Ann who inspired the *American Songbook* cycles.”

The familiar melodies appear mostly unaltered “to stay out of the way of those beautiful tunes.” But the settings are authentic Crumb, conjuring a sonic universe from an amplified concert grand piano and more than 100 percussion instruments from every inhabited continent on the globe. (“... all the many musics of the world are coming together as one.... [The] instruments or the musics of other cultures are a possible source for me as a composer,” Crumb wrote in 1980.)

One consequence of this dichotomy is that the music can accommodate different expressive viewpoints simultaneously. “I guess my music always has this kind of dual sense about it... There is sometimes kind of a folk-like quality, and yet underneath there is an underlying irony.... I find that the music I love most always seems to have both sides to it.”

Associate in Performance in the Department of Music and Dance at Swarthmore College, where he teaches keyboard musicianship, piano, and chamber music. His most recent recording on Bridge is a highly acclaimed four-disc set of Beethoven's sonatas for violin and piano with violinist Barbara Govatos.



Known for her performances of contemporary repertoire, **Rachel Rudich** has premiered works by dozens of prize-winning composers, and has appeared with most contemporary music ensembles in the US. Ms. Rudich has received recording grants from the NEA, the Alice M. Ditson Fund, and the Aaron Copland Fund for Music and she can be heard on over a dozen labels in over 25 CDs. She is currently a faculty member at Pomona College, and Professor of Flute at California Institute of the Arts.



Hailed for his warm, expressive sound and winning way with the audience, baritone **Randall Scarlata** enjoys an unusually diverse career. He has appeared as soloist with international orchestras, at international music festivals, and on concert stages the world over. He is particularly well known as a recitalist, and collaborates with artists such as Gilbert Kalish, Jeremy Denk, Jonathan Biss, Benjamin Hochman, Inon Barnatan, and Laura Ward.



James Freeman, artistic director and conductor, founded Orchestra 2001 in 1988. Trained at Harvard University, Tanglewood, and Vienna's Academy for Music, he counts among his principal mentors pianist Artur Balsam and his father, double bassist Henry Freeman. Mr. Freeman's many honors include two Fulbright Fellowships, grants from NEA and NEH, the German Government, Harvard University's Paine Traveling Fellowship, and the city of Philadelphia's Liberty Bell Award.



Marcantonio Barone, an American pianist of mixed Italian and German ancestry, studied with Eleanor Sokoloff at the Curtis Institute of Music and with Leon Fleisher at the Peabody Conservatory of Music. Among his other teachers were Susan Starr and Leonard Shure. Mr. Barone has performed for the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Wigmore Hall in London, and the Large Hall of the St. Petersburg Filarmoniya, and with orchestras including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the City of

Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and the Moscow Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Barone has had a life-long association with the Bryn Mawr Conservatory of Music, a private music school founded in 1934 by his father, the conductor Joseph Barone, and directed since 1988 by his mother, soprano Kathryn Blum Barone. He is also an

Crumb's title "From the Morning of the Earth" evokes, for him, an unspoiled world, a sense of nostalgia. It's also his personal reaction to hearing something pristine and unexpected: "That sounds like it came *from the morning of the earth!*" His musical touchstones throughout the Songbooks are the various American cultures (Appalachian in Songbook I, native American in V and VII, cowboys in VI, and African-American in six of the seven Songbooks); the diverse folk/classical fusions of Mahler, Debussy, Ives and Bartók; the refined *klangfarben* (literally "sound colors") of Webern; and the inventive American spirit of John Cage. His emotional touchstones are irony, fantasy, spirituality and a good dose of wit and humor.

My Lord, What a Beautiful Morning! is subtitled "Invocation to the Sun ('the drums of daybreak')". The drums and piano awaken, with snare strips rattling on top of the bass drum and a five-note chordal melody in the piano that peaks on a higher note with each repetition. (The initial occurrence traces a melodic figure that recurs throughout all seven Songbooks.) The voice enters with Crumb's own melody: for the first time in the Songbooks he replaces the original, which he found insufficiently celebratory to open the cycle.

The text has apocalyptic overtones, but the apocalypse brings the Messiah, which for the slaves meant freedom and triumph over evil. We hear fanfares in the piano and metallic percussion. Later, birdcalls precede the repetition of the opening verse, but now with a very different accompaniment. One could

ask: What is this sun rising over? Interestingly, this is the only morning-related song in *Voices From The Morning Of The Earth*.

A Mountaineer's Sad Song bears the indication “Dark, sunless; with brooding melancholy.” The original version of this song is titled “East Virginia”; but Crumb, West Virginia-born, “re-replaces” the opening line to honor his birthplace, a recurring theme in his music.

The accompaniment is mostly metallic, except for the distant-thunder sound of the spring drum and the low marimba sounding softly throughout the song. There are also wind sounds and jugs “popped” with the open palm, making a marimba-like sound.

Weep, All Ye Little Rains bemoans the fate of the lonely cowboys on the trail who often lost their sweethearts back home. Also known as *The Colorado Trail*, this tune was recommended to Crumb by his daughter Ann.

The sharp sounds of the Appalachian Hammered Dulcimer and plucked piano strings are set against the longer reverberations of tubular bells, glockenspiel and vibraphones. All the instrumental and vocal melodies are pentatonic (sounding like they're played exclusively on the piano's “black notes”), but appear in various keys (i.e., scales – not piano keys), giving the music a sense of similarity and independence simultaneously. The female voice



Dazzling singer/actress **Ann Crumb** has performed classical and jazz concerts throughout the USA and Europe, including recent appearances at the Salzburg Festival, Nederlandse Programma Stichting (Holland), and Lirico Sinfonica Petruzzelli (Italy). Ann has originated numerous leading roles on Broadway and London's West End, starring in *Aspects of Love*, *The Goodbye Girl*, *Nine*, *Les Miserables*, *Chess*, and *Anna Karenina*, for which she received a Tony nomination. Ann is the recipient of three Barrymore nominations

(winning for her performance in *Bed and Sofa* at The Wilma Theater), a Broadway National Theater nomination, an Ovation Award, three Broadway World nominations and an Arts Recognition Award. Recorded highlights include Ann's first jazz album, *A Broadway Diva Swings*, and *Three Early Songs* for the Grammy-winning George Crumb 70th Birthday Album. Ann can be heard on numerous cast albums as well as the premiere recordings of her father, George Crumb's *Unto the Hills*, *The River of Life*, and *Sun and Shadow/Voices from the Heartland* (Bridge). For more information: anncrumb.com

Orchestra 2001 is dedicated to performing and promoting the music of the 20th and 21st centuries, premiering new works, providing a major focus for the best new music of our time, introducing unknown older works, and reaching out to regional and international audiences. Currently in its 27th season, O2001 has brought new American music to countless new audiences throughout the United States, Denmark, England, Slovenia, Russia, Cuba, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Qatar, as well as their concerts in Philadelphia and at Swarthmore College.



sings the familiar “major-key” version of the pentatonic melody, whereas – in the duetted choruses – the male voice introduces a flatted “minor-key” note, turning the pentatonic figure into the melodic motive introduced in the opening song and appearing throughout the cycle.

In the second chorus, crotales and tubular bells accompany the melody in augmentation (crotales twice as slow, bells four times as slow) while the glockenspiel and vibraphone play the “major” pentatonic figure. At the end, the two voices trade off the “flattened” form in indistinct keys.

Dry Bones is subtitled “Humoresque Macabre.” Also known as “Dem Bones,” this is the Biblical (Ezekiel 37) parable of the Lord’s ability to raise the dead. The song was written by James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) with lyrics by his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson. Together they were among the brightest lights of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s.

As with other lively songs throughout the Songbooks, Crumb inserts additional beats to further syncopate the tune. A countermelody in the piano, played with a ruler laid on the strings, adds a distinctive buzz to the rasps, clicks and other dry sounds, making the “flattened pentatonic” figure sound bluesy. The voices alternate major and minor versions of this figure woven into the original tune.



Elizabeth & George Crumb
July, 1948

Put My Little Shoes Away is subtitled “from the Ozarks.” Although Crumb’s sources were a collection of Ozark folksongs and his wife Elizabeth’s memories of *her* mother singing it, the song was actually written to feed a post-Civil War craze for music with “a commercial bathos so flagrant as to bring a blush to the cheek of a P.T.Barnum.”¹ It became so popular throughout the growing nation that it was assumed to be a folk song, ultimately appearing in folk song anthologies attributed to Illinois and Alabama as well as the Ozarks.

Crumb didn’t like the original melody, so again we hear an authentic-sounding Crumb tune. The setting opens with soft cymbal strokes “like a breath.” The female voice is “like a little girl’s,” but the sentimental verse is transformed with a haunting accompaniment, pentatonic like the melody but with chromatic flecks. The piano’s gentle rocking opening contains a wispy suggestion of the *Dies Irae*; underneath the voice’s entry, a figure in major-seconds recalls “Jumbo’s Lullaby” from Debussy’s *Children’s Corner Suite*. In the second verse an African Thumb Piano follows the voice in close

1. Richard Jackson, of the Americana Collection at the New York Public Library, in the booklet notes to the CD *Angels’ Visits and Other Vocal Gems of Victorian America*, World 80220-2

The Sleeper (1984)

Crumb followed his masterful 1979 Whitman song cycle *Apparition* with another work for Jan DeGaetani and Gilbert Kalish, his brief song *The Sleeper* with words by Edgar Allan Poe. As he often does, the composer here extracts a few lines from a much longer poem. Crumb’s version tempers the poet’s tendency toward excessive rhyming, and he transforms Poe’s lugubrious meditation on a dead beloved (“Soft may the worms about her creep!”) into a haunting ode to a woman slumbering beneath the “mystic moon.”

After the piano harmonics quietly toll midnight, the singer paints the scene in muted, oracular tones. In the middle section, piano and voice echo one another in sinuous, chromatic phrases, gradually descending to the low register. The singer’s lines at the opening of the third section (“The lady sleeps!”) twice incorporate a falling chain of thirds, thus mirroring the rising thirds in the first section (“in the month of June”). In the closing section, as the voice gradually fades, the piano gently strikes the midnight bell five times.

—Steven Bruns



An Idyll for the Misbegotten (Images III) (1986)

I feel that “misbegotten” well describes the fateful and melancholy predicament of the species *homo sapiens* at the present moment in time. Mankind has become ever more “illegitimate” in the natural world of the plants and animals. The ancient sense of brotherhood with all life-forms (so poignantly expressed in the poetry of St. Francis of Assisi) has gradually and relentlessly eroded, and consequently we find ourselves monarchs of a dying world. We share the fervent hope that humankind will embrace anew nature’s “moral imperative.”

My little *Idyll* was inspired by these thoughts. Flute and drum are, to me (perhaps by association with ancient ethnic musics), those instruments which most powerfully evoke the voice of nature. I have suggested that ideally (even if impractically) my *Idyll* should be “heard from afar, over a lake, on a moonlit evening in August.”

An Idyll for the Misbegotten evokes the haunting theme of Claude Debussy’s *Syrinx* (for solo flute, 1912). There is also a short quotation from the eighth-century Chinese poet Ssu-K’ung Shu:

The moon goes down. There are shivering
birds and withering grasses.

—George Crumb

canon. The piano fragments the melody, and the percussion weakens: we hear ghostly vibraphone glissandi with a wire brush, another vibraphone played with yarn sticks, a tam-tam scraped with a coin, followed by a light tremolo on the upper dome of a cymbal. As the end approaches, however, the music doesn’t slow down; it just stops.

Blowin’ in the Wind was written by Bob Dylan in 1962. “[I] just put words to an old spiritual.... That’s the folk tradition. You use what’s been handed down.”² The spiritual was “No More Auction Block For Me,” but Dylan actually took only its first line’s melody; the rest of the tune, including the refrain, is Dylan’s. Crumb finds it especially compelling in its restricted *ambitus* (vocal range) and the hypnotic effect of its repetitions.

The accompaniment opens with the Chinese wind gong and Caribbean steel drums, using only notes from the pentatonic opening of the melody (minus its tonic resolution). When “the cannonballs fly,” the *diabolus in musica* (tritone-related) key enters on the tubular bells. A splintering outburst (“Intrusive, interruptive!”) is followed by an eerie quotation of Charles Ives’ *The Unanswered Question*. The strophic structure is maintained for the remaining verses, with transpositions and subtle, telling contributions from the piano.

2. Rolling Stone, *The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time (#14)* (April 7, 2011)

When the Saints Go Marching In is associated with New Orleans (recently struck by Hurricane Katrina when this was written), where it is played at funerals on the return march from the cemetery, celebrating the deceased's entry into heaven. But as with "My Lord, What a Beautiful Morning," the complete text contains apocalyptic imagery, including trumpets and solar and lunar eclipses. Crumb's processional whips up a frenzy as it nears, hearkening back to "Gimme That Old Time Religion" in *Songbook IV*; whoops and hollers of "Glory, Glory" and "Hallelujah!" echo Crumb's mordant setting of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," also in *Songbook IV*.

Crumb adds a beat to make the saints march in five. He also expands the original call-and-response into a canon. Percussion instruments strike other instruments: guiros, claves and tambourine are scraped and hit as they are held against the piano crossbars and the bass drum, and (later) the bass strings of the piano, raising a fearful racket. Eventually the tumult subsides into a "gently ironic" chorus of whistlers.

Goodbye, Old Paint is the cycle's second cowboy song. Unlike most folk tunes, this one includes a loping instrumental introduction. Crumb puts the introductory figure in B major whenever it appears, but keeps the vocal line in B-flat. Piano strings are strummed ("quasi zither") with a large rubber eraser.

O Peter, Go Ring-a dem Bells is another tune with extra beats, resulting in (mostly) alternating measures of 4 and 5. "Dry" bell sounds (damped vibes, xylophone, Indian ankle bells, sleigh bells, and later Caribbean steel drum) alternate with pealing bell sounds (tubular bells, Tibetan prayer bell, and ice bells which are like small cymbals).

Where Have All the Flowers Gone? ends this cycle as Crumb ends all the others, with "an especially powerful sentiment, a very special lyric." This one was written in the 1950s by Pete Seeger (verses 1-3) and Joe Hickerson (verses 4-5 and the idea to reprise the first verse).

Crumb's setting opens with the familiar flattened pentatonic motto. Its "major" version is contained within Seeger's opening line and, interestingly, in Dylan's, which uses exactly the same pitches. The singers alternate the melody but in opposing keys a tritone apart. At "when will they ever learn?"³, wind chimes suggest that this answer too might be "blowin' in the wind." Even the piano becomes a giant wind chime between verses. Subsequent verses are compressed by omitting line repetitions. The final verse is sung in close canon, "serene, transfigured," but still a troubled tritone apart. The final question fades into whispers, then silence. © 2008, 2015 by Eric J. Bruskin

3. According to Hickerson, Seeger would have preferred the refrain for the soldier's verse to be "When will we ever learn."