



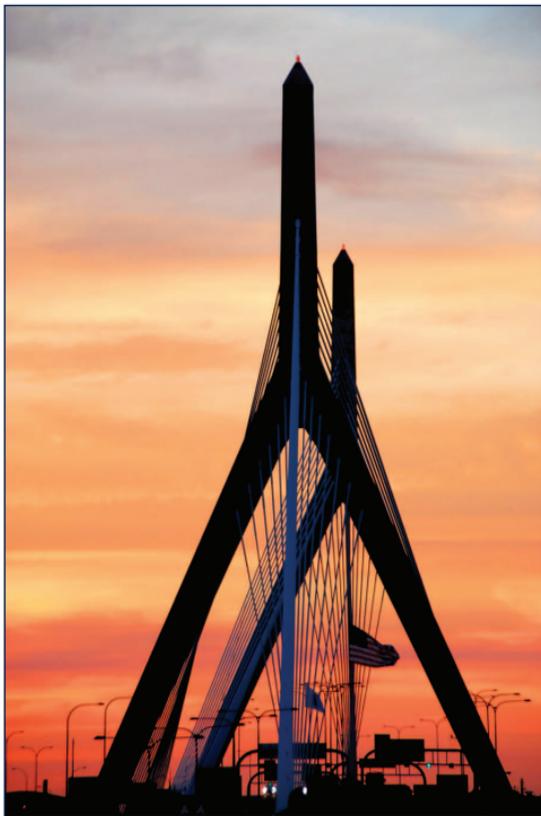
# SCOTT WHEELER

## The Construction of Boston

Hite • Blandy  
DeLoach • River  
Nomura • Anker  
Swistro • Nafziger

Chorus and  
Orchestra of  
The Boston Cecilia

Donald Teeters,  
conductor



## **Scott Wheeler (b. 1952)**

### **The Construction of Boston**

- 1 Overture 4:17
- 2 Prologue: I am the Opera, here to explain myself (Opera) 5:47
- 3 Hello, Sam (Henry, Sam) 3:49
- 4 You speak of one men are not fit to know (The Spirit of Boston) 1:25
- 5 Sea Interlude I 0:49
- 6 Primeval Pastoral – How strange! What freshness steals across my brow (Chorus) 2:32
- 7 Song: How happy I am now, fat as a cow (Beacon Hill) – The light summer day (Chorus) 0:56
- 8 Hail Populator (Chorus, Rauschenberg) 1:19
- 9 Dark afternoons in Autumn (Chorus) 1:18
- 10 I'd almost swear that I can hear the weather (Narrator, Storm, Noon, Dawn, Rauschenberg, Chorus, Moonlight) 3:53
- 11 And now I have to stock the city up with people (Rauschenberg, Chorus) 2:05
- 12 Veni Tinguely Spiritus: Tinguely, Spirit of the Air (Chorus) – I am arrived! (Tinguely) 1:20
- 13 Ah, what a lovely layout you have here! (Tinguely, Chorus) 1:28
- 14 But now we need more space (Tinguely) 2:19
- 15 Boston, all that I can say is, it's grand to be a bay! (Back Bay) – Now you're the town (Chorus) 3:03
- 16 Bay Bay, you're lucky (Tinguely) – Oh hear, how that noise (Chorus) 0:59
- 17 Sea Interlude II 0:50
- 18 Fairest Tinguely, we the Wharfs (Wharf Chorus, Tinguely, Water Chorus) 2:37
- 19 See how the smiling city take its shape (Chorus, Rauschenberg, Niki) 2:08
- 20 What this town needs is beauty (Niki, Tinguely) 2:11
- 21 Men say she has a magic pistol (Chorus, Niki) 1:45
- 22 I bring beauty and detail (Niki) 2:08
- 23 She'll shoot up the city (Chorus) 0:47
- 24 And now, at last, my time is past (Niki) 1:39
- 25 We who feel our new creation (Chorus, Niki) 3:17
- 26 Niki, all this city's Buildings (Tinguely, Rauschenberg, Niki) 1:09
- 27 Now, citizens, sunset cover you (Niki, Tinguely, Rauschenberg) 3:19

*The Construction of Boston*, like many operas and other works of musical theater, has changed its form several times. It began life in 1962, when the poet Kenneth Koch (1925-2002) wrote the text, in three inspired days, as a performance piece for the artists Robert Rauschenberg, Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint-Phalle. This first version of *The Construction of Boston* received a single sold-out performance at the Maidman Theater on 42nd St. in New York.

My musical setting of the play had its première in January 1989, in a concert performance by the John Oliver Chorale. In January and February of 1990, the Charlestown Working Theater produced a staged version, in a much reduced version for eleven singers and two players, produced and directed by Ron Jenkins. For that production, I persuaded Kenneth to add some explanatory text: a Prologue, which begins with the lines “I am the Opera, here to explain myself. / Operas don’t usually do this, but it seemed a good idea.”

In February 2002, Boston Conservatory produced the work for the first time with both full staging and orchestra – that is, as an opera, in a production directed by Patricia Weinmann. For this production, I restored most of the original overture and orchestrated the sung prologue – I consider this the final version of the piece, and that is the version heard in this live recorded performance by Boston Cecilia under conductor Donald Teeters.

*The Construction of Boston* has elements of comic opera, masque and dramatic cantata. Koch referred to it as “a postmodern baroque opera”. I dedicated the work to my teacher Virgil Thomson; it takes some of its aesthetic

from Thomson’s Gertrude Stein operas *Four Saints in Three Acts* and *The Mother of Us All*. As in the Thomson-Stein works, aspects of nonsense and opacity of meaning are no obstacle to the most serious artistic intent. In *Construction*, there is also a political (or at least civic) message.

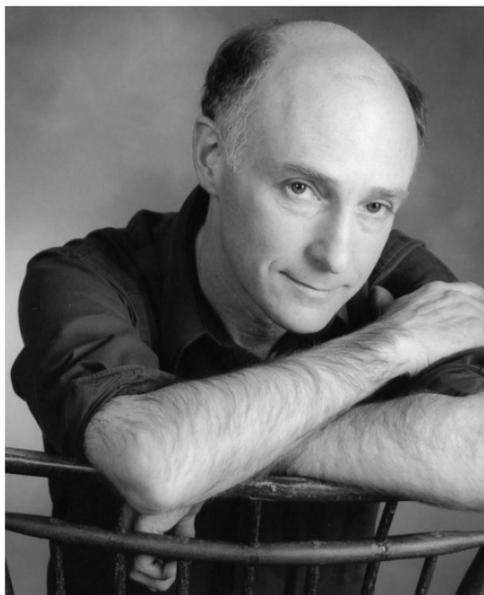
The music of *The Construction of Boston* is eclectic in the manner of many stage works. Certain bright triadic choral moments are virtually quotations from Thomson’s *Four Saints in Three Acts*. The entrance of Rauschenberg is announced with Handelian choral counterpoint; that of Tinguely with a reference to chant (marked “Veni Tinguely Spiritus” in the score). The choral responses frequently recall Gilbert and Sullivan. The orchestral music for the building of the city refers to Brecht and Weill’s imaginary city of Mahagonny. Smaller rôles are characterized by bits of marches, waltzes, or a hint of barbershop quartet. These varied references, inspired by the vivid language and imagery of Koch’s verse, culminate in a choral lullaby to the city whose tenderness, while perhaps unexpected, is not ironic.

*The Construction of Boston* was recorded live at New England Conservatory’s Jordan Hall on 1st April, 2007. This CD was produced by Adam Abeshouse. Partial funding was provided by an Emerson College Faculty Advancement Grant. A full list of funders is available at [www.scottwheeler.org](http://www.scottwheeler.org) or [www.bostoncecilia.org](http://www.bostoncecilia.org)

**Scott Wheeler**

## Scott Wheeler

Scott Wheeler, Boston Cecilia Composer-in-Residence, was born in Washington DC in 1952. He studied at Amherst College, New England Conservatory and Brandeis University, where his principal teachers were Lewis Spratlan and Arthur Berger. He pursued further study at the Tanglewood Music Center with Olivier Messiaen, the Dartington School with Peter Maxwell Davies, and privately with Virgil Thomson. He teaches at Emerson College in Boston, where he co-directs the BFA program in musical theatre. In 1975 he was a founding member of the new-music ensemble Dinosaur Annex, which he continues to direct and conduct. Scott Wheeler's first full-length opera, *Democracy: An American Comedy*, on a libretto of Romulus Linney, was commissioned by the Washington National Opera and was given its premiere by them in January 2005. Other commissions and performances include the orchestras of Minnesota, Houston, Toledo and Indianapolis, as well as New York City Opera and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. In January 2007, Kent Nagano and Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin commissioned a new chamber symphony called *City of Shadows*, which was featured on a portrait concert of the music of Scott Wheeler at the Kammermusiksaal of the Berlin Philharmonie.



*Photo of Scott Wheeler  
by Susan Wilson*

## **Donald Teeters**

Conductor Donald Teeters has been music director of The Boston Cecilia since 1968. In recent years he has led the Cecilia chorus and period instrument orchestras in a nearly complete cycle of Handel's large-scale English language works. He and the chorus are also enthusiastic performers of recent music, especially the works of New England composers and of twentieth century works from the English repertoire.

## **William Hite**

Tenor William Hite (Jean Tinguely and the prologue rôle of The Opera) is in demand as a singer of *Lieder*, acclaimed in the *Boston Globe* as a breathtaking communicator. He has appeared in opera, from Monteverdi onwards, and in concert.

## **Charles Blandy**

Charles Blandy, tenor, (Henry, Beacon Hill, Noon) was praised by *Opera News* and the *Boston Globe* for his performance in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He appeared in the world première of Golijov's *Ainadamar* at Tanglewood.

## **Marcus DeLoach**

Baritone Marcus DeLoach (Sam, The Storm), Boston born and bred, is currently on the roster of soloists at New York City Opera. *The New York Times* described him as "a fine baritone who puts words across with clarity and naturalness".

## **Krista River**

Mezzo-soprano Krista River (The Spirit of Boston, Narrator) who began her career as a cellist was praised by the *New York Times* as possessing a "shimmering voice ... with the virtuosity of a violinist and the expressivity of an actress".

## **Christòphen Nomura**

Baritone Christòphen Nomura (Robert Rauschenberg), was Boston-trained and now performs extensively in this country and abroad in a wide range of repertoire and periods, described in the *Wall Street Journal* as "one of classical music's rising stars".

## **Elizabeth Anker**

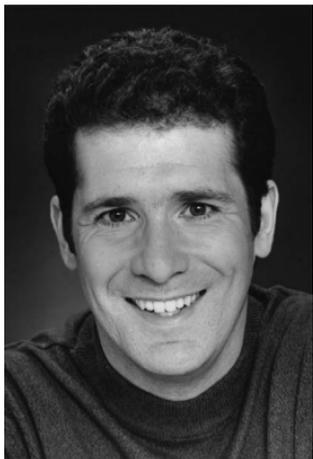
Contralto Elizabeth Anker (Dawn, Back Bay) has a wide-ranging repertoire including a number of works that have been especially written for her. She is a sought-after teacher of voice who is also active as a performer in oratorio, recital, chamber music, folk and pop.

## **Sharla Nafziger**

Sharla Nafziger, soprano, (Niki de St Phalle) is a New York-based singer on the roster at New York City Opera, who has performed with the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa at Tanglewood. She is skilled in music old, recent, and new.

## **The Boston Cecilia**

The Boston Cecilia was founded in 1876 by conductor B. J. Lang, a student of Liszt, and numbers among its former conductors Arthur Fiedler, who led the group throughout the 1930s and early 40s.



*Above, from left to right:*  
**William Hite**  
*(Lynn McCann);*  
**Sharla Nafziger**  
*(Lisa Meloni Ragusa);*  
**Christopher Nomura**  
*(Harry Heleotis).*  
*Left:*  
**Donald Teeters**  
*(Martin Johnson)*

Playing  
Time:  
**59:07**

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NAXOS

# The Construction of Boston

Opera in One Act

Music by Scott Wheeler (b. 1952)

Words by Kenneth Koch (1925–2002)

The Opera / Jean Tinguely . . . . . William Hite, tenor  
Henry / Beacon Hill / Noon . . . . . Charles Blandy, tenor  
Sam / The Storm . . . . . Marcus DeLoach, baritone  
The Spirit of Boston /  
Narrator . . . . . Krista River, mezzo-soprano  
Robert Rauschenberg . . . . . Christòpheren Nomura, baritone  
Dawn / Back Bay . . . . . Elizabeth Anker, contralto  
Moonlight . . . . . Christine Swistro, soprano  
Niki de St Phalle . . . . . Sharla Nafziger, soprano

Chorus & Orchestra of The Boston Cecilia  
Donald Teeters, Conductor

*Full track details can be found on page 2 of the booklet.*

*The libretto may be accessed at  
[www.naxos.com/libretti/669018.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/669018.htm)*

Recorded at Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory,  
Boston, USA, 1 April 2007 • Publisher: Scott Wheeler Music  
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engineer: Andy Ryder • Booklet notes: Scott Wheeler  
Cover image: Zakim Bridge, Boston (Elena Elisseeva /  
Dreamstime.com) • American flag, folk artist, 1880s



AMERICAN OPERA CLASSICS

The Boston Cecilia's concert performance of Scott Wheeler's one-act opera on 1st April, 2007, in New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, was hailed with a *Boston Globe* headline: "CONSTRUCTION OF BOSTON is a love note to the city". Drawing on a cast of brilliant, young, mostly Boston-based vocal artists, a chorus of established reputation in music old and new, and an outstanding orchestra comprised of first rank professional instrumentalists, Wheeler's witty, first foray into the operatic genre got a brilliant reading under the baton of veteran conductor Donald Teeters: "Teeters led everything with remarkable sensitivity to both text and architecture" (*Boston Phoenix*).

[www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)



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