

Theatrepieces (1986)

Thomas Pasatieri

“For many years, I refused all commissions to write works that did not include the human voice. But when I was approached in the spring of 1986 by the Verdehr Trio to compose an opera for three instruments, I accepted immediately. Three elements influenced my decision: my friendship with Walter Verdehr since our student days at Juilliard, my recent concentration on orchestral and chamber music as a result of my work in film, and the fascination of creating a cast of characters who sing with words. To my surprise, these characters began defining themselves more and more ‘instrumentally’ as the work progressed.

Theatrepieces is in three movements with virtuoso requirements for each player as the textures shift between ensemble and soloist in the spotlight. The second movement employs the characteristics of the *bel canto* approach in regard to ornamentation of a melodic line. In the last movement the troupe dances and mimes their way through a series of contrasting emotions and leave the stage when their story is over. As with my operas and songs, this work is about drama.”

—Thomas Pasatieri

The world premiere of *Theatrepieces* was on November 22, 1987 at Harris Auditorium, Memphis State University (later the University of Memphis), Memphis, Tennessee.

Thomas Pasatieri (born 1945, New York City, New York) began composing at age ten and, as a teenager, studied with Nadia Boulanger. He entered the Juilliard School as a scholarship student at age sixteen and studied with Vittorio Giannini and Vincent Persichetti. He received the first doctorate ever given by Juilliard. At age nineteen, Pasatieri studied with Darius Milhaud at the Aspen Music Festival where his chamber opera *The Women* won the Aspen Festival Prize. Since then, he has become a world-renowned composer, conductor, and pianist.

Pasatieri has penned over five hundred works, many for film and theater. He has written twenty-four operas, the best known of which is *The Seagull*, and he was invited to perform selections from it at the Carter White House. With a concern with the operatic education of children he wrote *The Goose Girl*, a thirty-five minute opera for young audiences for which he wrote his own libretto. Pasatieri’s operas have been produced at the major opera houses in the United States and Europe, and have been premiered by such high-profile singers as Evelyn Lear, Frederica von Stade, James Morris, and Jennie Tourel. With a preference for composing music for voice, Pasatieri has composed four hundred songs.

Film orchestrations can be heard in *Billy Bathgate*, *Road to Perdition*, *American Beauty*, *The Little Mermaid*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Legends of the Fall*, *Angels in America*, and *Scent of a Woman*. His work in television includes orchestrating the CBS thirteen-hour mini-series, *Space*, and composing the score for *The Trial of Mary Lincoln* which won an Emmy award. A multi-media work, *Black Widow*, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Additional compositions include orchestral works, chamber music, and instrumental solos.

Pasatieri has received numerous honors including the Richard Rodgers Scholarship, the Marion Freschl Prize, and the Irving Berlin Fellowship. He has been on the cover of *U.S. New & World Report*, *Musical America*, and *Opera News* and featured in *People*, *After Dark*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *The New York Times* Sunday magazine. He is a frequent guest on television and radio talk shows.

Pasatieri has taught composition at the Juilliard School, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. From 1980 through 1984, he held the post of artistic director of Atlanta Opera. In 1984, he moved to Los Angeles, California, where he formed his film music production company, Topaz Productions, and in 2003, he returned to New York to continue his concert and opera career.