

November 2, 2015

In Memoriam: David Stock - Composer, Conductor, and Advocate of New Music

Stock's Jewish roots were the focus of numerous works

Composer and conductor [David Stock](#), known for his stylistically modern yet accessible music, died on November 2nd. He was 76 and lived in Pittsburgh. His large catalog of compositions includes six symphonies, ten string quartets, a dozen concerti for mixed instruments, and numerous pieces for voice and chamber orchestra. He also produced a variety of works for theater, film, and television. Stock's reputation as a composer and conductor earned him many awards, commissions, and guest appearances at prestigious institutions around the world.

"David Stock poured his heart into music and used it to build community," said Milken Archive of Jewish Music founder Lowell Milken. "Although he traveled the world, he always remained part of his hometown's musical life. He will be missed."

Stock was born in 1939 in Pittsburgh, which was to remain his primary home. He earned his B.F.A. and M.F.A from the Carnegie Institute of Technology (later Carnegie Mellon University), where he studied trumpet and composition with Nikolai Lopatnikoff and Alexei Haieff. He earned a second master's degree studying with Arthur Berger at Brandeis University and matriculated at the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris and the Berkshire Music Center.

Stock was committed to the artistic growth of Pittsburgh. He was Professor Emeritus at Duquesne University, where he conducted the Duquesne Contemporary Ensemble. He also taught on the faculties of the Cleveland Institute of Music, the New England Conservatory, Antioch College, and the University of Pittsburgh. He was conductor laureate of the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, which he helped found in 1976, and composer in residence at the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and Seattle Symphony. In 1992, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust honored Stock with its Creative Achievement Award for "outstanding established artist."

Dedicated to promoting the music of contemporary American composers and cultivating new audiences for modern concert music, Stock was chairman of the Pittsburgh Alliance of Composers, directed the WQED-FM New Music Project, hosted its weekly radio series "Da Capo," and served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

Stock's music has been performed throughout the United States and Europe, as well as in Turkey, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, China, Uzbekistan, and Korea. Among his most important compositions are *Kickoff* (1990), which was premiered by the New York Philharmonic under Kurt Masur during its 150th anniversary season, and his Violin Concerto (1995), which received its premiere as part of the Pittsburgh Symphony's 100th anniversary celebration. Other significant work includes *Inner Space* (1973) and *A Joyful Noise* (1983) for symphony orchestra; *American Accents* (1983) and *Available Light* (1995) for chamber orchestra; and *Dreamwinds* (1975), *Keep the Change* (1981), *Parallel Worlds* (1984), and *Sulla spiaggia* (1985) for mixed chamber ensemble. He has also composed music for youth orchestras, including *Zohar* (1978), which draws from Jewish mysticism, and *Triflumena* (1978).

During the 1980s and 90s, Stock began writing more work with explicitly Jewish content. The Milken Archive/Naxos release [David Stock \(2006\)](#) includes [A Little Miracle \(1997\)](#), a dramatic cantata for mezzo-soprano and chamber orchestra on Holocaust themes; [Yizkor \(1999\)](#), a single-



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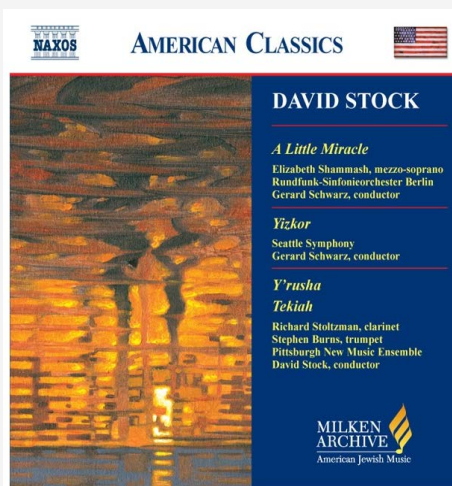
The American Experience



Composer David Stock

movement orchestral reflection of the Jewish memorial service; and [Tekiah \(1987\)](#), a three-movement work for trumpet and chamber orchestra that refers to the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Stock also received commissions from Music of Remembrance, where he served on the advisory board, for *A Vanished World* (2000), named after the Roman Vishniac book and conceived as an aural representation of pre-war Eastern European Jewry; and for *Mayn Shvester Khaye* (2008), his arrangement of a song by Israeli singer Chava Alberstein. Other works of Jewish character include his Third Symphony, *Tikkun Olam* (1999), commissioned by the Boston Modern Orchestra Project; his Cello Concerto (2001), of which the last movement is styled on cantorial melodies; and his Sixth Symphony (2013/2014), which incorporates several songs from the Jewish liturgy, including “Sh’ma Yisrael.”

He recorded on CRI, Innova, Northeastern, MMC, Ocean, and Ambassador, among others. Notable recordings with the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble include *David Stock: Chamber Works* (originally released in 1984 on CRI), which features two jazz-oriented compositions, *Triple Play* and *Scat*, as well as *The Philosopher’s Stone*; and *Taking Stock* (1994, Northeastern), which presents the multi-movement works *The Particle Zoo* and *Tekiah*. His television credits include the theme music for the PBS series *Kennedy Center Tonight*.



Reviews of Stock’s work often pinpointed his unabashed 20th-century musical approach that prized expression above all else and avoided some of the trappings of much contemporary music. In a 2010 review of the premiere performance of Stock’s *Blast!*, *Seattle Times* critic Bernard Jacobson noted that Stock “commands a style where apparent simplicity coexists with a high degree of technical sophistication,” while a 2006 review of the Milken Archive/Naxos CD “David Stock” for the *American Record Guide* wrote that “Stock has the clarity (but not the austerity) of a latter day minimalist.” Scott Winship of the website *New Music Box* described a performance of *Available Light* as “an almost schizophrenic journey through Stravinsky-esque rhythms and orchestrations . . . with sudden shifts to Bernstein harmonizations and restless perpetual motion reminiscent of a Saturday morning cartoons.” Another writer called Stock’s *Violin Concerto* “one of American music’s best kept secrets.”

Stock received a Guggenheim Fellowship, several fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and grants and commissions from the Ella Lyman Cabot Trust, the Paderewski Fund for Composers, the Koussevitzky Music

Foundation, the Barlow Endowment, Boston Musica Viva, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Seattle Symphony, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Richard Stoltzman, Duquesne University, and the Erie Philharmonic, among others.

His international guest conducting appearances included Australia’s Seymour Group, Poland’s Capella Cracoviensis and Silesian Philharmonic, Mexico’s Foro Internacional de Musica Nueva, and China’s Eclipse. In the U.S., he appeared with the Pittsburgh Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, Syracuse Society for New Music, Minnesota Composers Forum, American Dance Festival, Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh, New England Conservatory Contemporary Ensemble, Chautauqua Symphony, American Wind Symphony, and the Cleveland Chamber Symphony.

The Milken Archive of Jewish Music mourns the loss of [David Stock](#). May his artistic gifts and dedication to community continue to inspire.

Watch the All-Star Orchestra perform David Stock’s [Blast!](#)