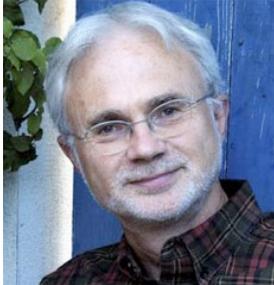


## YALE HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENTS COMMENCEMENT 2013 | MAY 20, 2013

### JOHN ADAMS, DOCTOR OF MUSIC



John Adams is an American composer and conductor. His compositions *Nixon in China* and *On the Transmigration of Souls* have received critical acclaim and numerous awards, including the 2003 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

Born in Worcester, Massachusetts, Mr. Adams was raised by parents who were music enthusiasts, and he grew to love jazz and rock as much as Mozart and Beethoven. His father taught him to play the clarinet at a young age, and he participated in community orchestras and local marching bands. By the age of ten, he had begun composing music. His first orchestral composition was performed when he was just thirteen.

He earned a scholarship to Harvard University, where he conducted the Bach Society Orchestra and studied composition under Leon Kirchner, Roger Sessions, and Earl Kim. He also served as a reserve clarinetist for the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Opera Company. Mr. Adams, who graduated magna cum laude in 1969, became the first Harvard undergraduate to submit a musical composition as his honors thesis. After earning a master's degree in music composition from Harvard in 1971, he moved to California to teach at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. From 1982 to 1985, he served as composer-in-residence of the San Francisco Symphony.

Mr. Adams was influenced by the experimental techniques of composers like John Cage but it was not until he became involved with the minimal music movement in the 1970s that he began developing his own musical style. It was during this time that he composed such major works as *Phrygian Gates* (1977), *Harmonium* (1980–81), and *Grand Pianola Music* (1982).

Mr. Adams began a long-time collaboration with stage director Peter Sellars in 1985 and composed groundbreaking operas inspired by themes in contemporary life, including *Nixon in China* (1987), which won a Grammy Award, *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991), and *Doctor Atomic* (2005).

In 2002, he composed *On the Transmigration of Souls* for the New York Philharmonic to commemorate the first anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks. The quietly reflective twenty-five-minute composition commissioned for orchestra, chorus, and prerecorded tape won not only the 2003 Pulitzer Prize but also three Grammy Awards for Best Classical Album, Best Orchestral Performance, and Best Classical Contemporary Composition.

Mr. Adams has conducted world-renowned orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and the orchestras of Atlanta, Berlin, and Stockholm.

His autobiography, *Hallelujah Junction*, was the winner of the 2009 Northern California Book Award for creative nonfiction and was named one of the notable books of 2008 by the New York Times. Mr. Adams is an honorary member of Phi Beta Kappa and was a recipient of NEA Opera Honors in 2009 for his extraordinary contributions to opera in the United States.