

PLURABELLE

An opera in two or more acts, steeped in the “Anna Livia Plurabelle” chapter of *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce, and drawing out and upon some of the 3,000+ references to opera that he fused into his flourishing text.

Begetter / Librettist

Thomas Peter O’Brien

Composer

Augusta Read Thomas

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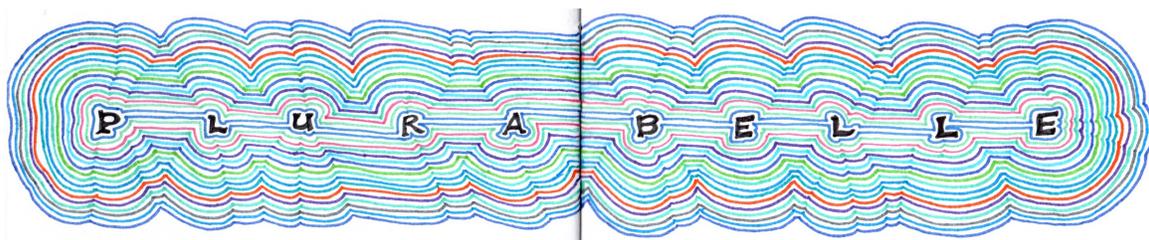
Augusta Read Thomas

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Augusta Read Thomas

Born in New York, Augusta is the tenth of ten children. A graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, London, her work is championed by Barenboim, Rostropovich, Boulez, Eschenbach, Salonen, Maazel, Ozawa, Davis, and Alsop. Over 90 CDs containing her music have been released by commercial recording companies, and she is a multiple award, prize, and fellowship winner. She lives in Chicago.

She is University Professor of Composition in the Department of Music and the College at The University of Chicago. She was the longest-serving Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for conductors Daniel Barenboim and Pierre Boulez (1997-2006), culminating in the premiere of *Astral Canticle*, one of two finalists for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Music. She is featured on a Grammy-winning CD by Chanticleer.

She is one of the most active composers in the world. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1996, she was named Chicagoan of the Year and founded the University of Chicago's Center for Contemporary Composition. She is the former Chairperson for the American Music Center, and Member of the Conseil Musical de la Fondation Prince Pierre de Monaco.

“I think of myself, and have been described as, a poet-composer. I sculpt my music akin to how poets create, refine, and polish their poems ... I never listen for categories – I listen for excellence of the piece on its own terms, no matter what style, language, or aesthetic.”

Thomas Peter O'Brien

Born in New York, Peter is the ninth of ten children. He received his BA from the University of Notre Dame, his MA from McGill University, and he studied at the School of Irish Studies (Dublin), and the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts. He lives in Toronto.

He has written or edited 11 books – including *Cleopatra at the Breakfast Table*, about studying Latin with his teenaged daughter – and he publishes reviews and articles widely on literature and art. Margaret Atwood, Gordon Lightfoot, Alberto Manguel, Johannes Debus, and Leon Edel have praised his work.

He had his first sighting of *Finnegans Wake* as a university student at the School of Irish Studies in Dublin, and has been reading the text for 48 years or so. He has published related articles and reviews, and is in the midst of a multi-year artwork, *LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE*, which has been exhibited in Antwerp, Changzhou, Hong Kong, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia, and Toronto, and been published by journals in Canada, France, Ireland, Israel, Nigeria, and the U.S. It yokes together his twinning interests in the visual and the verbal, the illustrative and the intellectual, the musical and the magical.

“I'm intrigued that there has never been a full opera based on or generated from *Finnegans Wake*. The text is universally considered to be unapproachable and incomprehensible (responses that I do not disagree with), but I still believe its fertile, multilingual, and generative musical language can be put to librettic use for a wide audience.”

Augusta Read Thomas Selected Orchestral and Vocal Work

[A complete list of alphabetical links](https://augustareadthomas.com/works/alpha.html) or see <https://augustareadthomas.com/works/alpha.html>

Orchestra

- Absolute Ocean* 2008 18'
For solo soprano, harp obbligato, and orchestra.
Alternate version: solo mezzo-soprano, harp obbligato, and orchestra.
Pairs perfectly with Mahler's 4th Symphony.
- Astral Canticle* 2005 22'
Double concerto for flute, violin, and orchestra.
- The Auditions* 2019 27'
For chamber orchestra. Can be performed with 9 strings or with full string section.
Pairs perfectly with "Appalachian Spring" by Aaron Copland.
- Cello Concerto #3: Legend of the Phoenix* 2013 26'
For cello and orchestra.
- Dance Foldings* 2021 13'
For orchestra or chamber orchestra.
Like jazz big band interlaced with Stravinsky ballets.
- FIESTA! (no chaser!)* 2023 23' or 13'
For trumpet in C and wind ensemble, or in a version for trumpet and orchestra.
- Gwendolyn Brook Settings* 2020 30'
For treble chorus and orchestra.
Treble chorus can be comprised of a mix of adult sopranos, mezzo-sopranos, altos, with youth girl and boy sopranos, mezzo-sopranos, and altos.
- Memory Place* 2019 6'30'
For string orchestra (no basses). Playful, optimistic, colorful.
- Plea for Peace* 2017 6'
A vocalise for soprano and string orchestra (no basses).
The vocalise solo line can also be performed by flute, alto flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, soprano saxophone, violin, viola, cello, or countertenor in place of the soprano.
- Song in Sorrow* 2000 22'
For solo soprano, large chorus, and orchestra.
- Sonorous Earth* 2017 33'
For percussion quartet playing ~300 bells from around the world, and chamber orchestra.
Movement #2, "Prayer," can be performed as a stand-alone composition of 7'20".

Toward a Secret Sky 2023 36'
For SATB chorus and orchestra. Text by Rumi.

Violin Concerto #3 – Juggler in Paradise 2008 20'
For violin and orchestra.

Chorus

Chanting to Paradise 2002 18' or 5'30"
For solo soprano, SATB chorus and orchestra.
Movement #3: "Blazing in Gold and Quenching in Purple" can be performed as a stand-alone composition of 5'30".

Dappled Things 2015 5'
For TTBB choir. Also two versions for SSAA choir.
Text by Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Daylight Divine 2001 20'
For small ensemble and mezzo-soprano and counter-tenor.

Dancing Stars 2021 4'
For open instrumentation orchestra or chamber ensemble of no less than 8 players.
Instrumentation may include a group of voices singing open vowels.

Far Past War 2020 11'
For SATB chorus and orchestra.
About bringing peace through nature, both to the self and to the world.
Text by Cammy Thomas.

Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour 2004 8'
For small ensemble and mezzo-soprano and counter-tenor.
A small amount of humming and vocalizing is required from half the players – these vocal parts require only an amateur level voice and singing skills.

FREEDOM, To Be Free and Sky Bound 2022 7' or 4'20"
For treble choir or for tenor baritone choir.
In memoriam, Rosa Parks.

Ring Out, Wild Bells, to the Wild Sky 2000 15'
For solo soprano, large chorus, and orchestra.

Two E. E. Cummings Songs 2008 8'
For SSAA chorus.

Toward a Secret Sky 2023 36'
For SATB chorus and orchestra.
Text by Rumi.

Opera

Ligeia 1993 ca. 75'

For chamber orchestra, solo singers, and small chorus.

Librettist: Leslie Dunton-Downer.

Sweet Potato Kicks the Sun 2017 – 19 ca. 83'

An opera for all ages. For small ensemble and special guest artist.

Flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, 1 percussion. Option: chamber orchestra.

Librettist: Leslie Dunton-Downer.

Chamber Music

Avian Capriccio 2016 12'

For 2 trumpets in C, horn, trombone, tuba.

Bebop Riddle III 2023 8'

Duo for percussion and piano.

Klee Musings 2016 16'

For piano trio – violin, cello, and piano.

Of Being is a Bird (Emily Dickinson Settings) 2015 17'

For light lyric soprano and 9 players: 2 flutes, oboe, clarinet, horn, harp, 2 violins and cello.

Perfect for sinfonietta-sized ensembles. It is optional to substitute the soprano with either a flute, oboe, English horn, clarinet, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, trumpet or viola.

Upon Wings of Words 2021 17'30"

For lyric soprano and string quartet.

Version for lyric mezzo soprano and string quartet also exists. For shorter duration options, alternate endings are clearly listed on the score and parts. Version for lyric mezzo soprano and string quartet is transposed down by a perfect fourth.

Text by Emily Dickinson.

Dance and Ballet

Forest of Shifting Time a Ballet for Reed Quintet 2022 31'

For oboe, clarinet in Bb, alto saxophone in Eb, bass clarinet in Bb, bassoon.

Alternate quintet instrumentations are available. A 17-minute ballet suite is available.

Terpsichore's Box of Dreams 2023 17'30"

For flute (picc.), oboe, clarinet (bass cl.), alto saxophone (baritone sax.), horn, 2 percussion, harp, piano, 2 violin, viola, and cello.

Optional: a second clarinet (bass cl.) player can replace the saxophone (baritone sax.).

Conductors of the Music of Augusta Read Thomas

Mstislav Rostropovich
Esa-Pekka Salonen
Daniel Barenboim
Pierre Boulez
Seiji Ozawa
Sir Andrew Davis
Marin Alsop
Christoph Eschenbach
Gerard Schwarz
Leonard Slatkin
Andris Nelsons
George Manahan
Oliver Knussen
David Robertson
Marty Brabbins
Lorin Maazel
George Benjamin
Ken-David Masur
Vimbayi Kaziboni
Karina Canellakis
Tim Weiss
Jeff Milarsky
Ryan Bancroft
Stefan Asbury
Ryan McAdams
Robert Trevino
Donald Nally
Steven Fox
Pascal Rophé
Joshua Weilerstein
Fabio Luisi
Giancarlo Guerrero
Thierry Fischer
Christian Arming
Krzysztof Urbaniński
Ludovic Morlot
Eric Stark
Kanakano Abe
John Storgårds
Thomas Dausgaard
Benjamin Manis
Stilian Kirov
Christian Reif
Joseph Giunta
Bradley Lubman

Jonathon Heyward
Alevtina Loffe
Francesco Lecce-Chong
Dalia Stasevska
Jeffrey Kahane
Soo Han
Jiří Bělohlávek
Simone Menezes
Julien Leroy
Juan Trigos
Hans Graf
Cliff Colnot
Xian Zhang
Andrey Boreyko
Bruno Ferrandis
Victor Yampolsky
William Wiedrich
Peter Biloen
JoAnn Falletta
Grant Llewellyn
William Boughton
Gil Rose
John Nelson
Sora Elisabeth Lee
Joana Carneiro
Earl Rivers
Barbara Schubert
Delta David Gier
Robert Whalen
Hans Vonk
Mischa Santora
Markus Stenz
Dennis Russell Davies
Don Schleicher
Rand Steiger
Zhang Yi
Steven Jarvi
Jonathan Stockhammer
Kimcherie Lloyd
Emily Freeman Brown
Albert-George Schram
Frederick A. Speck
Mark Gibson
Jack Delaney
Kate Tamarkin

Robert Trevino
Hannu Lintu
Peter Lipari
Christopher Lyndon-Gee
Josephine Lee
Donald Hunsberger
Mark Powell
Mark Laycock
Edwin Outwater
Norman Scribner
Michael Lewanski
Kirill Karabits
Hyo Kang
Kevin Field
Apo Hsu
Mariusz Smolij
Jonathan Yates
Susan McMane
Jahja Ling
David Loebel
Allen Tinkham
Captain Kenneth Collins
Orcenith Smith
Lawrence Leighton Smith
Mallory Thompson
Toshiyuki Shimada
Manfred Honeck
Morihiro Nakahara
Odaline de la Martinez
Christian Lindberg
Stuart Chafetz
Keith Lockhart
Alan Pierson
Jac Van Steen
Hugh Wolff
Gianpiero Taverna
Susan Davenny Wyner
Lois Ferrari
Deanna Tham
Grant Gilman
Robert Stull
Kristo Kondakçi
Darren Y. Lin
Aaron Holloway-Nahum
and others.

Selected Performances of Note

Thomas's orchestral works have been performed by

Berlin Philharmonic	American Composers Orchestra
New York Philharmonic	Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra
Philadelphia Orchestra	New York Chamber Symphony
London Symphony	New Jersey Symphony
Chicago Philharmonic	Louisville Orchestra
Boston Symphony Orchestra	ORF-Vienna (Austrian Radio Orchestra)
Boston Modern Orchestra Project	Residentie Orchestra of The Hague
Fulcrum Point New Music Project	Houston Symphony
Cleveland Orchestra	New Haven Symphony
Chicago Symphony Orchestra	Rotterdam Philharmonic
Orchestra of Paris	Holland Symphonia
Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra	Bochumer Symphony
National Symphony	Fort Worth Symphony
BBC Symphony Orchestra	Lutoslawski Philharmonic
Vienna Modern Festival	New Japan Philharmonic in Tokyo
Strasbourg Philharmonic	Cleveland Chamber Symphony
Festival Presence in Paris	Aurora Orchestra
Detroit Symphony Orchestra	Orpheus Chamber Orchestra
Dallas Symphony	Washington Choral Arts Society
Hong Kong Philharmonic	Soli Deo Gloria
Minnesota Orchestra	Virtuosi Players
Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra	Swedish Chamber Orchestra in Orebro
Nashville Symphony	Marin Symphony
BBC National Orchestral of Wales	Syracuse Youth Orchestra
Pittsburgh Symphony	Columbus (GA) Symphony
Indianapolis Symphony	Women's Philharmonic
HR-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt	Boston Civic Orchestra
Baltimore Symphony	Long Beach Symphony
London Sinfonietta	Swedish Wind Ensemble
Orchestre national d'Ile de France	Patel Conservatory Youth Orchestra
Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra	New York Youth Symphony
Narragansett Bay Symphony Orchestra	(First Hearing Commission)
Tampa Metropolitan Youth Orchestra	Concord Symphony
Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra	Memphis Symphony
Bozeman Symphony Orchestra	Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphony
Washington D.C. Choral Arts Society	Northwestern University Symphony
Seattle Symphony	Orchestra
Orchestra of Radio France	Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay
Santa Rosa Symphony	Virtuosi Orchestra
Eugene Symphony	and others

Selected Awards and Honors

In 2007, her composition *Astral Canticle* was one of two finalists for the Pulitzer Prize in Music.

Two of her works were featured on the Grammy-winning CD *Colors of Love* by Chanticleer, in 2000.

She won the Lancaster Symphony Orchestra's Composer Award for 2015-16. The oldest award of its kind in the nation, it is intended "to recognize and honor living composers who reside in the US who are making a particularly significant contribution in the field of symphonic music, not only through their own creative efforts, but also as effective personal advocates of new approaches to the broadening of critical and appreciative standards."

The Sovereign Prince of Monaco awarded her the Chevalier of the Order of Cultural Merit. The insignia of this distinction was given by S.A.R. Princess of Hanover at the Prince's Palace on 18 November 2015.

Her chamber opera *Ligeia* (librettist: Leslie Dunton-Downer, based on a short story by Poe) was awarded the International Orpheus Prize (Luciano Berio, president of the jury) and performed in Spoleto, Italy. Commissioned by Mstislav Rostropovich and Rencontres Musicales d'Evian, *Ligeia* was premiered by Rostropovich at the 1994 Evian Festival.

Other awards and honors include:

- The First Moliner International Percussion Composition Award, for *Solstice Ritual* (2026)
- Centennial Award from the Eastman School of Music (2022)
- Album *Of Being is a Bird* received *BBC Music Magazine's* Chamber Choice Award (2016)
- Lincoln Academy of Illinois awarded her the Order of Lincoln (2014)
- Fromm Foundation Commission (1992, 1996, 2011)
- Koussevitzky Foundation Commission (1999, 2011)
- Barlow Endowment (1995, 2010)
- *Ceremonial*, for orchestra, was chosen as a Recommended Work at the UNESCO International International Rostrum of Composers (2001)
- Siemens Foundation in Munich (2001)
- American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Awards (1989, 1994, 2001)
- ASCAP Rudolph Nissim Award (1999)
- National Endowment for the Arts Grants (1988, 1992, 1994)
- John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, (1988)
- New York Foundation for the Arts (1998)
- Debussy Trio Music Foundation and Thomas van Straaten Fellowship (1989)
- Columbia University Bearn's Prize (1991)
- BMI (1990)
- Third Century Award from the Office of Copyrights and Patents in Washington, D.C. (1989)

Selected Reviews / Commentary

“a true virtuoso composer.”

– *The New Yorker*

“one of the most recognizable and widely loved figures in American music.”

– American Academy of Arts and Letters

“Bliss out to Ms. Thomas’s transfixing shimmer.”

– *The New York Times*

“Augusta Read Thomas has secured for herself a permanent place in the pantheon of American composers of the 20th and 21st centuries. She is without question one of the best and most important composers that this country has today. Her music has substance and depth and a sense of purpose. She has a lot to say and she knows how to say it – and say it in a way that is intelligent yet appealing and sophisticated.”

– Music critic Edward Reichel

Thomas’ body of works “embodies unbridled passion and fierce poetry.”

– American Academy of Arts and Letters

“This is music that is always in motion, as if coming perpetually out of a magician’s hat. It leads but doesn’t direct, and is playful and subtle, dancing on light feet. It is music that conjures.”

– *The Huffington Post*

“Augusta Read Thomas is one of the most important composers in the USA today.”

– *Dance International Magazine*

“... the vividly imaginative instrumental palette that Thomas has at her fingertips ... established her as one of the most distinctive and rewarding US composers.”

– *The Guardian*, London

“Augusta Read Thomas has an exceptional ear for timbral detail.”

– Jessica Duchon, *BBC Music Magazine*

“Thomas’ musicality is impeccably visionary ... ‘Toward a Secret Sky’ is sonically rapturous, emotionally ecstatic.”

– Rita Kohn, NUVO

“Augusta Read Thomas’s recent Jubilee is an electric, joyous piece.”

– Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise* (music critic for *The New Yorker*)

“Heart and soul in the breathtaking music of a thoughtful contemporary composer. Thomas’s brainy brand of modernism reveals a lively, probing mind allied to a beating heart.”

– Donald Rosenberg, Gramophone

“Inspired by prose and poem, myth and lore, philosophy and religion, modern dance and jazz improvisation, Thomas’ composition is informed by layers of drawings, charts, and colorful visual artistry.”

– R. J. Weick, *Great Lakes By Design Magazine*

Terpsichore’s Box of Dreams: “... an utterly delightful new work by Augusta Read Thomas, the guiding light at the Chicago Center for Contemporary Composition” – *Third Coast Review*

“Enter the limitless sound world of composer Augusta Read Thomas ... No matter how gloomy you may be feeling about the state of the world, it seems impossible to come away from an encounter with Augusta Read Thomas without a surge of fresh hope.”

– *Strings Magazine*

“Ms. Thomas was in control of every nuance in these vividly colorful pieces”

– *The New York Times*

“Augusta Read Thomas writes precisely calibrated music of refined beauty. Her works are in the repertory of several A-list players and ensembles.”

– David Weininger, *Boston Globe*

“Helix Spirals combines explosive energy, technical virtuosity, and vivid colors and textures with an intellectual rigor of conception that lends it formal continuity and cohesion. This exciting work deserves a place in the repertoire.”

– Matthew Heck, *The Boston Musical Intelligencer*

“Augusta Read Thomas’s music mixes extraordinary clarity and elegance with a bold resonant vitality. Its inventiveness, its lyric turns seem almost magically sustained; and, unfailingly, result in a beautiful immediacy.”

– American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (when winning the Academy Award)

“... unique among the world’s most prominent living composers for the consistent attention she devotes to projects on the broad behalf of other composers and curious listeners. The envisioning is not only meticulous in detail but also breathtakingly big in scope.”

– Nancy Malitz, Classical Voice North America

“Thomas’s music, particularly her orchestral music, fairly explodes with an extroverted boldness of utterance audiences and musicians alike find challenging yet immediate. It’s music that doesn’t sound like anybody else’s — music that insists you pay attention.”

– John von Rhein, *Chicago Tribune*

“The periodic accumulation of sustained clouds of dissonance made for one of the most powerful new music experiences I’ve felt in years.”

– Chicago Classical Review

“According to statistics released last year by ASCAP, a performing rights organization, Ms. Thomas topped their list of most frequently performed living composers in 2013-14.”

– Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim, *The New York Times*

Writings by Augusta Read Thomas

On her compositional voice

“On the one hand, my compositional voice has been consistent for the past 40 years. Never did I switch styles (now I am a X-ist, now I am a Y-ist). I have been plowing, cultivating, growing, sculpting my own creative ground since I started playing music and composing as a young child. That said, each composition is a unique creation with its own inner-life, reason for being, and way of being. Each composition is made of particular organic musical materials which are carefully allied to, and which are organically generating the composition’s form.”

On J. S. Bach

“I consider J. S. Bach to be my most important teacher. Every day of my life includes the music of J. S. Bach. I love his music for far too many reasons to list, but for starters: its magic, sublime beauty, invention, craft, clarity, intensity, elegance, concision, perfection, technical mastery, form, flow, integration, magnetism, humanity, spirituality, empathy, power, civility, and grace. For me, Bach’s music will always be contemporary because it is timeless; to me, it sounds ‘fresh’ and vivid in any context or epoch.”

On her drawings

“Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s statement ‘Music is liquid architecture; architecture is frozen music’ has, for the past 40 years, stirred my imagination and sparked creative journeys into sonic, visual, physical, formal, and spatial explorations. Composers and improvisers throughout history have created sketches, doodles, maps-of-form, charts, and limitless other kinds of visual and notational representations of their sounds. Form conserves energy. But what exactly is the relationship between a specific composition’s musical materials and its duration and its form? Are the proportions of various sections in balance with one another based on the terms presented by and inherent to the very musical materials of those sections - and for the whole? How so? How do we know? How, for a musical composition, could these relationships be illustrated with drawings and diagrams? [These drawings] have potential to offer a glimpse into various working processes, craft, materials, form, and imagination.”

On composing

“I love composing. In a good way, my nerve endings for sound are always dialed up high – actually, they are on perpetual alert. If I hear one note or chord or if, for example, I play one on an instrument, I get lit up as if electric shock ribbons instantly race from my ears and fingertips to my imagination and then my creativity and craft play high-speed ping-pong where the ball is bouncing back and forth 100 times a second. It’s like living inside of a poem. The outcomes are unpredictable to me. I stay absolutely flexible. Everything is malleable, springy, stretchy, coil-able, color-able, twistable, bouncing, zig-zagging, and splinter-able. It feels like I am dancing with contrapuntal flickering sonic lights that accumulate into a spinning pinwheel spawning sound and form. I slide, skate, swivel, and spin with my materials – crafting nuance and finesse – and then I sculpt, shape, chisel, fashion, and form. At the end of all of that, I feel as if the piece wrote me – not as if I wrote the piece! My music has its own inner life. If I listen carefully, the piece I am composing will tell me what it next needs.”

Thomas Peter O'Brien Books Written or Edited

Love and Let Go: Reflections, Confessions, Encouragements, and a Few Cautionary Forewarnings from a Father to a Daughter (Mosaic Press)

Dream Visions: The Art of Alanis Obomsawin – with a Preface by Buffy Sainte-Marie (Perceval Press / Viggo Mortensen)

A Perfect Offering: Personal Stories of Trauma and Transformation, edited with Harold Heft and Suzanne Heft (Mosaic Press)

The Meister Effect [Book I of The Meister Trilogy] (Carbon Publishing)

The echo is where: Pages 126 – 68 of LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE With 43 catalogue texts by 43 academics, artists, consultants, curators, editors, independents, innocent bystanders, professors, scholars, students, and writers (both Joyceans and non-Joyceans) from 14 or so countries, and ranging in age from 22 to 105 (with snippets of Chinese, Dutch, French, Georgian, German, Persian, and Yiddish) (Carbon Publishing)

Cleopatra at the Breakfast Table: Why I Studied Latin With My Teenager and How I Discovered the Daughterland (Quattro)

INNING: How the Toronto Blue Jays Inspired Us About Baseball and Life in 53 Error-Filled, Ecstatic, Epic Minutes (Carbon Publishing)

Build a Better Book Club, written with Harold Heft – with a Forward by Paul Quarrington (Macmillan)

Introduction to Literature: British, American, Canadian, edited with Robert Lecker and Jack David (Harper & Row)

So To Speak: Interviews with Contemporary Canadian Writers (including Margaret Atwood, Christopher Dewdney, Mavis Gallant, Jack Hodgins, Leon Rooke, and Josef Skvorecky) (Véhicule)

Fatal Recurrences: New Fiction in English from Montreal, edited with Hugh Hood – with an Introduction by Hugh Hood (Véhicule)

Selected Articles, Reviews, Interviews

[A complete alphabetical list](https://tpob.me/articles-and-reviews/) or see <https://tpob.me/articles-and-reviews/>

“Drawing Upon *Finnegans Wake*,” article on and portfolio of artwork, LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE – *Art / Research International*

“He believed in magic,” review of *Dai Vernon: Artist, Magician, Muse, 1894 – 1941*, by David Ben, Magicana / Squash Publishing – *The Globe and Mail*

“Pictures and words,” review of *Cubism and Futurism: Spiritual Machines and the Cinematic Effect*, by R. Bruce Elder, Wilfrid Laurier UP; *Ulysses, Film and Visual Culture*, by Philip Sicker, Cambridge UP; *Samuel Beckett and the Visual Arts*, by Conor Carville, Cambridge UP – *The Fortnightly Review*

“Human Nature,” review of *Drawn From Life: Science and Art in the Portrayal of the New World*, by Victoria Dickenson, University of Toronto Press – *National Post*

Review of *Artaud 1937 Apocalypse: Letters from Ireland* (Antonin Artaud), by Stephen Barber, artworks by Martin Bladh, photographs by Karolina Urbaniak, Infinity Land Press – *The Fortnightly Review*

“Novella a philosophical treatise on life,” review of *The Actual* by Saul Bellow, Viking – *The Financial Post*

Review of Eleanor Bond, *Work Station*, Concordia Art Gallery – *C Magazine*

“Canadian art from A to Z,” review of *Canadian Art: From its Beginnings to 2000*, by Ann Newlands, Firefly Books – *Montreal Gazette*

“Vagaries of Power,” review article of three exhibitions: Nicole Jolicoeur, Jaclyn Shoub, Diana Thorneycroft – *Views*

“Following West Wind: A breezy primer on Canadian art from Tom Thomson to today,” review of *Canadian Art in the Twentieth Century*, by Ann Newlands, Firefly Books – *Montreal Gazette*

“A blurred reflection,” review of *Reflections of a Siamese Twin: Canada at the End of the Twentieth Century*, by John Ralston Saul, Viking – *The Financial Post*

“A metaphysical meander in France,” review of *Ocham’s Razor: A Search for Wonder in an Age of Doubt*, by Wade Rowland, Patrick Crean / Key Porter – *The Globe and Mail*

Review article of *The Michael Snow Project: Visual Art 1951 – 1993*, by Dennis Reid, Philip Monk, Louise Dompierre, Art Gallery of Ontario and The Power Plant – *The Journal of Canadian Art History*

“Rothenberg: A Vital Force,” article on an exhibition of paintings by Susan Rothenberg, MacLaren Art Centre – *The Globe and Mail*

“Quebec fiction pour les anglais,” review of five French books in translation, including two by Michel Tremblay – *The Globe and Mail*

“Memory and Desire: The Poems of Erin Mouré,” review of *Wanted Alive*, House of Anansi – *Essays of Canadian Writing*

“The Daunting Beauty of Paris,” review of *Paris*, by Geoffrey James and Hubert Damisch, Services culturels de l’Ambassade du Canada – *Montreal Gazette*

“Show, Don’t Tell,” review of *Inscription: the Journal of Material Text – Theory, Practice, History*, College Book Art Association

“‘I paint the land out of love,’” article on painting exhibition *Big North*, by John Hartman – *The Globe and Mail*

“Recent Canadian Artists’ Books,” article and portfolio – *Descant*

“The man behind the myth,” article on and interview with Northrop Frye – *University of Toronto Bulletin*

“Middle of Somewhere,” review article on the sculptures of Antony Gormley, MacLaren Art Centre – *National Post*

“Lamenting the decline of the large family,” article on Peter O’Brien – *Toronto Star*

“A forbidden story makes its way into Iran,” article on and interview with Akram Pedramnia – *The Globe and Mail* / translated into Farsi on shahrgon.com.

“‘And the People Love It:’ Peter Dale Scott’s Terror,” review article of *Coming to Jakarta: A Poem about Terror*, by Peter Dale Scott, McClelland and Stewart – *Rubicon*

Article on the art glass installation “Singing the Light,” by Sarah Hall at Greenwood College School – *Studio*

“‘Consumed with that which it was nourished by’: Will Gorlitz’s Literary Landscapes,” review article on the paintings of Will Gorlitz – *University of Toronto Quarterly*

“The world’s hungriest reader turns his eye to the visual arts,” review of *Reading Pictures: A History of Love and Hate*, by Alberto Manguel – *Toronto Star*

“The Most Complete Collection Yet,” review of *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson*, by David P. Silcox, Firefly Books – *Books in Canada*

“Good, bad and Picasso,” article – *Toronto Star*

“Taking apart James Joyce’s final novel *Finnegans Wake*,” article – *The Globe and Mail*

“All roads lead to Rome? It’s true,” review of *Rome: A Cultural, Visual, and Personal History*, by Robert Hughes, Random House – *The Globe and Mail*

“Having Fun at the Wake,” illustrated article on LOTS OF FUN WITH FINNEGANS WAKE – College Book Art Association

“The paintings of Alex Colville: A relaxed, but explosive quote,” illustrated cover article – *McGill News*

“From stubbies to Nanook,” reviews of *Souvenir of Canada* by Douglas Coupland, Douglas and McIntyre, and *Canada and the Idea of North*, by Sherrill E. Grace, McGill-Queen’s UP – *Montreal Gazette*.

“Life today: it’s by design,” reviews of *Life Style*, by Bruce Mau, Phaidon, and *Brand.new*, edited by Jane Pavitt, Princeton UP – *Montreal Gazette*

“The unfinished canvas of her life,” article on painter Doris McCarthy – *The Globe and Mail*

“An Awakening,” review of *The “Finnegans Wake” Experience*, by Roland McHugh, U of California Press – *McGill Literary Journal*

“‘the one the pictor of the other’: Drawing on *Finnegans Wake*,” illustrated article – *Joyce Studies Annual*

Interview with Ron Haselden, in *Aspects: A Journal of Contemporary Art* (England), reprinted in *Parallogramme*

“Ugly Beauty: An Interview with Geoffrey James,” in the catalogue “Geoffrey James: PAST present / future,” University of Toronto Art Centre

Interview with Leon Rooke, *So To Speak: Interviews with Contemporary Canadian Writers*, Véhicule Press

Interview with Jack Hodgins, *So To Speak: Interviews with Contemporary Canadian Writers*, Véhicule Press

Interview with Christopher Dewdney, *So To Speak: Interviews with Contemporary Canadian Writers*, Véhicule Press

Interview with Erin Mouré, *So To Speak: Interviews with Contemporary Canadian Writers*, Véhicule Press

Interview with Margaret Atwood, *So To Speak: Interviews with Contemporary Canadian Writers*, Véhicule Press

Selected Reviews and Commentary

On P L U R A B E L L E:

“I had some time to read and find myself simply amazed by this virtuosic world of wonders you have created. I believe there is great potential in it for being set to music. If only I were a composer I would start right away. And this one needs a real virtuoso composer who is capable making music the subject through music as you make words the subject through words ... Quite amazing, quite mind-boggling.”

– Johannes Debus, Music Director, Canadian Opera Company, and regular conductor with the Metropolitan Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper Munich, Santa Fe Opera, etc.

<https://www.coc.ca/about-the-coc/johannes-debus>

<https://www.opus3artists.com/artists/johannes-debus/>

“I really, really enjoyed your libretto, Peter. What you do with Anna Livia Plurabelle is terrific, I must say. Breaking the prose lines down into shorter bits immediately makes the reader sit up and pay attention differently: read them as poetry, carefully, and look below the surface meaning(s). Thinking of these lines as *sung*, surtitles can bring out the complexity of the verbal play, so that it would be visible as well as audible. The words certainly come across on the page as very *singable*. Your dramatic situation and characters are nicely extracted from Joyce’s text, and you articulate clear operatic staging possibilities. All adaptations for opera require selections / cuts, and yours are inspired, as are your changes to the text to conform to operatic / singing conventions (e.g., adding repetitions). I’m thrilled you have such an experienced and gifted composer working on this with you. I can certainly see an opera company being delighted to produce P L U R A B E L L E.”

– Linda Hutcheon, FRSC, OC, is a University Professor Emeritus in the Department of English and of the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. In 2000 she was elected the 117th President of the Modern Language Association, the third Canadian to hold this position, and the first Canadian woman. She has written nine books, and with her husband Michael Hutcheon has co-written four books on opera, including *Bodily Charm: Living Opera*, and *Four Last Songs: Aging and Creativity in Verdi, Strauss, Messiaen, and Britten*.

“I spent a lovely afternoon in Brussels this past week reading and re-reading your libretto. It is a fascinatingly adept re-assembling and textual orchestration of these pages from *Finnegans Wake*. I am no specialist on Joyce, and even less so of FW, but it feels as though, in your proposal, there is a tone truly captured and a ritual truly engendered. The piece remains poetically abstract to the extreme, and as I said, ritualistic ... More than a libretto, it feels like a template for a performance piece (the kind of piece that resides within the top-tier international Festival circuit – Edinburgh, Dublin, Sydney, Adelaide, Hong Kong, Amsterdam, Vienna, Avignon etc.) that now really requires the buy-in and input from a composer and a stage director.”

– Matthew Jocelyn, former director at the opera studio of Paris’s Opéra Bastille, director of the Atelier du Rhin, and Artistic and General Director of Canadian Stage, Toronto; librettist, *Hamlet* by Brett Dean

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Jocelyn

<https://tapestryopera.com/bios/matthew-jocelyn/>

On Published Books and Exhibited Artwork:

“Images by renowned Indigenous filmmaker and artist Alanis Obomsawin: treasured knowledge.” – Margaret Atwood, author of *The Handmaid’s Tale* and winner of the PEN Centre USA Lifetime Achievement Award

“This brave collection speaks to our common humanity ... It’s what happens when big questions, vital questions, are let loose in the world.” – Camilla Gibb, author of five internationally acclaimed novels, including *Sweetness in the Belly*, adapted into a 2020 film starring Dakota Fanning

“What is the source of a spark, or a thought? *The Meister Effect* weaves together the 14th-century France of Christian mystic Meister Eckhart, with a near future where the source and nature of power are radically reimagined. Peter O’Brien extrapolates today’s most important trends (decentralization, neurodiversity, self-reinvention) while hinting at an underlying effervescence that is ever-present.” – LeeAnn Janissen, physicist, sci-fi superfan

“A searing, compelling examination of how individuals process and ultimately survive trauma, pain, and loss. This emotionally honest book is simultaneously brutal, beautiful, and deeply inspiring.” – Jennifer Meeropol, grand-daughter of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg

“This book will break your heart right open, and that’s a good thing – vulnerability draws us closer.” – Mike Downie, Co-Founder of the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund

“Filled with love and understanding. I heartily recommend this book for parents, and for all young adults heading out on their own.” – Dr. Ruth, author of 45 books, including *Dr. Ruth Talks to Kids* and *Dr. Ruth’s Guide to College Life*

“Charming. Endearing. Helpful. As a proud parent, I encourage you to buy this book. There is lots of loving insight here.” – Chris Osgood, 17-year NHL goalie and winner of three Stanley Cups with the Detroit Red Wings

“Intended for the child who is leaving the nest, I see *Love & Let Go* as wisdom of the ages for the parent. It’s a soothing balm for the soul of the one who must let go.”
– Rev. Bob Shantz, author of *Windows on Our Souls: A Spiritual Excavation*

“*Love & Let Go* is a beautiful gift. Caregivers at all stages will appreciate the special moments between parent and child. The book reminds me that it is worth taking the time to slow down and reflect, so that we can provide a legacy and lessons for the people we care about the most – our children.” – Zoe Share, CEO, DaddysDigest.com

“Love-drenched, tenderly written stories ... *A Perfect Offering* invites us to confront, and may even help us to overcome, our deepest fears.” – Barbara Kay, *National Post*

“I would like to thank Peter O’Brien ... I am blessed for his experience, his intelligence, and his commitment to always learning. I am better because of him.” – Melinda Harrison, multi-year All American in five swimming events, Olympian, and author of *Personal Next*

“Engaging and articulate, like listening to a first-class baseball announcer. Wonderful tidbits of trivia.” – W. P. Kinsella, author of *Shoeless Joe*, made into the movie *Field of Dreams*

“This book casts a warm light on a father and daughter enjoying some great times together.”
– Gordon Lightfoot, inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, his songs have been recorded by Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Bob Dylan

“Delightful, clever, and downright laugh-out-loud funny. What a lucky daughter!”
– Linda Nielsen, author of *Between Fathers & Daughters*, and former President of the American Coalition for Fathers and Daughters

“... stunning and constantly shifting ingenuity ... O’Brien’s sinuous and insinuating text babbles like a brook, flows like a stream, trickles and pools like something spilled and sticky.” – Garry Leonard, Professor of English, Comparative Literature, and Cinema at the University of Toronto

“*So To Speak* has something for every reader: human interest, political comment, the creative process, and more. ... Peter O’Brien manages to avoid ivory-tower irrelevance.”
– *Quill & Quire*

“... electricity, banter, stimulation – call it what you will ...” – *Westender*

“These stories of survival and triumph come out of intense pain, loss, and sadness. The effect can be initially shattering, then affirming, and at times exhilarating.”
– Chaviva Hošek, former CEO of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research

“By turns funny, insightful, and moving, O’Brien connects ancient history to contemporary family life in a fresh and thoroughly engaging way.” – Vicky Alvear Shecter, author of *Cleopatra Rules!* and *Warrior Queens: True Stories of Six Ancient Rebels Who Slayed History*

“... savvy irreverence ... bracing and unexpected combinations, this guide propels us down any number of dream paths we might travel ... down-to-earth approach ... chatty, accessible tone.” – *The Hamilton Spectator*

“... interesting and informative reading. ... the interviewer / letter writer, Peter O’Brien, was well-matched with the authors ... With any luck [*So To Speak*’s] worthiness to the average reader will be recognized.” – Marc Côté, *The Globe and Mail*

“The personal stories in this book all begin at the moment when our normal routines are swept away ... The ensuing transformations prove that mortality is a great teacher ... brave and compelling.” – Robert Everett-Green, journalist and novelist

“... illuminating in an intellectual way ... these interviews are fascinating and immensely valuable for their informal views they give us of creative minds at work.”
– George Woodcock, *Books in Canada*

“These interviews answer a modern need to add document to creation – a form of oral history ... into writers, their artistic experiments, their strivings, sincerities, postures and endeavours.” – Leon Edel, winner of the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize

“This is a collection of intriguing, some very good, writing, questioning themes and realities that escape the city limits. This breaking of borders seems to me a great and powerful advantage.” – Alberto Manguel, *NOW*, Officer of the *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* of France, and the former Director of the National Library of Argentina

“The labor and skill and imagination that went into taking the words of the *Wake* and transforming them into something so wildly and beautifully new gives it a more intense depth than I’ve seen in any other painting or visual art.”

– Margot Norris, Chancellor’s Professor Emerita, University of California, Irvine

“ ‘My media are my message’ writes O’Brien ... and the message is ... to prove that having lots of fun at *Finnegans Wake* is quite possible.”

– Tamar Gelashvili, writer and translator, Tbilisi, Georgia

“Joyce’s universe is vividly presented, and Peter O’Brien’s artwork adds yet more illustrative and intellectual layers onto this rich, inclusive, varied, and variable ‘collideorscape’ book.”

– Congrong Dai, professor, winner of China’s Influential Book of 2012 Award.

“In moving his magic lantern across Joyce’s book of the night, O’Brien actualizes for the viewer/reader that lavish palette of *Wakean* colors that its blind creator remembered and imagined, but could no longer see.” – Philip Sicker, editor, *Joyce Studies Annual*

“O’Brien elaborates on and questions *Finnegans Wake* as an ‘unreadable’ book and calls it ‘communist’ ... He is right – and he does something about it: he puts into practice a counter strategy. If the book is unreadable, it may be ‘writeable.’ ”

– Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, professor, art historian, curator, Amsterdam

“O’Brien does not represent an organized, collective movement, instead having much in common with *art brut*: the kind of work produced by solitary figures on the margins of the institutions and markets of the art world, thus bearing witness to another kind of freedom.”

– David Spurr, author, Professor Emeritus, Université de Genève

“Joyce needed only words, but struggled to leave the space of his text alone. In glorious colour, Peter O’Brien here extends this principle and packs material into every spare space.”

– Finn Fordham, professor, co-edited and wrote the introduction for the Oxford World’s Classics edition of *Finnegans Wake*

“We can read the *Wake*, and appreciate this project, only if we let ourselves meander, wander off, get lost, loop around, allow chance to intervene, and make mistakes.”

– Michael Groden, professor, author, general editor of *The James Joyce Archive* (63 volumes)

“*Finnegans Wake* refuses to stay in its box and, as Peter O’Brien demonstrates, it lures brave, brilliant accomplices to giving the book wings.”

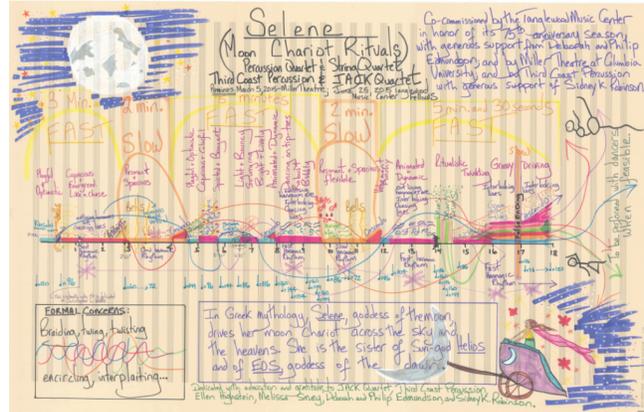
– Denis Boyles, author, university lecturer, co-editor, *The Fortnightly Review*

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