

**Two Excerpts mentioning the ASO and Robert Spano from John Adams' memoir, *Hallelujah Junction – Composing an American Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).**

*-On The Transmigration of Souls* (from page 267):

In later performances in different halls, the piece fared both better and worse. I found myself oscillating wildly between loathing it and loving it. A distinctly unsatisfying performance of the piece in London with an amateur British chorus in 2007 left me thinking the piece was a dud. But not long afterward I experienced a revelation with the very same music and texts when I heard first the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus and then the Cincinnati May Festival Chorus sing the piece with an understanding and empathy that I'd never before suspected was lying inherent in the texts. The pure American quality of their enunciation and their perfectly balanced sonorities lifted the matter-of-fact plainness of the words to a transcendental level, and for once the piece did not seem as compromised and uneven as I had previously thought.

*-Doctor Atomic* (from page 293):

...*Doctor Atomic* will never be an easy addition to the standard repertoire. The long, dreamlike second act will always present a challenge for directors and conductors. Where act I follows a more or less logical narrative thread, act II is a nearly ninety-minute symphonic arch that oscillates back and forth between a real-time event (the countdown) and a deliberately abstracted treatment of time and space that is part dream vision and part sudden, terrifying apparition. Moody soliloquies and alien electronic moonscapes give way to frantic scrambling, shrieking choral voices, and panicky orchestral stampedes.

Sitting one night at a Chicago performance conducted masterfully by Robert Spano and with Gerald Finley again singing the role of the great physicist, I wondered how this complicated piece of music drama would fare in the hands of less caring or less informed performers. Some operas will survive a mangled or indifferent production, but others live or die on the devotion and intelligence of the performers. *Doctor Atomic*, because of its exceptionally risky formal scheme, is more vulnerable than most, and it will always require the most alert and sensitive treatment from conductors, singers, and stage directors if it is to make the impact it made in its earliest embodiment.