

# David Carlson, Testimonials and Reviews

## Musician Testimonials

The moment I heard David's "True Divided Light" (for viola and piano) as well as his "Sonata for Cello and Piano" I was convinced that he would compose a world-class work for tuba. His mastery of lyrical writing, his ability to write compelling "new" music which is firmly grounded in history and structure, and his beautiful, neo-Romantic writing won me over immediately. David's idea to write a piece which capitalized upon the lyrical qualities of the tuba set against a canvas of string orchestra and harp was brilliant and thrilling. It is truly a piece of chamber music- in the same way that a Mahler symphony is: constantly morphing colors and textures, every musician's part has soloist overtones, forms that build to epic climaxes, moments of transparency bumping up against full-throttled adrenalin. This piece is quickly becoming one of the most profound and "real" pieces in the tuba repertoire.



*Jay Hunsberger*  
*Principal Tuba, Sarasota Orchestra*  
*Faculty, University of South Florida*

Simply put, working with David has been one of the most exciting and rewarding collaborations of my conducting career. Beginning with the premiere of the first cello concerto and encompassing orchestral, choral and operatic works, I've been privileged to conduct many of David's works both in the USA and Europe. Most recently I commissioned David to write an operatic version of "Anna Karenina" to celebrate the opening of the new opera house in Miami. The result was a triumph for David and subsequently we recorded the opera with the St. Louis Symphony.



Each time I approach a new work of David's I'm caught by surprise over something novel, something unexpected. His style has changed over the years but what has been constant is that each new work has a luminosity, a sense of magic that is impossible to explain in words.

Although David's technical command of orchestration is astonishingly rich in the Straussian sense, his work somehow seems to become simpler, more transparent with each new composition. This transcendental quality is ever-present and is a unique and key element that draws audiences of all kinds to be captivated on an initial hearing.

*Stewart Robertson*  
*Music Director Emeritus, Glimmerglass Festival NY*  
*Artistic Director Emeritus, Atlantic Classical Orchestra, FL*

To me, David 's music is full of emotion and color, in an easily understandable language for audiences and performers. He understands form, shape and content and the piece, "True Divided Light" starts out as an exotic dream. It then leads to the fast, wild, diabolical, moto perpetuo second movement that can leave everyone breathless, performers included! It is a huge high to be able to play it and I adore this piece!



*Geraldine Walther*  
*Violist, Takacs Quartet*

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David Carlson is the real thing. His music is supremely well-crafted, emotionally fulfilling, and technically challenging. I've had the honor and privilege of commissioning two works from him for saxophone quartet, and have performed his pieces throughout the US and abroad. Audiences are consistently thrilled and moved by his music, and as a musician, I am constantly challenged and continually rewarded by playing it. After the premiere of his most recent work for saxophone quartet, conductor Leif Bjaland told me, "That was the most exciting concert I heard all season."

I have known David for nearly 30 years, and have eagerly anticipated every new work and every new recording. I have never been disappointed. His work will endure, and I am happy to have played a small part in the creation of his magnificent oeuvre.

*David Henderson*

*Tenor Saxophone and Founder of Premiere Saxophone Quartet*



David Carlson's music is close to my heart. I have had the honor of collaborating with this master craftsman for many years. His voice is singular, inventive and engaging. His musical taste and knowledge is impeccable. Playing David's music has made me a better cellist and musician. Thank you, Maestro !!

*Emil Miland*

*Cellist, Soloist and Chamber Musician  
San Francisco Opera Orchestra*



## Reviews

On the "Tuba Concerto"

In two movements, Carlson managed to show us what a virtuoso of composition he is. It's difficult to describe new music without associating it with the past, so I must invoke the memory of Ralph Vaughan Williams because Carlson's Tuba Concerto is, in ways, reminiscent of Vaughan Williams' "The Lark Ascending" and "Serenade to Music."

But Carlson writes as if he's reinvented the Vaughan Williams sound, bringing the composer into the 21st century with luxuriant harmonies and a freshness that touches on Stravinsky's dance works.

Elfin, playful, charming, cheeky and puckish, the finale is a gossamer treat. But the opening movement, marked Andante affettuoso, has a mysterious air to it that allows the sensuousness of the tuba, lovingly caressed by Hunsberger, to sound like something both beautiful and otherworldly.

*June Lebell*

*The Observer*

[Full Review](#)

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## On "Rhasodies"

On the first half, Blomstedt paired Haydn's Symphony No. 86 with David Carlson's Rhapsodies. The latter is a lush sequence of instrumental songs, currently making the rounds of orchestras great and small, far and near. Reminiscent of Stravinsky's "Firebird" in the shimmering scoring and David Del Tredici's "Alice" music in its yearning sentiment, Rhapsodies is a gushingly accessible orchestral vehicle. Graced with eloquent, pointed woodwind solos and a warm string context, the performance rose frequently to expansive climaxes, glib emotional swellings rather than substantive developments.

*John Henken*

*Los Angeles Times*

[Full Review](#)

## On *Anna Karenina*

Mr. Carlson (who visited Russia for inspiration) remained faithful to a 19th-century Russian sound world, even using a variant of the Czar's Hymn (which Tchaikovsky used in "1812 Overture" and the "Marche Slav") as a fate motif. His romantic and luxuriantly textured music, with soaring vocal writing, retains interest with an underlying tension and hint of astingency.

*Vivien Schweitzer*

*New York Times*

[Full Review](#)

## On *Dreamkeepers*

Tackling the difficulties of assimilating the microtones and vocal inflections of Native American music within a lush, post-romantic score, Carlson uses distinctive Ute rhythms, dance steps, and instruments, including a river-cone flute.

*American Opera*

*Elise Kirk*