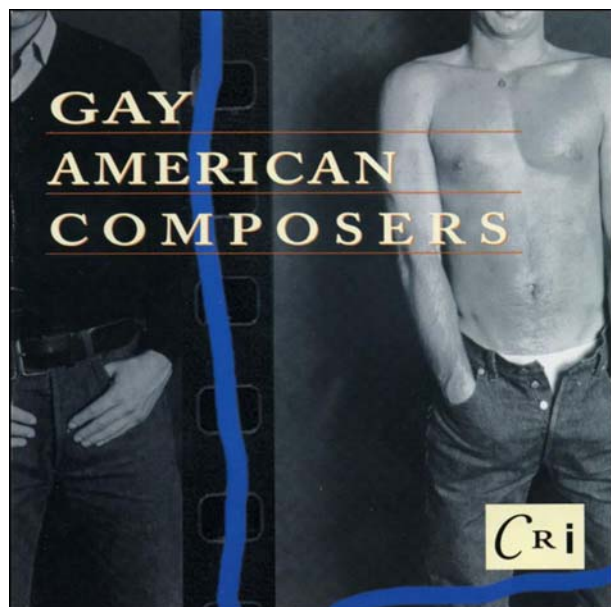


Gay American Composers



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| 1. Robert Helps: <i>Hommage à Rachmaninoff</i> (1972) (2:13)
Robert Helps, piano | David Del Tredici: <i>Fantasy Pieces</i> (1960) (9:28) |
| 2. Lee Hoiby: "I Was There" from <i>Five Songs on Poems of Walt Whitman</i> (1988) (3:03)
Peter Stewart, baritone, Lee Hoiby, piano | 10. I – Adagio (1:56) |
| Lou Harrison: Selections from String Quartet Set (1978–79) | 11. II – Poco allegretto (1:37) |
| 3. Variations (5:19) | 12. III – Allegro minacciando (...Diabolique) (1:25) |
| 4. Estampe (3:58)
Kronos Quartet: David Harrington, John Sherba, violins; Hank Dutt, viola, Joan Jeanrenaud, cello | 13. IV – Largo (4:34)
David Del Tredici, piano |
| 5. Chester Biscardi: <i>Incitation to Desire: Tango</i> (1984) (3:17) | 14. Robert Maggio: <i>Desire-Movement</i> from Two Quartets (1993) (7:28)
Bart Feller, Kathleen Nester, flute; Fred Sherry, Jonathan Spitz, cello; Bradley Lubman, conductor |
| Ned Rorem: Selections from <i>The Nantucket Songs</i> (1979) | 15. Conrad Cummings: <i>In the Department of Love</i> (1988) (3:59)
Text by James Sienna
Cummings Ensemble: Dora Ohrenstein, soprano; Larry Adams, baritone; Gregory Fulkerson, violin; Daryl Goldberg, cello; Andrew Sterman, woodwinds; Conrad Cummings, keyboard |
| 6. The Dance (William Carlos Williams) (1:27) | 16. William Hibbard: <i>Bass Trombone, Bass Clarinet, Harp</i> (1973) (8:01)
Jon English, bass trombone; Charles West, bass clarinet; Motter Forman, harp; William Hibbard, conductor |
| 7. Nantucket (William Carlos Williams) (1:13) | 17. Jerry Hunt: Excerpt from <i>Transform (Stream)</i> (1977) (3:16)
Jerry Hunt, voice and original instruments |
| 8. Go, Lovely Rose (Edmund Waller) (1:35) | 18. Lou Harrison: <i>Serenade for Betty Freeman & Franco Assetto</i> (1978) (5:48)
Lou Harrison, suling; Gamelan Sekar Kembar: Timothy Beswick, Larry Calame, Alice Dahl, Robert Neilson, Trish Neilson, Andrew Ostwald, Cindy Otterness, Richard Vosper, Jacqueline Wiebe, Lou Harrison and William Colvig |
| 9. The Dancer (Edmund Waller) (1:50)
Phyllis Bryn-Julson, soprano, Ned Rorem, piano | 19. Chris DeBlasio: <i>Walt Whitman in 1989</i> (1990) ... (3:40)
Poem by Perry Brass; Michael Dash, baritone; Chris DeBlasio, piano |
| | 20. Robert Helps: <i>Hommage à Fauré</i> (1972) (3:55)
Robert Helps, piano |
| | Total playing time: 70:20
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Notes

In 1971, after the release of pianist Natalie Hinderas's landmark double-LP of classical music by black composers—the first recording to look at the contribution of African American composers to classical music—a storm of heated controversy ensued. What does race have to do with music? Why bring something as base as the human body into the discussion of something as precious as classical music? As one observer later remarked, "Black was beautiful but it was still revolutionary to say so."

I am reminded of this debate of twenty-five years ago when considering the reaction to the recent "outings" of gay American composers. Though gender and sexuality are hot topics today in musicology and pop music journalism, the mere

mention of sexuality in the same breath as classical music frequently provokes squirms, if not more vocal indignation.

Granted, music is an abstract art form and it has no gender. Yet haven't sexual words like "passion" and "climax" been used for years to describe music? And doesn't all music, written and sounded, come through the body?

With this recording, *Gay American Composers*, we have tried to avoid presenting a point of view on the issues surrounding these topics (that is, of course, unless the very acknowledgment of homosexuality implies a point of view). Instead, we have gathered together works from the CRI catalogue by some of today's finest composers. They range in age from their early-thirties to their mid-seventies, live in various parts

of the country, and write in a diversity of styles and genres. We have allowed each composer to speak for himself on the topic of homosexuality and its impact on his music and his career. (We do hope that it will be possible for CRI to present a collection of music by lesbian American composers.)

There is no denying that throughout this century, gay composers have played a central role in the maturing art of American classical music. CRI is proud to present this disc as further evidence of the vital contribution of gay men to the contemporary music scene. The works selected here are merely samples of the substantial output of each artist. We hope this disc will ultimately entice you to explore their work further.

—Joseph R. Dalton,
Managing Director,
Composers Recordings, Inc.

Robert Helps (b Passaic, NJ, 23 Sept 1928; d Tampa, FL, 1 Dec 2001) has served as professor of piano at the New England and San Francisco Conservatories, Princeton and Stanford Universities, the University of California at Berkeley, and the Manhattan School of Music, and was artist-in-residence at the University of California, Davis. As a composer, he has won awards and grants from the Guggenheim, Naumburg, Ford and Fromm Foundations, several commissions from the National Endowment for the Arts, and an award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The American Composers Orchestra recorded his *Gossamer Noons* (1977), a setting of poetry by James Purdy, with soprano Bethany Beardslee—one of many artists whom Helps accompanied over the years.

Hommage à Fauré and *Hommage à Rachmaninoff* from *Robert Helps: Collected Works*, CRI CD 717, American Masters series

Lee Hoiby (b. 1926) was born in Wisconsin and currently resides in upstate New York. Though he has composed two piano concertos and other instrumental works, he is principally known for his vocal works, including the operas *Summer and Smoke* (1971), *The Tempest* (1986), the oratorio *Galileo Galilei* (1975), and the cantata *A Hymn of the Nativity* (1960). Among his nearly one-hundred songs are “Investiture at Ceconi’s,” set to text by James Merrill, which was part of the original 1991 *AIDS Quilt Song Book*, and the song cycle *I Was There*, which was commissioned and premiered by baritone Peter Stewart for his New York City debut in 1989.

I Was There from *Continual Conversation with a Silent Man: Songs of Lee Hoiby* featuring Peter Stewart, baritone, accompanied by the composer, CRI CD 685

Lou Harrison (b Portland, OR, 14 May 1917; d Lafayette, IN, 2 Feb 2003) was born in Portland, Oregon and for the past forty years lived in the Monterey Bay area of California. While thoroughly American and personal, his music draws on Eastern sounds, including alternative tunings and the innovative and extensive use of percussion. Recent major performances include *Parade for MTT*, which opened the 1995–96 inaugural season of Michael Tilson Thomas as music director of the San Francisco Symphony, and Dennis Russell Davies’s performance of the Symphony No. 3, also with the San Francisco Symphony. Harrison is currently at work on a new score commissioned by choreographer Mark Morris, who has set many dances to the composer’s music. Harrison also is a published poet, calligraphist, painter and writer, studies sign language and is currently designing a straw bale house for a high desert getaway with his companion William Colvig.

String Quartet Set and *Serenade for Betty Freeman and Franco Aspetto* from *Lou Harrison: Collected Works*, CRI CD 613, American Masters series

Chester Biscardi (b 1948) was born in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and lives in Manhattan with his partner, baritone Peter Stewart. He is the recipient of the Prix de Rome, the Japan Foundation Fellowship, an Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts & Letters, and a Guggenheim Fellowship, as well as commissions from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation and the NEA. He is currently the William Schuman Chair in Music at Sarah Lawrence College. Among his recent works is *The Gift of Life* (1990–93) a setting for soprano and piano of texts by Emily Dickinson, Denise Levertov, and Thornton Wilder. His opera, *Tight Rope*, with a libretto by Henry Butler, was produced in 1985 in Madison, Wisconsin.

Incitation to Desire: Tango from *Chester Biscardi: At the Still Point*, CRI CD 686

Ned Rorem (b 1923), once called by *Time* magazine “the world’s best composer of art songs,” has written over three hundred songs as well as numerous works for chamber and orchestral forces. Two of his operas, *Miss Julie* (1964–65) and *A Childhood Miracle* (1952) have recently been recorded for the first time. Rorem won the Pulitzer Prize in 1976 for the orchestral suite *Air Music*. Other honors include Guggenheim fellowships and induction into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Recent major works include the Concerto for Piano Left-Hand and Orchestra (1991), written for Gary Graffman and premiered by the Curtis Institute Orchestra (the composer’s alma mater) with conductor André Previn; the Concerto for English Horn and Orchestra (1993), commissioned by the New York Philharmonic for its 150th anniversary celebrations; and the String Quartet No. 4 (1995), commissioned by the Emerson String Quartet. Rorem has also written thirteen books including the 1994 memoir *Knowing When to Stop*. He has lived with James R. Holmes, a musician and analyst, since 1967.

The Nantucket Songs from *Ned Rorem: Collected Songs*, CRI CD 657, American Masters series

David Del Tredici (b 1937) is famous for his on-going series of large-scale settings of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* writings. “In Memory of a Summer Day,” a section of the evening-length *Child Alice* (1977–1981), received the 1980 Pulitzer Prize. The unabashedly tonal writing in many of these works, especially *Final Alice* (1976), a bicentennial commission for the Chicago Symphony, earned Del Tredici a reputation as a leader in “neo-Romanticism” and the return to tonality. However, he first came to prominence in the 1960s for his atonal writing, in particular his three settings of James Joyce texts for chamber ensemble and voice. As child prodigy, Del Tredici first studied piano before turning to composition.

Fantasy Pieces from *New Chamber and Solo Works by Del Tredici, Helps, Street and Radzynski*, CRI CD 649; also available: *Del Tredici: An Alice Symphony*, CRI CD 688 and *Del Tredici: Three Joyce Settings*, CRI CD 689, American Masters series

Robert Maggio (b 1964) lives in Philadelphia with his partner, the artist Tony LaSalle, and is on the faculty of the West Chester University School of Music. Maggio graduated from Yale University in 1986, and subsequently received master’s and doctoral degrees in music composition from the University of Pennsylvania. Maggio’s music has been commissioned and performed by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the Oakland East Bay Symphony, and the Kennedy

Center. He has received awards, grants and fellowships from ASCAP, BMI, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Meet the Composer and the American Music Center.

Desire-Movement from *Robert Maggio: Seven Mad Gods*, CRI CD 720

Conrad Cummings (b 1948) was born in San Francisco and studied at Yale and Columbia and was a researcher at IRCAM in Paris before joining the faculty of Oberlin Conservatory, where he directed the music and media program. He has written and produced three full-length operas: *Eros and Psyche* (1983) for the Oberlin Conservatory; *Photo-Op* (1989), with libretto by James Siena for La MaMa Etc., in collaboration with Ridge Theater; and *Tonkin* (1993), for the Opera Delaware. In addition to repertoire for his New York-based ensemble of amplified instruments and voices, he has written orchestral and chamber music. Currently, Cummings is a nano-opera composer for Hyperspace Cowgirls, an interactive multimedia company in New York City.

In the Department of Love from *Conrad Cummings: Photo-Op*, CRI CD 627, Emergency Music series

William Hibbard (b Newton, MA, 8 Aug 1939; d San Francisco, 5 April 1989) was associated with the University of Iowa from the time he received his doctorate there in 1967, serving as professor of music and co-founder and music director of the University's Center for New Music. Born in Newton, Massachusetts, Hibbard maintained homes in Iowa City and San Francisco, where he died of AIDS at age 49. As a violist, Hibbard frequently played new works and was principal of the Quad City Symphony Orchestra. He described his music as strictly serial. His catalogue consists of over forty concert works; both Hibbard and his music have been described as unabashed, honest, and direct.

The composer and arts administrator Philip Blackburn, a former student of Hibbard's, recalls: "A twinkle came to his eye at the mention of Carter, Wuorinen, and trichords—and he mentioned them a lot. As a teacher, he really made those subjects come alive. He was known to have shown up in class in full-leather and once said among friends, "My two favorite things are serialism and sex and not necessarily in that order." He was deeply committed to the relationship between physicality and academically rigorous music. Another former student and friend, Donald Engstrom remarks "Bill was deeply shy and could come off as cold or elitist. This is because he would be hesitant to speak, always wanting to use language very precisely so that it would say exactly what he wanted it to say, especially when it came to spiritual and

queer topics. But his heart and his true voice were in his music."

Bass Trombone, Bass Clarinet, Harp originally released on CRI SD 324 and is currently available on *William Hibbard In Memoriam*, CD 675 on the Music & Arts label

Jerry Hunt (b Waco, TX, 30 Nov 1943; d Canton, TX, 27 Nov 1993) was a true American original. He described the focus of his musical work after 1978 as "the production of a series of interrelated electronic, mechanic and social sound-sight interactive transactional system performances, with and for other performers, and interactive participant array installations." Besides the electronic sound-pieces of the 1970s, he is remembered for legendary performances at international music festivals in the 1980s, including a series of collaborations with performance artists Karen Finley. Hunt drew inspiration from the esoteric magical studies and angelic transcriptions of the Elizabethan John Dee. He also drew upon the latest advances in electronic equipment, himself a pioneering inventor of electronic circuitries (*Transform (Stream)* is an early example of digital speech synthesis). A life-long Texan, Hunt was born in Waco and died in Canton after a long bout with lung cancer.

Transform (Stream) from *Jerry Hunt: Lattice*, CRI CD 713

Chris DeBlasio (b West Long Branch, NJ, 22 Feb 1959; d New York, 21 July 1993) was the composer of the musical *Instant Lives* (1984), based on the poetry and prose of Howard Moss, and the operetta *A Murder is Foretold* (1984), suggested by an Oscar Wilde story, with a libretto by Sharon Holland. He received commissions from Trinity Church (New York), Union Theological Seminary, the New Orleans Gay Men's Chorus, and various instrumentalists and singers. He provided scores for the off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway plays *Stray Dog Story*, *Night Sweat*, and *Adam and the Experts*, and served as composer-in-residence for the Williamstown Theater Festival's Second Company. He created arrangements for the late Martha Schlamme, and served as arranger and conductor at the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, the Chelsea Theater Center, and Mabou Mines. His song cycle, *All The Way through Evening*, is a setting of texts by the New York City-based author and poet Perry Brass. Chris was an early member of ACT-UP/New York and is survived by his lover William Berger.

"Walt Whitman in 1989" from *And Trouble Came, Musical Responses to AIDS*, by Chris DeBlasio, C. Bryan Rulon and Laura Kaminsky performed by Musicians' Accord, CRI CD 729.

Production Notes

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