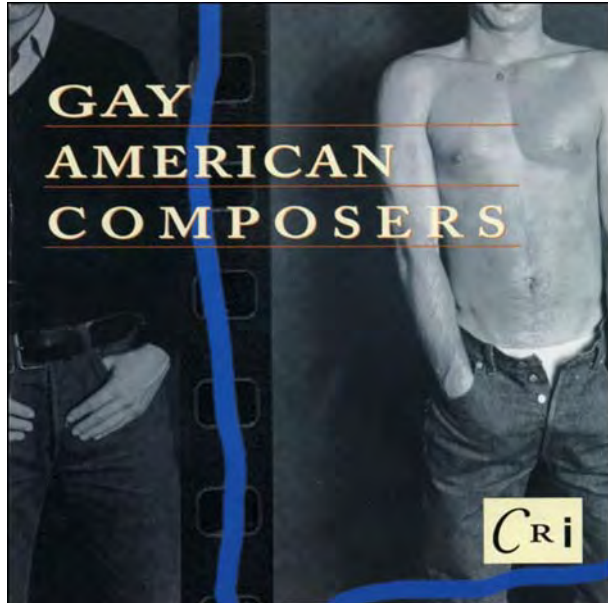


Gay American Composers



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Robert Helps, piano
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16. William Hibbard: *Bass Trombone, Bass Clarinet, Harp* (1973) (8:01)
Jon English, bass trombone; Charles West, bass clarinet; Motter Forman, harp; William Hibbard, conductor
17. Jerry Hunt: Excerpt from *Transform (Stream)* (1977) (3:16)
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19. Chris DeBlasio: *Walt Whitman in 1989* (1990) (3:40)
Poem by Perry Brass; Michael Dash, baritone; Chris DeBlasio, piano
20. Robert Helps: *Hommage à Fauré* (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 Cecconi’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

Conceived and Produced by Joseph R. Dalton

Mastered by Joseph R. Dalton and Robert Wolff, Engineer at Sony Music Studios, New York City.

Art Direction & Design: Mark Leger

Photography: Charles Hovland, Cover Model: Fabio

Publishers: Helps: C.F. Peters; Hoiby: G. Schirmer, Harrison String Quartet Set: Peer International, Serenade: Hermes Beard Press/Frog Peak; Biscardi: C.F. Peters; Rorem: Boosey & Hawkes; Del Tredici: Boosey & Hawkes; Maggio: Theodore Presser; Cummings: Composer; Hibbard: Ione Press; Hunt: Hunt Estate; De Blasio: De Blasio.Estate.

Proceeds from the sale of this disc will help continue the work of CRI.

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This compact disc was made possible through the generous support of Maury Newburger.

GAY AMERICAN COMPOSERS

- [1] **ROBERT HELPS** *Hommage à Rachmaninoff* (1972) (2:13)

Robert Helps, *piano*

- [2] **LEE HOIBY** *I Was There* (1988) (3:03)

from *Five Songs on Poems of Walt Whitman*

Peter Stewart, *baritone*, Lee Hoiby, *piano*

LOU HARRISON from String Quartet Set (1978-9)

- [3] Variations (5:19)

- [4] Estampe (3:58)

Kronos Quartet

David Harrington, John Sherba, *violins*,
Hank Dutt, *viola*, Joan Jeanrenaud, *cello*

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DAVID DEL TREDICI *Fantasy Pieces* (1960) (9:28)

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- [14] **ROBERT MAGGIO** *Desire-Movement* (1993) (7:28)

from Two Quartets

Bart Feller, Kathleen Nester, *flutes*, Fred Sherry, Jonathan Spitz, *cellos*

Bradley Lubman, *conductor*

- [15] **CONRAD CUMMINGS** *In The Department of Love* (1988) (3:59)

Text by James Sienna

Cummings Ensemble:

Dora Ohrenstein, *soprano*, Larry Adams, *baritone*

Gregory Fulkerson, *violin*, Daryl Goldberg, *cello*,

Andrew Serman, *woodwinds*, Conrad Cummings, *keyboard*

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Jerry Hunt, *voice and original instruments*
- [18] **LOU HARRISON** *Serenade for Betty Freeman & Franco Assetto* (1978) (5:48)
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Michael Dash, *baritone*, Chris DeBlasio, *piano*
- [20] **ROBERT HELPS** *Hommage à Fauré* (1972) (3:55)
Robert Helps, *piano*

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1971, after the release of pianist Natalie Hinderas' 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 so base as the human body into the discussion of something so 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 disc, *Gay American Composers*, we have tried to avoid presenting a point of view on the issues surrounding these topics (unless, of course, 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-30s to their mid-70s, live in various parts of the country, and write in a diversity of styles and genres. And 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 soon 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 form 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 only 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

"I personally feel there is no artistic difference between 'gay' music (music written by 'gay' composers) versus 'straight' music (music written by, presumably, 'straight' composers). In the act of creation these concepts disappear. But who knows what affects us subliminally? Furthermore, if this disc and similar ones reach an audience of sympathetic listeners, many perhaps previously untapped, and if any excitement, rapport, consolation or communication results, I feel more than happy to have been a part of the project. Also, I am truly pleased with the meaty list of composers presented on this disc and am happy to be in the company I'm in.

"The two pieces of mine on this disc are somewhat off the mainstream of my compositions, but less so as time goes by. In both pieces there is some attempt to evoke times past, hopefully inducing nostalgia with lush harmony and sensuous piano writing. The *Hommage a Fauré* was written when I was a bit out of my mind — a temperature of 104 degrees drove me to the writing table. A 'tune' which normally would have been instantly suppressed took over with extreme (at the time) non-contemporary tonal consequences. The *Hommage a Rachmaninoff* had an even more peculiar birth. I had written in the 50s a piano etude for myself — purely an exercise — the pianistically irritating part of which was the inner trill in the right hand. Twenty years later I entertained the thought of turning the left-hand

part into a much more 'interesting', contrapuntal, more melodically contemporary creature. The result, with very few right-hand changes, became the *Hommage*. I tried the pieces out on several friends, about eight in total. Results were mixed. Four recommended burning them instantly; four glowed with an inner warmth, a warmth apparently not connected

with burning them, and said they were without doubt the best pieces I had ever written. My vote remained in doubt. A little later at a relaxed gathering at Aaron Copland's house I decided to let him be the judge between burning and a visit to C.F. Peters publishing house. For right or wrong he recommended the latter."

ROBERT HELPS (b. 1928) has been professor of piano at the New England Conservatory, the San Francisco Conservatory, Princeton University, Stanford University, the University of California at Berkeley, the Manhattan School of Music and artist-in-resident 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 a à Fauré* and *Hommage a Rachmaninoff* from *Robert Helps: Collected Works*,

CD 717 in the CRI American Masters series (available June, 1996).

LEE HOIBY

"I Was There is the title of a work for baritone and orchestra consisting of five Whitman settings, among them *O Captain! My Captain!* and the title song recorded here. I see no traces of my sexual preferences in my (or any) music. Whitman, on the other hand, leaves the finger prints of his sexuality all over his work. Some observation about the ineffable relationship between words and music might be derived from this."

LEE HOIBY (b. 1926) was born in Wisconsin and lives 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," with text by James Merrill, which was part of the original 1991 *AIDS Quilt Song Book*, and the song cycle *I Was There*, which baritone Peter Stewart commissioned and premiered at his New York City debut in 1989.

▼ *I Was There* from *Continual Conversation with a Silent Man: Songs of Lee Hoiby, Peter Stewart, Baritone, Accompanied by the Composer*, CRI CD 685.

LOU HARRISON

"Since childhood I've known that I liked other males. My two main mentors, Henry Cowell and Virgil Thomson, were gay and I early learned that Tchaikowsky and the divine Mr. Handel also were. My friend John Cage was gay and William Colvig and I have, for twenty-nine years, maintained a loving and working life together.

Learning anything from a man of congenial disposition is always easier for me, and in foreign lands I used to find a lover and/or a helper within a few days. I have not populated, and I omit religion and abjure government. Living and working outside the mainstream is, I believe, a help to those inside the mainstream.

"In the mid 1970s, I was happy to receive a commission from Canada, specifically from Robert Aitken's New Music Concerts of Toronto, along with the Canada Council. The result was my String Quartet Set. At one point in the rehearsal by the Orford Quartet, which premiered the work in Toronto, I had to leave the room — broken' up, tears in the eyes and the whole bit — because I had not imagined that it could be played so beautifully. The Variations are the beautiful Palestinian Song by Walter von der Vogelweide (1107-1228) and were begun in the '40s when I first encountered that Minnesinger's lovely melody. My variations are hard to play, because (contrary to popular belief) the 'Pythagorean' intonation suitable to quintal counterpoint is quite hard to produce on the violin family, which more easily plays the soft thirds of the 'just diatonic.'

"My friend the percussionist William Winant pointed out to me that the English 'stampede' is cognate with the French 'estampie' and really means a general bru-ha-ha and excitement. Fortunately it is a useful and interesting form to compose and I have made a number of them.

"The gamelan 'Sekar Kembar,' now the possession of Trish Neilsen, was tuned by William Colvig in a form of just intonation. Mr. Colvig also created the small 'suling' (or flute) which is used in the gamelan

degung and which I play in the Serenade for Betty Freeman and Franco Aspetto. All know of the generosity and good will of Betty Freeman to music and other arts. She is herself now a famed photographer and brings to us faces and places which many of us have never known before."

LOU HARRISON (b. 1917) was born in Portland, Oregon and has lived for the past forty years in the Monterey Bay area of California. His music, while thoroughly American and personal, draws on Eastern



Lou Harrison (right) with partner, Bill Colvig

sounds including alternative tunings and innovative and extensive uses 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' performance, also with the San Francisco Symphony, of the Symphony No. 3. Harrison is currently at work on a new score

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

CHESTER BISCARDI

"I am fortunate to have grown up in the late '60s and early '70s in the midst of the anti-war and gay liberation movements on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. 'Coming out' seemed like the most natural thing in the world to me. I didn't have to fight for my sexual identity and have always felt strongly that the way I choose to live my life and write my music — as a full human being with a variety of concerns — is the most powerful and personal political statement I can make.

"I wrote *Incitation to Desire* (*Tango*) for the International Tango Collection which includes eighty-eight composers as varied as John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Virgil Thomson. The work appears in both solo piano and chamber versions and has been performed by numerous interpreters, including two fine virtuoso pianists who also happen to be gay men, Anthony de Mare and the late Yvar Mikhashoff (for whom it was written and who first recorded it on New Albion). It is in one short movement starting with a brief, flashy introduction, then the tango itself entitled 'in the style of a tango-canion' (originally a vocal form with instrumental accompaniment and strong sentimental character) with abstracted characteristic habanera rhythmic patterns in 2/4 meter and sentimental

melody, and then a brief, driving coda. The title comes from H. C. Colles' 'tango' entry in the Fifth Volume of the 1944 Third Edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*: 'The movements of the dance are less presentable to a polite audi-

ence than those of the Habanera, and as now performed in the cafés chantants of Madrid and other cities of Spain the Tango has become nothing but an incitation to desire.'" CHESTER BISCARDI (b. 1948) was born in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and lives in Manhattan with his partner, the baritone Peter Stewart. He is the recipient of the Prix de Rome, the Ivan 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 chairman of the music

department as well as 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 Dickinson, Levertov and 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

“What fun to be on a record with so many old friends. (Hey, I didn’t know about Conrad!) I always used to be the youngest. Today I’m generally the oldest, except for Lou — we’ve known each other fifty years.

“During those years, especially during the past twenty-five since Gay Liberation took hold, I never bothered either to hide or to broadcast my sexuality, the issue seemed somehow so ordinary. There is no homosexual music, I always said, there is merely music by homosexuals. This stance did not stand me in favor with younger colleagues who have perhaps felt more persecuted than I.

“Only in the past decade have I come to realize that if homosexuality is extraordinary, then it is through its new political presence, a presence that asks to be accepted as ordinary. That acceptance is one that I am now — Quaker though I be — willing to fight for. As Henri IV declared on renouncing Protestantism, ‘Paris is well worth a mass,’ so homophobia is worth challenging on a soap box.

“My songs are my soap box. But they are propagandistic only in the sense that all art is subversive (as many a senator has long suspected).

“The two poets responsible for the four songs included here, the 18th-century Edmund Waller and

the 20th-century William Carlos Williams, are both straight. Had CRI chosen to represent my settings of, say, Whitman’s *Calamus Poems* (his most outspokenly homophobic work) or the contemporary Paul Monette’s ‘Love Alone’ (about a love that dares to speak its name), would listeners detect the music to

be more queer? Music is the one art whose maker’s orientation cannot be deduced. Which is why so many female composers write music that sounds more ‘masculine’ than maybe that of Chopin or Delius who in their heterosexuality never tried to prove anything. But what is masculine music? And is queerness necessarily effeminate? Maybe all music is queer. Or rather, all German music is queer, all French music is straight.

“For the record, these four songs are extracted from a cycle of ten called *The Nantucket Songs*, composed for soprano Phyllis Bryn-Julson. This performance is from the premiere at the Library of Congress in 1979, when

Phyllis and I (at the piano) both had the flu.”

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 membership in the American Academy of Arts & Letters. Recent major works include the Concerto for Piano Left-Hand and Orchestra (1991) written for Gary Graffman and premiered by the orchestra of The Curtis Institute (the composer’s alma mater) with conductor Andre 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, CD 657 in the CRI American Masters series.

DAVID DEL TREDICI

“The four Fantasy Pieces were written at a tumultuous personal time — 1959, age 22, Princeton University Graduate School, away from home for the first time, a shame-drenched Catholic virgin coming out as a gay man.

“Throughout my adolescence playing the piano and later composing were the only two activities which allowed me to express feelings. No wonder I practiced so many hours a day, composed with such



passion! As well, music — my special gift — allowed me to ignore my nascent sexuality — to pretend, even, that it didn’t exist. In my teenage mind there was either a good ‘musical’ me or an abyss — that bad, subterranean, homosexual part of me (the term ‘gay’ had not yet been coined). As I was writing Fantasy Pieces a terrifying light — reality — was beginning to shine into those depths.

"Certainly my later attraction to the poetry of James Joyce and the *Wonderland* books of Lewis Carroll relates, in part, to sexuality and shame. Identifying earliest with Joyce the tortured, lapsed Catholic, I moved on, even more ardently, to Carroll the clever man with the sexual secret. I think it was our secrets — Lewis Carroll liking little girls and me liking big boys — that drew us together. I always used to say 'If you gave me Lewis Carroll's shopping list I could set it to music.' You see, it was not the words, it was the man I really set.

"It is a pleasure to speak now in these notes things I once thought unspeakable."

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 Pulitzer Prize in 1980. 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, especially three settings for chamber ensemble and voice of texts by James Joyce. 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*, CD 689 in the CRI American Masters series.

ROBERT MAGGIO

"I am thrilled to stand and be counted among the extraordinary composers on this disc, whose work continues to inspire and inform my own. I write music that matters to me — music that explores my internal emotional life and the relationships between individuals. As with all important facets of my identity, my homosexuality has an influence on my music, at times directly affecting the



pieces I write. In 1993 I composed *Winter Toccata* (*I can't believe you want to die*), which grew out of my AIDS volunteer work, beginning as a musical response to the polemics by Larry Kramer in his book *Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist*. "I composed most of *Two Quartets* (desire, movement, love, stillness) without conscious external inspira-

tions, following the lead of my initial musical ideas and their characteristics: aggressive, kinetic, public. About halfway through the movement, the music turned unexpectedly inward, becoming private and unassuming. I began to consider the piece as a kind of spiritual journey from distortion and distraction to resolution and focus — a search for the empty space in which clarity exists. When the piece was nearly finished, I began reading T. S. Eliot's 'Burnt Norton' from *Four Quartets*. I was challenged on an intellectual and emotional level by Eliot's ideas of desire, movement, love and stillness. For Eliot, desire — the obsession, the excess movement, the acute awareness of the passage of time — is not desirable. This is the state of the fast music in the first movement. Love, on the other hand, is undesiring, a form of meditation, the harvesting of energy, timeless: the state toward

which the music continually moves."

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 Doctorate degrees in Music Composition from the University of Pennsylvania. Maggio's music has been commissioned and performed by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the Kennedy Center and Oakland East Bay Symphony. 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

"The interesting thing is that when I composed *In the Department of Love* in 1988 I was fairly sure I was straight. I'm quite sure I'm gay now — it dawned on me four or five years ago — so *is In the Department of Love* a piece by a gay composer? Being an outsider and an insider at the same time has been part of my life since I was a kid in so many dimensions that the



gay/straight one only adds to it. And I suppose the urge to synthesize or reconcile conflicting positions has been part of me for that long. I'm sure I was attracted to James Siena's lyrics for that reason: love and war as subjects, passionate and bureaucratic language as tones, and the tones and subjects reversed from what you'd expect. *In the Department of Love's*

companion *Midgetman* is passionate language about war, *In the Department of Love* is bureaucratic language about love. May you and your loved ones be 'industrialized'!"

CONRAD CUMMINGS (b. 1948) was born in San Francisco and trained at Yale, Stony Brook 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 Oberlin, *Photo-Op* (1989)

with libretto by James Siena for La MaMa Etc. in collaboration with Ridge Theater, and *Tonkin* (1993) with 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*, CD 627 in the CRI Emergency Music series.

WILLIAM HIBBARD

from 1974:

"My Bass Trombone, Bass Clarinet, Harp trio began as a short essay for solo trombone several years ago, but was abandoned at the completion of the opening section, where the bass clarinet now enters. One year later I decided to expand this solo into a duet for bass trombone and bass clarinet. Though the resultant duet was attractive, I lost interest in the potential of the material for this particular combination. Finally — and again one year later — I thought of adding a vertical element, a predominately choral harp part, to this twice thwarted attempt. The result is the composition in its present form: an essay in contrasts between the melodically oriented wind instruments and the harmoni-

cally stoic harp.

"The bass trombone and bass clarinet essay a differentiated style of melodic expression. The former is generally 'steady-state' and angular in its approach to dynamics. Timbral richness and variety are produced by the use of four types of mutes. The bass clarinet, on the other hand, complements the bass trombone's timbral variety with an extremely fluid, non-steady-state style of dynamic expression, continually in motion with crescendo and decrescendo. The harp has its own inner contrast achieved through the opposition of events played either secco or allowed to ring, as well as between chords played either non-arpeggio or rolled in the normal fashion."

WILLIAM HIBBARD (1939-1989) was associated with The University of Iowa from the time he received his PhD 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 and 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. Currently available on the disc *William Hibbard In Memoriam*, CD 675 on the Music & Arts label.

JERRY HUNT

In 1957, in the eighth grade, Jerry met his partner, Stephen Housewright. These are Stephen's comments on how Jerry felt his work was influenced by his homosexuality:

Practically speaking, Jerry and I both always believed our being gay freed us from the constraints imposed on heterosexuals. We didn't have to plan our lives around any responsibilities except those we felt toward one another and to ourselves. For Jerry, this meant that he could spend his time composing and performing music without worrying too much about schedules and money. He also had the time to explore his interest in cooking, carpentry, and Dutch.

We did talk about whether there is such a thing as a "gay sensibility." We visited an art exhibition at The New School in the mid-80s organized to investigate that theme, but we agreed that all it really proved is that there is such a thing as "camp." On an intuitive level, though, we were always certain that being gay did make us 'different' in fundamental ways — due in large part, we supposed, to how society treats us.

I think for Jerry being gay freed him to play, in the deadly serious way serious artists do. He had the time, and the latitude, to indulge himself in a richly imaginative, creative life, and if he was marginalized as a homosexual, he was at the same time given a unique perspective on the world. "My whole life has

been one great big happy easy accident," he told Gordon Monahan in an interview, "in which all of my stresses and neurotic reactions and unhappinesses have been complete luxury items that I can indulge in to whatever degree I find satisfying. In a way I wish everyone could have that choice."

JERRY HUNT (1943-1993) 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 soundpieces 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 long bout with lung cancer.

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



CHRIS DeBLASIO

Walt Whitman in 1989 is the last song in Chris DeBlasio's wrenching five-song cycle *All the Way Through Evening*, which he set to my words. I am the last person alive involved with the creation of the cycle. Chris died of AIDS complications in 1993, two years after the cycle's premiere; Michael Dash, the beautiful baritone who premiered the cycle and for whom Chris wrote the music, died in 1995. *Walt Whitman in 1989* has truly become an anthem of our time. It was included in Will Parker's groundbreaking *AIDS Quilt Songbook* program, and has been performed hundreds of times by many different singers. Each time, it seems to pull a hole out of people's hearts and then fill it. I've had strangers come up to me afterwards and hug me. They tell me that the song has meant everything to them, and I nod and understand. At this point, what I remember most about writing the poem was that it came out, in 1989, almost spontaneously. I had written a great deal about AIDS already, but very little of it seemed to come from that complete part of my being that Walt Whitman in 1989 came from. I just knew, after the deaths of so many of my friends, that I had made a connection with something that I call the "gay tribe," and Walt Whitman himself is one of the signs of the tribe's existence as well as a companion to each of us who are in it.



Chris was a tremendous believer in the importance of text, and he often said that *All The Way Through Evening* was easy to write because he believed in the poems so much. Unfortunately, this was not actually the case. For about a year prior to writing the cycle, he composed almost nothing. We argued about this a lot. "What's the use of Art," he

asked me, "in the face of AIDS?" I told him that it had every use, and luckily, he came to believe me. In October of 1991, in his small walk up apartment in Greenwich Village, he played the piano while Michael performed the cycle for me for the first time. The three of us were in tears at the end, and then Michael said to me, "You know, I've sung an awful lot in my life. But this is the first thing I've sung that is really a part of me."

Walt Whitman in 1989 has become a part of all three of us. And to Chris and Michael, I thank you both. — Perry Brass
CHRIS DeBLASIO (1959-1993) 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-off-Broadway and 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 the forthcoming recording *All The Way Through Evening. Musical Responses to AIDS*, by Chris DeBlasio, C. Bryan Rulon and Laura Kaminsky performed by Musicians' Accord (Fall, 1996).

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