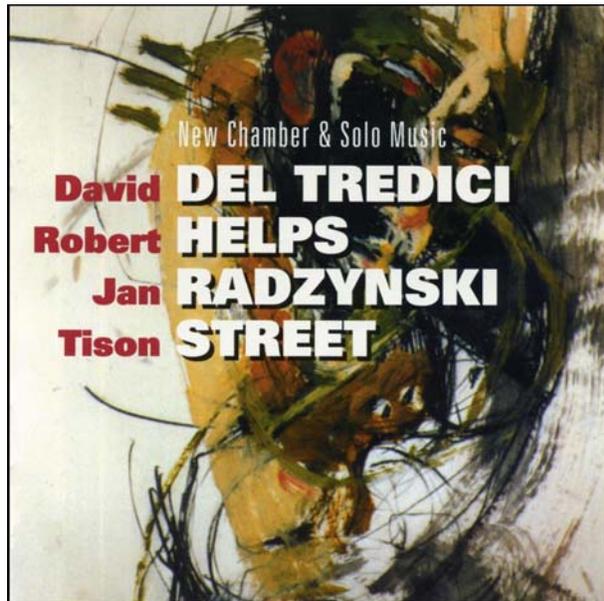


NWCR649

# New Chamber & Solo Music

David Del Tredici, Robert Helps, Jan Radzynski, Tison Street



Robert Helps

1. *Hommage à Fauré* (1972) ..... (3:56)
2. *Hommage à Rachmaninov* (1972) ..... (2:17)
3. *Hommage à Ravel* (1972) ..... (4:30)  
Robert Helps, piano

David Del Tredici

4. *Trio* (1959) ..... (8:01)  
Members of Spectrum Ensemble Berlin: Per Sporrang,  
violin; Brett Dean, viola; Frank Dodge, cello

*Fantasy Pieces* (1960)

5. I - *Adagio* ..... (1:56)
6. II - *Poco Allegretto* ..... (1:36)

7. III - *Allegro Minacciando (...Diabolique)* ..... (1:25)
8. IV - *Largo* ..... (4:37)

David Del Tredici, piano

Jan Radzynski

9. *String Quartet* (1978) ..... (12:00)  
The Aviv String Quartet: Hagai Shaham, violin;  
John McGross, violin; Yariv Aloni, viola; Zvi  
Plessner, cello

10. *Canto* (1981) ..... (10:18)  
Arnon Erez, piano

*Five Duets* (1982)

11. I - *Risoluto* ..... (1:25)
12. II - *Allegro* ..... (1:05)
13. III - *Allegretto burlesco* ..... (1:19)
14. IV - *Remembering Sepharad* ..... (2:51)
15. V - *Agitato* ..... (2:25)  
Maya Beiser, Zvi Plessner, cellos

Tison Street

16. *Trio* (1963) ..... (9:38)  
Members of Spectrum Ensemble Berlin: Per Sporrang,  
violin; Brett Dean, viola; Frank Dodge, cello

Robert Helps

17. *Nocturne* (1960) ..... (7:42)  
Members of Spectrum Ensemble Berlin Mi-Kyung  
Lee, violin; Per Sporrang, violin; Brett Dean, viola;  
Frank Dodge, cello

Total playing time: 77:12

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## Notes

Robert Helps – 3 *Hommages* for piano (1972)

I have consistently avoided writing descriptive notes for the 3 *Hommages*, preferring the listener to react to these three pieces with out prejudicial comments from the composer. These pieces were not written as a set; although I felt they complement each other quite well, they are very performable as separate pieces.

The first two *hommages* are much more tonal than any other music of mine. All three are very pianistic. These two qualities probably account for their being fairly popular as a “contemporary” selection in high-level piano competitions. The 3 *Hommages* were prominently featured on a Decca-Argo CD release by the pianist (and former student of mine) Alan Feinberg. That recording was nominated for a Grammy (1992).

The titles of the pieces, with the exception of the Ravel *hommage*, were arrived at long after their composition. The first two were therefore obviously not written, as could easily

be conjectured from the titles, as an attempt to “imitate” the “style,” of Fauré and Rachmaninov. Even so, I find the titles not inappropriate. However, when I was trying to find an appropriate title for the set, 3 *Hommages*, 3 *Nocturnes*, and 3 *Etudes*, all came to mind. Any of these titles, despite seeming contradictory, still seem appropriate to me. The combination of all three titles describe the nature of the works better for me than any one title does.

The *Nocturne* for string quartet, written in 1960, belongs to an esoteric genre of pieces that hardly ever get performed—single movement pieces for string quartet. I later incorporated the *Nocturne* into a yet more apt-not-to-be-performed work—a chamber music “happening” entitled *Serenade*, a work in three movements, performable as a single work or as separate works, of which the *Nocturne* is the middle movement. The first movement is for violin and piano (“Fantasy”), the third movement for piano, violin, and horn (“Postlude”). The three-movement version, commissioned by the Fromm Music

Foundation, was performed several years ago in New York City and Buffalo by the composer-pianist David Del Tredici and the Buffalo Contemporary Chamber Players.

The *Nocturne* is very much a mood piece, the mood being in the tradition of the numerous Mahler and Bartók “night music” movements which make their appearances in these composers’ string quartets and symphonic works. It is predominately a gentle movement—“night music” heard from afar. It does, however, have its share of “filigree” passage work and an occasional “muted” climax. The combination of delicacy, even wistfulness, and consistently high register employed in all four instruments presents, I feel, an interesting performance challenge.

—Robert Helps

**Robert Helps** (b Passaic, NJ, 23 Sept 1928; d Tampa, FL, 1 Dec 2001) was a professor of music at the University of South Florida. He also has been a recipient of awards in composition from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim, Ford, and many other foundations. His Piano Concerto No. 1 was commissioned by the Thorne Music Fund and premiered by the composer with the Manhattan Conservatory Orchestra. His Piano Concerto No. 2 was commissioned through the Ford Foundation by Richard Goode and performed by him with the Oakland Symphony.

Helps has been professor of piano at the New England Conservatory, the San Francisco Conservatory, Princeton University, Stanford University, the University of California at Berkeley, and the Manhattan School of Music. He was artist-in-residence (pianist) at the University of California-Davis in 1973. Many of his compositions, including the Symphony No. 1 (Naumburg Award) and *Gossamer Noons* for voice and orchestra, have been recorded; he also is featured extensively as pianist, composer, and pianist/composer on labels such as Victor, Columbia, Composers Recordings Inc., Deutsche Grammophon, New World, Desto, Son Nova, and GM Recordings. He music is published by C.F. Peters, Associated Music Publishers, E.B. Marks, and the American Composers Edition.

Helps has toured extensively with such internationally famous performers as Bethany Beardslee, soprano; Isidore Cohen, violinist; Rudolf Kolisch, violinist; Phyllis Curtin, soprano, and Aaron Copland, composer/pianist. Concerts have included solo recitals of the music of renowned American composer Roger Sessions at both Harvard and Princeton universities, an all-Ravel recital at Harvard; a solo recital in Town Hall, NY; four summers with the Chamber Music West summer festival; with violinist Jorja Fleezanis, (concert master of the Minnesota Symphony) in Minneapolis, San Francisco and New York; and with Bethany Beardslee, soprano, in Boston, New York City (Town Hall) and Colorado Springs.

His most recent compositions are *Eventually The Carousel Begins* for two pianos (commissioned by Norma and Leonard Mastrogiacomio from Tallahassee on a National Endowment for the Arts award) and *A Mixture of Time* for guitar and piano which was premiered in San Francisco in June 1990 by Adam Holzman and the composer.

David Del Tredici (Trio)

Trio (1959) is in one movement, divided into two parts. The first part is by turns dramatic, agitated, and rhythmic. The second, contrastingly, is lyrical and flowing. At the end there is a reprise of the piece’s opening signature sound—a sustained major third surrounded by a dissonant “buzz” of ponticello tremolos.

Written in 1959, during my last year as a college student and my first years as a composer, Trio was inspired by a performance of the Schoenberg String Trio. I had never heard “modern” string effects—*sul ponticello, col lengo, battuta*, harmonics—and these new sounds filled me with awe and wonder. Trio was the result.

The *Fantasy Pieces* [Adagio: Poco Allegretto; Allegro minacciando (...Diabolique); and Largo] were written at age twenty-two, a year after the Trio, while I was a graduate student at Princeton University. *Fantasy Pieces* began as a response to composer-professor Earl Kim’s suggestion that I try to write some twelve-tone music. Each of the pieces does, in fact, start with a tone row. However, my ear, quite differently inclined, led me down another more tonal path that ended finally, far from dodecaphony, on an unresolved dominant seventh chord.

The four pieces are highly virtuosic and were written at a time when my piano playing career was in full flower. The first two are delicate, kaleidoscopic, the third (...Diabolique) is demonic, and the last (and longest) is, by contrast, almost Wagnerian in its tonal outpourings.

The pieces are dedicated to four composer/performer friends (in order): Stephanie Shehatovitch, Earl Kim, Jules Langert, and Robert Helps.

The pianist Alan Marks has written this description of *Fantasy Pieces* “...a set of four brief impressions that are in every sense fantastic: intensely focused emotional expressions of wildness, dreaminess, nervousness, or spaciousness. What is important in each piece is the gesture; the specific notes seeming to exist secondarily to the impulse of the moment. These impulses rarely occur in strict rhythm; a hesitation will precipitate a sudden rush which may be sustained or burn out in an instant. This ebb and flow of the rhythm gives the music its improvisatory flavor. As brief as each movement is—as in Webern’s music—it is highly expressionistic and structurally bound by only two or three ideas.”

—David Del Tredici

**David Del Tredici** (b 1937) has been, arguably, America’s foremost exponent of the return to tonality in composition. Trained in serial technique, his early works, many of them settings of poems by James Joyce, reflect a quirky individuality in the handling of those orthodox musical materials. Soon however, he broke away from the language of his teachers to explore the fantasy of Lewis Carroll, and in so doing, developed a rich musical idiom of color, humor, and sentiment worked out on vast orchestral canvases of tonal sound. David Del Tredici’s lengthy list of honors and awards includes Guggenheim and Woodrow Wilson Fellowships, election to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, numerous commissions, a Friedheim Award, and the 1980 Pulitzer Prize for Music. David Del Tredici has held faculty appointments at Harvard University, Boston University, the State University of New York at Buffalo, and is currently distinguished professor of music at the City College of New York. His works are published by Boosey and Hawkes.

David Del Tredici is that rare find among composers – a creator with a truly great gift... I venture to say that his music is certain to make a lasting impression on the American musical scene. I know of no other composer of his generation, at least among those who write within the normal concert idiom, who composes music of greater freshness and daring, or with more personality.

—Aaron Copland

Jan Radzynski (String Quartet)

The String Quartet (1978) draws its inspiration from the liturgical Sephardic music of the Middle East often characterized by highly ornamented melodic lines, microtonal intervals, and various types of heterophony. The melodic contours, melismas, and subtle inflections are modeled on pitch and language interaction in biblical cantillation. The human voice, that most perfect instrument, one capable of evoking every nuance of feeling, serves as the unattainable ideal for the strings articulation and mode of expression.

In one continuous movement, the Quartet opens with an eight-part four-pitch canon that grows in density as it accumulates energy. That energy, when released at the end of the canon in a frantic viola passage, provides an impetus for the entire piece thereafter. In spite of the dense tone clusters frequently employed here, the music clearly centers tonally on C.

*Canto* (1981) is a fantasy in which fragments of a cantus firmus are woven into dream-like sequences. A broad range of keyboard textures evoke various national styles of piano playing, in particular the French and German.

The idea of repetition is expressed in *Canto* in several ways: impulse-reverberation, echo, ostinato, and reminiscence. The various registers of the piano serve as an inexhaustible source of inspiration. The considerable range of expressive and technical demands presents special challenges to the performer.

*Canto*, hailed recently by *The Jerusalem Post* as "...undoubtedly one of the most important works for the piano written in the last decade," was premiered at Sprague Hall at Yale University in 1982 by Martin Goldray. The piece is dedicated to my wife, Paula.

*Five Duets* (1992) were composed as a birthday present for Andre Hajdu, a noted Hungarian-born, Jerusalem-based composer. *Five Duets* allude in many subtle and not so subtle ways to Hajdu's multifaceted personal and musical background (he was a student of Kodály, Milhaud, and Messiaen). The piece was presented to Hajdu at a special concert in Israel that included pieces composed for this occasion by many composers from around the world. In the performances on this recording, the cellists alternate playing the first and second parts: in duets 1, 3, and 5 Plesser plays first and in 2 and 4, Beiser plays the first part.

—Jan Radzynski

**Jan Radzynski** (b 1950, Warsaw) left his native Poland in 1969 to settle in Israel. He studied composition with Leon Schidlowsky at the Tel Aviv University Academy of Music, and with Krzysztof Penderecki and Jacob Druckman at Yale University, where he received his doctorate in 1984. Radzynski is presently an associate professor of composition and theory of music at Yale.

The composer's catalogue of works during the last decade has been extensive and includes much orchestral and chamber music commissioned by noted artists and performed at various festivals. The American premiere of his *Kaddish* by the Cleveland Orchestra in 1988 received much critical acclaim. Radzynski's *David Symphony*, premiered at Avery Fisher Hall in New York in 1989, was performed the same year in Poland by the Cracow Philharmonic, and again in 1990 at the Warsaw Autumn Festival.

Radzynski's recent commissions are from the Sixth International Arthur Rubinstein Piano Competition (1989), from the Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra in Israel for Cello Concerto (1990), from the Cologne Radio Orchestra for *Time's Other Beat* (1990), from the Chamber Music Days in Upper Galilee, Israel, for Serenade for woodwind quintet (1991), from the Rothschild Foundation for *Fanfare*, premiered at the dedication of the Supreme Court building in Jerusalem (1992), and from the Virginia Symphony for Viola Concerto, to be premiered in April 1993.

Tison Street (String Trio)

My String Trio of 1963 is a twelve-tone work but not strictly so, the technique being used quite freely at times. In form it is a large one-movement arc. The opening *accompagnato* figure in the viola states the row and sets the stage for a rather lyrical theme that appears over it in the violin. These musical materials recur at the end of the piece, but transformed and elegiac in character. In the middle is an extended and virtuosic *presto* section climaxing in a *presto possibile*. Then on either side of this central *presto* are transitional episodes that evolve, develop, and reflect upon the main materials of the piece. Perhaps the most striking of these is the passage not long after the *prestissimo* climax in which a distant songlike remembrance of the theme is heard in the violin over quietly pulsing *pianissimo* chords in the viola and cello. Finally in the middle of the ending Adagio is a violin cadenza that perhaps reflects in a new context some of the intensity of the central climax.

—Tison Street

**Tison Street** was born in Boston in 1943 and received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Harvard, where he studied composition with Leon Kirchner and David Del Tredici. Among his awards and fellowships are the Naumburg Recording Award, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Award, Guggenheim Fellowship, an NEA grant, Brandeis Creative Arts Award, and commissions from the Fromm, Koussevitsky, and Kindler Foundations. During the years 1979–1983 he was an associate professor of music at Harvard. His works have been performed by such orchestras as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the American Composers Orchestra, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and by soloists such as Peter Serkin and Ani Kavafian. At present he resides in Boston, working as a composer and freelance violinist.

**Spectrum Ensemble:** Mi-Kyung Lee, Per Sporrang, Brett Dean, and Frank Dodge represent part of the internationality of Berlin's music world—four musicians, four nationalities. Their work together in conjunction with the series Spectrum Concerts Berlin and American Music Week Berlin, of which Frank Dodge is founder and director, has provided the chamber music life of Berlin with a strong sustained infusion of American music.

**Mi-Kyung Lee** has been winner in numerous international competitions including the Queen Elizabeth and ARD in Munich. She leads an active life as soloist and chamber music musician. **Per Sporrang** is concertmaster of the Swedish Radio Orchestra. **Brett Dean** is presently a member of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and **Frank Dodge** leads an active life as cellist and organizer.

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## Production Notes

Helps: *3 Hommages*: Recorded in 1989, Morrisound Recording, Inc., Tampa, FL. Recording engineer: Rick Miller. Published by C.F. Peters Corp. Nocturne: Recorded 1988. Sender Freies Berlin. Recording engineer: Wolfgang Hoff. Published by American Composers Alliance (BMI)

Del Tredici: Trio and *Fantasy Pieces*: Recorded 1987, Eras Recording Studios, New York City. Recorded and edited by Allan Tucker, Foothill Digital Productions, New York. Published by Boosey and Hawkes, Inc. (ASCAP)

Radzynski: String Quartet and *Canto*, recorded 1991; *Five Duets*, recorded 1992, at Yale University School of Music, Fred Plaut Recording Studio. Recording engineer/editor: Eugene Kimball. String Quartet and *Canto* published by Israel Music Institute; *Five Duets* published by Keshet Music Publications (ASCAP).

Street: String Trio recorded 1986. Sender Freies Berlin. Recording engineer: Rita Babo. Published by Tison Street (BMI)