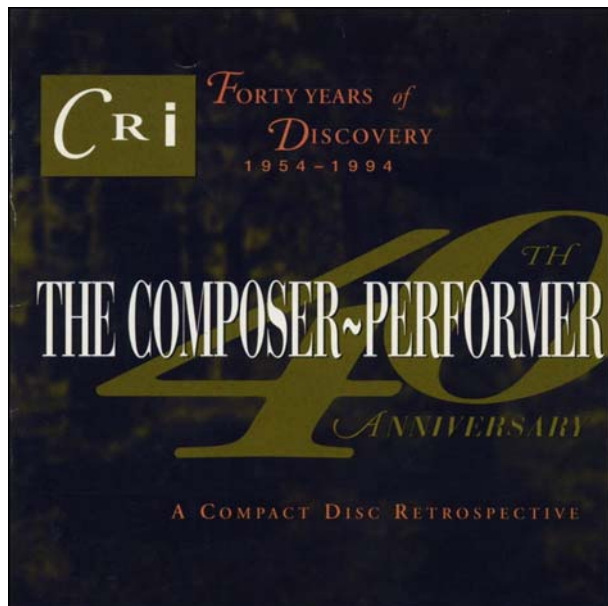


The Composer/Performer

40th Anniversary



1. Henry Cowell (b 11 March 1897; d 10 Dec 1965)
Aeolian Harp (1923); *The Banshee* (1925) (3:18)
Henry Cowell, piano;
(Recorded July 16, 1956, Columbia Records Studio, New York City. From SD 109, 1957)
2. Harry Partch (b 24 June 1901; d 3 Sept 1974)
The Letter (1943) (5:18)
Harry Partch, intoning voice; Ben Johnston, Betty Johnston, Donald Pippin, and Harry Partch performing on the Harry Partch instruments: Kithara II, Pollux (harmonic canon), surrogate Kithara, diamond marimba, bass marimba.
(Recorded 1950, Gualala, California, and released on Partch's own label, Gate 5 Records. First released on CRI on SD 193 in 1964.)
3. Irving Fine (b 3 Dec 1914; d 23 Aug 1962)
Waltz-Gavotte from *Music for Piano* (2:44)
Irving Fine, piano
(Recorded on May 22, 1956, Fasset Recording Studio, Boston, MA; from SD 106 "Sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the National Institute of Arts and Letters.")
Courtesy Boosey & Hawkes. (ASCAP)
4. Otto Luening (b 15 June 1900; d 2 Sept 1996)
Fantasy in Space for Tape Recorder (1952) (2:51)
Otto Luening, four overdubbed flutes
(Recorded/composed in 1952 in New York City at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. First released on SD 268 "Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center Tenth Anniversary.")
5. Robert Helps (b 23 Sept 1928; d 2001)
Image (1957) (2:57)
Robert Helps, piano
(Recorded in 1966, New York City and originally released on RCA Victor. From SD 288 "Robert Helps Plays Music for the Piano") Courtesy Lawson-Gould Publishing.
6. Virgil Thomson (b 25 Nov 1896; d 30 Sept 1989)
Praises and Prayers (1963) (3:43)
My Master Hath a Garden
Before Sleeping
Betty Allen, mezzo-soprano, Virgil Thomson, piano
(Recorded in the world premiere performance, October 24, 1963, Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. From SD 207, 1977) Courtesy G. Schirmer, Inc. (ASCAP)
7. William Albright (b 20 Oct 1944; d 17 Sept 1998)
Fanfare from Organbook (1967) (2:39)
William Albright, organ
(Recorded on the Frieze Memorial Organ in the Hill Auditorium at the University of Michigan. From SD 277.) Courtesy Editions Jobert, Theodore Presser. (ASCAP)
8. George Walker (b 27 June 1922)
Spentials: Variations for Piano (1960) (3:23)
George Walker, piano; (Originally recorded New York City, 1972, and released on SD 270. This performance recorded 1987, Montclair, New Jersey, and from the forthcoming CD "George Walker Plays the Music of George Walker.")
Courtesy MMB Music. (ASCAP)
9. Harvey Sollberger (b 11 May 1938)
Divertimento for flute, cello, and piano (1970) ... (3:31)
Movements 1 and 2
Harvey Sollberger, flute; Fred Sherry, cello; Charles Wuorinen, piano; (Recorded March 5, 1971, at CAMI Hall, New York City; from SD 319.) Courtesy ACA/Harvey Sollberger. (BMI)
10. Curtis Curtis-Smith (b 9 Sept 1941)
Five Sonorous Inventions (3:41)
Second Invention
Gerald Fischbach, violin; Curtis Curtis-Smith, bowed piano
(Recorded in 1975, Western Michigan University. From SD 346.) Courtesy of the composer.
11. Ned Rorem (b 23 Oct 1923)
The Nantucket Songs (1979) (4:13)
The Dance (William Carlos Williams)
Nantucket (William Carlos Williams)
Go, Lovely Rose (Edmund Waller)
Phyllis Bryn-Julson, soprano; Ned Rorem, piano
(Recorded at the world premiere performance, October 30, 1979, in the Coolidge Auditorium,

- the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. First released on SD 485.) Courtesy Boosey & Hawkes. (ASCSP)
12. Joan Tower (*b* 6 Sept 1938)
Petroushskates (1980) (5:35)
 Da Capo Chamber Players: Patricia Spencer, flute; Laura Flaz, clarinet; Joel Lester, violin; Andre Emelianoff, cello; Joan Tower, piano (Recorded February 23–24, 1981, Church of the Holy Trinity, New York City. Original recording released on SD 441 “The Da Capo Chamber Players’ Tenth Anniversary Celebration.”) Courtesy Associated Music Publishers. (BMI)
13. Guy Klucevsek (*b* 26 Feb 1947)
Samba D Hiccup (1986) (5:24)
 Guy Klucevsek, accordion; (Recorded April 1991, New York City. From CD 626 “Guy Klucevesek: Manhattan Cascade” in the Emergency Music series.) Courtesy of the composer. (BMI)
14. Michael Gordon (*b* 20 July 1956)
Strange Quiet, Part I (1987) (5:24)
 The Michael Gordon Philharmonic: Ted Kuhn, violin; John Lad, viola; Michael Pugliese, percussion; Evan Ziporyn, bass clarinet; Bob Loughlin, electric guitar; Michael Gordon, keyboard; (Recorded 1987, Bang on a Can Festival, Rapp Arts Center, New York City. From CD 628 “Bang on a Can Live, Vol. 1” in the Emergency Music series.) Courtesy of the composer. (ASCAP)
15. Victoria Jordanova (*b* 1962)
Requiem for Bosnia (excerpt) (1995) (4:59)
 An Improvisation for Broken Piano, Harp, and Child’s Voice; Victoria Jordanova, broken piano and harp; (Recorded 1987, Bang on a Can Festival, Rapp Arts Center, New York City, From CD 628 “Bang on a Can Live, Vol. 1” in the Emergency Music series.) Courtesy of the composer. (ASCAP)
16. Tan Dun (*b* 18 Aug 1957)
Nine Songs (Ritual Opera) Water Spirit (1989) (4:58)
 Tan Dun, voice, percussion, and conductor with Nine Songs Ensemble and Chorus performing on Chinese and Western percussion, wind, and string instruments; (Recorded 1989, New York City. From CD 603.) Courtesy G. Schirmer, Inc. (ASCAP)
17. Alice Shields (*b* 18 Feb 1943)
Apocalypse, An Electronic Opera (1993) (5:27)
 Organ Screaming (*excerpt*); Dawn Wind
 Alice Shields, voice and electronics; (Recorded/created in 1993 at Quality Studios, and the Columbia University Electronic Music Center. From CD 647.) Courtesy of Symbolion Music. (BMI)
- Total playing time: 68:42
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Notes

Perhaps only a composer could have been daring enough to strum the strings of a piano to create music, as was first done by **Henry Cowell** in 1923. Or perhaps it is just such bold innovations that transform a performer into a composer, as in the case of harpist **Victoria Jordanova**, whose first major composition, *Requiem for Bosnia*, resulted from her experimenting with the sound of a piano that had fallen down a flight of stairs. Breaking down barriers to find new sound possibilities, to create new performing techniques, and to communicate with audiences in new ways—these are goals that characterize the work of many of the over 400 American composers whose music has become part of the CRI catalogue during the past forty years.

It was a daunting challenge to conceive and program a retrospective of the label that would capture the sense of discovery that comes from listening to new music. But consider this disc, “The Composer/Performer,” and its accompanying booklet, as one pathway through the chronology of American music that is the CRI catalogue.

Before a composer starts to *create* music, he or she must learn how to *make* music. That may not be news—biographies of composers almost invariably begin: “Early musical studies were with. . . .” What can be revealing is to learn how and why some composers continue as active performing musicians.

The joy of making music is, of course, its own reward and history is full of composers who have been marvelous interpreters both of their own music and of the music of others. In American music, conductor, pianist, and composer Leonard Bernstein is the consummate example of a

composer/performer. In the CRI catalogue, over two dozen composer/conductors appear, among them Linda Bouchard, Earl Brown, Morton Feldman, John Harbison, Karel Husa, Barbara Kolb, Tania León, Robert Hall Lewis, Hugo Weisgall, and Richard Wernick, who lead performances of their own works, and Lukas Foss, Ralph Shapey, Gunther Schuller, Gregg Smith, and Howard Hanson, who conduct performances of music by other composers.

If music is made under the leadership of composer/conductors, it is made under the hand of composer/pianists. **Robert Helps** and Leo Smit are two composer/pianists who have each made significant contributions to contemporary music by premiering and recording the music of dozens of their contemporaries. Other composer/pianists who have recorded their own solo works include **Irving Fine** and **George Walker**, who appear here, and George Rochberg, David Del Tredici, and Richard Trythall, while Tobias Picker, Francis Thorne, and Charles Wuorinen are soloists in recordings of their own piano concertos. An interesting irony is that Vivian Fine appears several times in the CRI catalogue, as composer and pianist, but never as both in the same recording. The same situation exists with **William Albright**, although he did record his *Organbook*, which is excerpted here. On a forthcoming CD with the Merling Trio, composer/pianist **Curtis Curtis-Smith** will perform at the keyboard, though here he plays on the piano’s strings using a bowing technique he has pioneered.

The intimate collaboration of singer and accompanist is a living tradition, beautifully displayed here in recordings of

two world premier performances: **Virgil Thomson** accompanying mezzo-soprano Betty Allen, and **Ned Rorem** accompanying soprano Phyllis Bryn Julson. Also part of that continuum (and also represented on CRI) are the pairings of George Perle and soprano Bethany Beardslee, George Rochberg and soprano Neva Pilgrim, and Frederic Rzewski and soprano Carol Plantamura. A song disc in preparation features Lee Hoiby accompanying the young baritone Peter Stewart.

While the piano may be the most common instrument for composer/performers (probably due to the instrument's use as a compositional workplace), there are important exceptions. Composer/accordionist **Guy Klucevsek** has been acclaimed for single-handedly commissioning and premiering a new body of repertoire for his instrument. His solo disc "Manhattan Cascade" includes four new polkas and other commissioned works from classical, experimental, and jazz composers, as well as Klucevsek's eloquent *Samba D Hiccup*. From the jazz tradition, there is composer/violinist Leroy Jenkins, whose premiere on CRI, "Themes and Improvisations on the Blues," consists of four concert works by Jenkins that integrate improvisation into compositional structures. Among the artists joining Jenkins on the disc are flutist Henry Threadgill, clarinetists Don Byron and Marty Ehrlich, violinist David Soldier, and pianist Myra Melford—composers all in their own right.

Stepping even further away from tradition and traditional instruments, there are the musical mavericks and freethinkers whose ongoing search for new sounds has itself become a tradition in American music. The visionary composer and theorist **Harry Partch** created a new family of instruments to realize the extraordinary tuning system through which he heard music. Performing with his ensemble of disciples, Partch made a series of recordings for his own Gate 5 label, which CRI is proud to have kept available for over 20 years. Another instrument-builder is the young Chinese-born composer **Tan Dun**, who, in collaboration with the New York ceramic artist Ragnar Naess, created a family of ceramic instruments known as EarthSounds. These instruments supplement the traditional Chinese and Western instruments that are used in the stirring "ritual opera" *Nine Songs*.

While dance has served as an inspiration to composers for generations, in America it has often given birth to wildly new experimental sounds. John Cage's prepared piano was the result of his desire to enliven his work as an accompanist in dance classes. Composer Lucia Dlugoszewski has collaborated for more than 30 years with choreographer Erick Hawkins, and in the process has created a new family of percussion and "friction" instruments. And throughout his long career, choreographer Alwin Nikolais wrote his own electronic dance scores, which were collected on disc for the first time by CRI and released in 1993 only months after Nikolais's death.

In today's world of high-tech wonders, the term *electronic music* can be broadly interpreted and electronic tools themselves are widely available. Yet it all started somewhere and that was at Columbia University with the work of Vladimir Ussachevsky and **Otto Luening**. CRI's "Pioneers of Electronic Music" disc presents these masters' seminal works from the early 1950s. Ussachevsky's piano and Luening's flute were the source materials for their early compositional experiments with tape manipulation. Luening's *Fantasy in Space* consists of four tracks of the composer playing flute, with an undistorted flute playing a folk-like melody near the end. Jumping ahead to the 1990s, we find former Ussachevsky protégé **Alice Shields**, in her electronic opera

Apocalypse, using her own operatic voice as source material for her extravagant musical and mythological fantasies.

"Live" electronics have come to be an increasingly important part of concert music. CRI's three volumes of recordings from New York's Bang On A Can Festival contain several lively examples: in the solo *I Kick My Hand* (from Volume 3) electric guitarist Nick Didkovsky plays a duet with himself through the use of a delay box; in *Haiku Lingo* (from Volume 2) the "downtown" duo of Shelley Hirsch, voice, and David Weinstein, electronics, spin a space-age fairy tale; and Phil Kline, with only a harmonica and 12 "boom boxes" create a low-tech vision of chaotic beauty in *Bachman's Warbler* (also from Volume 2).

Apart from any need to be innovative or stylish, for composers the simple need to get music heard may be the biggest inspiration to perform. In New York in 1962, the composers **Harvey Sollberger** and Charles Wuorinen (both conductors, and flutist and pianist, respectively) founded the Group for Contemporary Music as a means to present authoritative performances and recordings of their own music and that of their peers. Like many new music groups that sprouted up around the country in subsequent years, the Group's performing forces expand and contract according to the needs of the repertoire at hand. In contrast, the Da Capo Chamber Players is a quintet of fixed membership and instrumentation (the flute-clarinet-violin-cello-piano instrumentation, known as the *Pierrot lunaire* ensemble after Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*). Da Capo was founded in 1969, also in New York, by composer/pianist **Joan Tower**, who during her years with the group drew on their musical interaction to hone her instrumental writing. Da Capo continues as an active force in new music without Tower, who left the group in 1984 to devote herself fully to composition and teaching.

Outside New York, universities are often fruitful ground for new music, especially in the form of composer-led ensembles. Two examples are well documented in the CRI catalogue: the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago, founded in 1954 by Ralph Shapey, which premiered and recorded numerous works by Shapey and other composers; and the Sonor Ensemble of the University of California, San Diego, founded in 1975 by Bernard Rands, which continues to premiere and record works by and with university's faculty members, recently including Rand Steiger and (the transplanted) Harvey Sollberger.

The rise to fame of the minimalist composers Philip Glass and Steve Reich during the 1970s and 1980s can be attributed, in part, to their leading their own ensembles, as keyboardist and percussionist respectively, in numerous international tours. The career-minded minimalists have inspired a new generation of composer/performers to organize small, often amplified, touring ensembles to present full-length concerts of their own works. Among the more successful of this second generation is **Michael Gordon**, whose ensemble of amplified keyboards, winds, and strings is known as The Michael Gordon Philharmonic. With Gordon on keyboards and composer Evan Ziporyn on reeds, the Philharmonic has toured widely, performing the two composers' music in concert halls and alternative venues throughout Europe and the U.S.

Kyle Gann, writing in the *Village Voice* in 1993, dubbed Gordon, Ziporyn, and a handful of other young, primarily New York City-based composers as "totalists," because of certain attributes of their post-minimalist music. From a broader perspective, the composer/performer can be consider-

ed as taking a totalist approach to music. Whether it involves doubling as a top-notch soloist, employing the organizational skills of an ensemble leader or conductor, or simply the bravery to make sounds no one has ever made before, the task of being a composer is a difficult one in America today. But our culture is richer for contemporary composers' presence

and for the challenging sounds of their music, from whatever source it is heard. CRI is proud to have served the needs of composers over the past forty years by recording and distribution their music to enthusiastic and ever-growing audiences.

—*Joseph R. Dalton, Managing Director, CRI*

Production Notes

The Composer-Performer: Forty Years of Discovery: A CRI Fortieth Anniversary Retrospective

Conceived and programmed by Joseph R. Dalton

Compiled and mastered by Joseph R. Dalton and Robert Wolff, engineer at Sony Classical Productions, Inc. NYC.