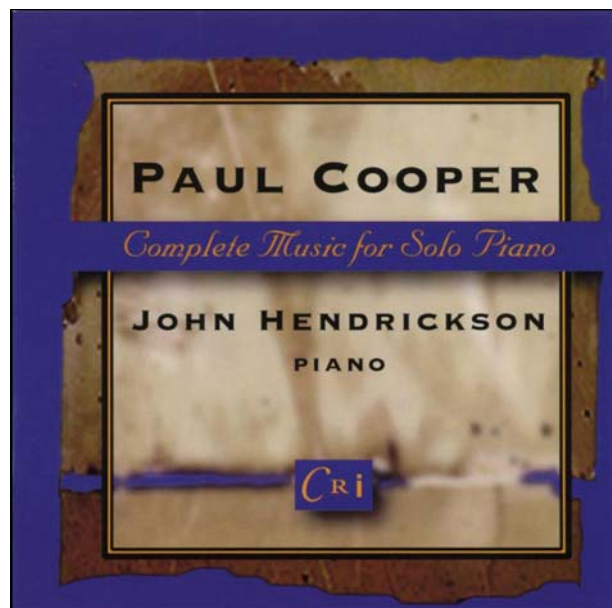


NWCR776

# Paul Cooper (1926-1996)

## Music for Solo Piano



1. <i>Cycles</i> (1969) .....	(12:48)
Four Intermezzi (1980) .....	(6:33)
2. I Half-note = 40 .....	(1:39)
3. II Half-note = 72 .....	(1:36)

4. III Eighth-note = 160 .....	(1:39)
5. IV Half-note = 54 .....	(1:39)
Sonata for Piano (1962) .....	(9:42)
6. I Tranquillo diventando agitato .....	(2:46)
7. II grave .....	(3:03)
8. III vivace .....	(1:57)
9. IV molto agitato diventando tranquillo ..	(1:56)
Frescoes (1994) .....	(10:23)
10. I Study in sixths: calm and reflective ..	(2:10)
11. II Study in fifths: with quiet energy .....	(1:08)
12. III Study in fourths: quietly dramatic ....	(3:34)
13. IV Study in thirds: fast and aggressive ..	(1:13)
14. V Study in octaves: very calm and	
15. deeply reflective .....	(2:18)
<i>Sinfonia</i> for solo piano (1989) .....	(18:05)
16. I Tempestoso .....	(5:17)
17. II Mesto .....	(8:05)
18. III Volando .....	(4:43)
John Hendrickson, piano	

Total Playing Time: 58:13

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## Notes

*Cycles* was commissioned by the Kansas Music Teachers for the state convention in 1969. The work was subsequently submitted to the Music Teachers' national association headquarters, where it was judged along with entries from other states. *Cycles* had the distinction of being named the best composition, and earning for me the Distinguished Composer of the Year award. The twelve short pieces are of intermediate difficulty, and are unified by common melodic materials. New notation and new keyboard techniques are in evidence—introducing young pianists to the spatial and proportional notation of the 1950s and 1960s.

Jeffrey Kurtzman, a colleague at the Shepherd School, commissioned the Four Intermezzi as a gift for his wife. A double premiere in Houston—Kathi Kurtzman for the Tuesday Musical Club, and Gary Smart for the Syzygy: New Music at Rice series—launched the first of numerous performances in the United States and in Europe.

In the early 1960s, colleagues and friends commissioned me for several works, resulting in the first violin concerto, two string quartets, and six sonatas. The sonata for piano is one such composition, commissioned by the supremely gifted young pianist, Ronald Rogers. The work is highly chromatic but also lyrical, and consists of three sections plus a reprise, all played without pause.

*Frescoes* was commissioned by Mimi Walker, on the occasion of her husband William Walker's fiftieth birthday. Each short movement emphasizes a particular interval—thirds, fifths, sixths, etc. *Frescoes* was widely performed in

Europe this past summer.

John Perry commissioned the *Sinfonia* for solo piano to commemorate the 500,000th Steinway piano. The premiere took place in the Cullen Theater of the Wortham Center in Houston. The fifty or sixty performances have been worldwide—from China to Poland, and throughout the United States. It is a large, virtuoso work in classical three-movement form. The outside movements are extroverted while the middle movement might suggest a funeral dirge.

I began notating my compositions when I was about eight years old, and obviously there are more than these five piano pieces. John Hendrickson performs those works that I have included in my publisher's catalogue. The compositions span more than thirty years of creativity, and are diverse in style and vocabulary.

—Paul Cooper, 1996

When the wind blows through the chimes on my lower terrace, I always think of Paul and his fascination with that sound. He discovered our wind-chimes while wandering through our garden during a cigarette-break a few years ago. Not only did he compose during that vacation, but he included the chimes in the composition. He suspended an identical set of chimes next to his piano at home.

Paul told me, shortly before he died in 1996, that he had written everything he wanted to, and that he felt complete as a composer. We spoke of mortality and immortality. Most of us face mortality: our productivity and vitality are our lives; Paul faced immortality: his music and his compositions were for

future musicians and listeners. His earthly existence was a mere servant of future times. The flow of his life, combined with the deep romanticism of his soul, made up his music. His complex rhythms were a simple ground for the profound emotion presented by his melodies. His own unique compositional language, which can seem exceptionally difficult and complicated to the Cooper novice, is evident in all his music.

Paul was the consummate orchestrator, but as an accomplished pianist he used the piano as a multi-colored instrument. He could improvise in any style, using his vast historical and theoretical knowledge as a playground in which his heart and humor could run free. He would play a composition in its entirety before writing down a note, often singing parts which could not be covered by his ten over-taxed fingers. From the early days of the Shepherd School, Paul found a pianist with the technical and musical capacity to be a champion of his music: John Hendrickson. The enormous, Scriabinesque note-writing flowed easily from John's hands, and the Cooper melodies sang clearly in true vocal tones.

I mentioned to Paul that his life was his music: to have changed a moment was to change a note. *In Tune* magazine wrote: "Cooper's music is immediately communicative and powerful, although he makes no gesture toward commercial tastes... always highly passionate, exquisitely crafted in every detail, and serious in a dedicated way that's nearly religious." When you add humor, you have Paul Cooper.

—Ronald Patterson

[Violinist Ronald Patterson had a long association with Paul Cooper. He played in the premieres of Cooper's fourth and fifth symphonies, and gave the first performance of the double-concerto for violin and viola, which was dedicated to him and violist Roxanna Patterson—Duo Patterson. For CRI he recorded Cooper's string quartets Nos. 5 & 6, his second violin concerto, and the violin-and-violita duos *Canons d'Amour*, and *Verses*, both of them written for Duo Patterson.]

**Paul Cooper** was born in Victoria, IL, on May 19, 1926. He died in Houston, TX, on April 4, 1996, a little more than a month before his seventieth birthday, and less than two months after John Hendrickson's concert that is heard on this disc. Cooper was acknowledged as one of the country's most distinguished composers, with a large body of works in many genres, and an equally substantial and impressive list of

awards and citations. He studied at the University of Southern California with Ingolf Dahl, Raymond Kendall, and Halsey Stevens; and on a Fulbright scholarship at the Paris Conservatoire with Nadia Boulanger. He made his professional debut in 1953, with a commission from the Los Angeles Philharmonic. From 1955 to 1968 he was on the faculty of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, where he developed a close association with composer Ross Lee Finney. Himself a widely-recognized musical figure, Finney cited Cooper as "one of America's most distinguished composers."

Paul Cooper was affiliated with the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University from 1974. At the end of his career he was the Lynette S. Autrey professor of music, and composer-in-residence. The majority of Cooper's music is published by Wilhelm Hansen (Associated Music), and his large catalogue includes six symphonies, six concertos, four oratorios, six string quartets, and more than sixty diverse vocal and instrumental chamber works.

Active as a soloist, chamber musician, and educator, pianist **John Hendrickson** has appeared with leading orchestras and chamber ensembles in his native Texas. Along with his passion for the traditional repertoire, he has a flair for the contemporary, including many premieres by leading present-day composers. His scholarships include the Aspen Music Festival, Music Academy of the West at Santa Barbara, and the Adamant Festival in Vermont. The National Endowment for the Arts awarded him a solo-recitalist grant under which he video-taped Chopin's twenty-four Etudes, as well as other major keyboard works.

An honors-graduate of the Shepherd School of Music, Mr. Hendrickson made his New York City debut at Merkin concert hall. He has been on the touring roster of the Texas Commission on the Arts for several seasons, and has been a frequent performer on the Syzygy-New Music at Rice series at the Shepherd School of Music. Other concert appearances have included recitals at London's Wigmore Hall and Royal Festival Hall, the Terrace at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, and Weill recital hall in New York City. He currently serves as artist-in-residence for the College of Arts and Humanities at Houston Baptist University.

John Hendrickson can also be heard on another CRI disc (CRI CD 736), in music by Ellsworth Milburn.

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## Production Notes

Recorded in concert on February 19, 1996, at the Lillian H. Duncan recital hall, Shepherd School of Music, Rice University, TX.

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