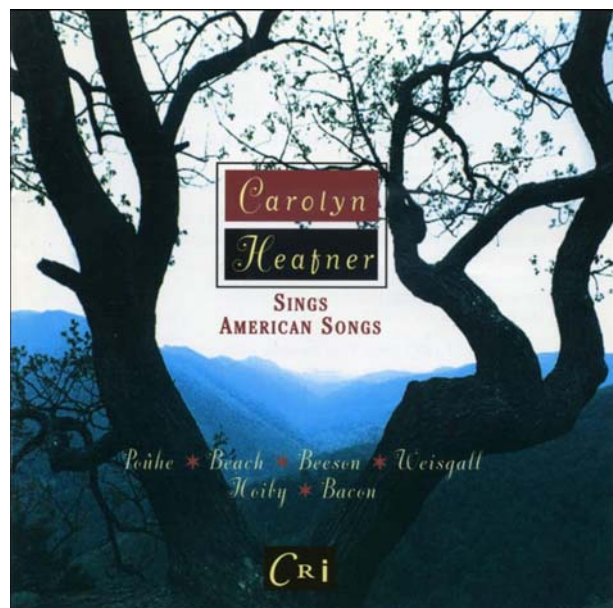


NWCR854

# Carolyn Heafner Sings American Songs

Carolyn Heafner, Soprano



Jay Poûhe (*b* 1935)

*The Amorous Line* (1970) ..... (18:07)  
(Poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay)

1. Women have loved before ..... (2:58)
2. Now by this moon ..... (1:44)
3. Humoresque ..... (0:57)
4. I too beneath your moon ..... (3:42)
5. Oh, think not ..... (2:15)
6. And you as well must die ..... (2:06)
7. What lips my lips have kissed ..... (4:25)

Jay Poûhe, piano

Amy Beach (*b* 1867; *d* 1944)

Three Browning Songs (1900) ..... (7:55)  
(Poems by Robert Browning)

8. The year's at the spring ..... (1:16)
9. Ah, love, but a day ..... (3:33)
10. I send my heart up to thee ..... (3:06)

Dixie Ross Neill, piano

Jack Beeson (*b* 1921) ..... (5:47)

11. Death by Owl-Eyes  
(Poem by Richard Hughes) (1971) ... (2:25)
12. The You Should of Done it Blues  
(Poem by Peter Viereck) (1971) ..... (2:10)
13. Eldorado  
(Poem by Edgar Allan Poe) (1951) .. (1:12)  
Dixie Ross Neill, piano

Hugo Weisgall (*b* 1912; *d* 1997)

Four Songs, Op. 1 (1934) ..... (8:05)  
(Poems by Adelaide Crapsey)

14. Old Love ..... (1:18)
15. Song ..... (2:06)
16. Oh, Lady, let the sad tears fall ..... (3:11)
17. Dirge ..... (1:30)  
Dixie Ross Neill, piano

Lee Hoiby (*b* 1926)

*Night Songs* (c. 1950) ..... (9:21)  
(Poems by Adelaide Crapsey)

18. Night ..... (2:10)
19. Pierrot ..... (2:21)
20. Angélique ..... (2:05)
21. The Shroud ..... (2:45)  
Lee Hoiby, piano

Ernst Bacon (*b* 1898; *d* 1990)

Selected songs to Emily Dickinson (1928–1938) . (12:10)

22. I'm Nobody ..... (1:23)
23. Eden ..... (2:39)
24. Poor Little Heart ..... (2:16)
25. The Little Stone ..... (0:43)
26. The Heart ..... (1:49)
27. The Banks of the Yellow Sea ..... (2:09)
28. Simple Days ..... (1:11)  
Dixie Ross Neill, piano

Total playing time: 61:25

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## Notes

It's a pleasure to introduce the songs of Jay Poûhe as well as to look back on working with the other talented composers represented on this recording. With the exception of Amy Beach, when the original works were recorded all of the composers were living. And, interestingly, every composer represented is or was a pianist. From this came my desire to have each song accompanied by the composer if at all possible. And from there came the experience of working with the composers. I have always tried to consult the source, and in most cases it was as simple as picking up the telephone and dialing! I have also always found composers to be accessible and delighted to know of my interest in their music and their personal input.

But I am getting ahead of myself. The new addition to this

recording, *The Amorous Line* by Jay Poûhe, is a startlingly insightful and beautifully written cycle of songs set to poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay. Fortunately, Jay plays piano exceedingly well, and was only too happy to give as much time as necessary to the project. In working together I learned that he had quite an experience in getting permission to use the poetry. Norma Millay Ellis, the sister of Edna, had control—and I mean Control—of the estate. Jay sent her the songs and then learned that she was a singer and that she took his music to her accompanist. She would call him after every session and ask specific questions concerning how a particular word was set, and then would go back and try them again. She was apparently quite a character (she rode a motorcycle to her singing sessions) and knew exactly how she thought the

poems should be set. She did give her approval. I had occasion to speak with her quite a number of years later concerning a totally unrelated project, and she asked me if I knew Jay Poûhe's songs. That's approval!

I was privileged to work with Ernst Bacon many times. He was wonderful at coaching his own music—energetic, talented, and kind. He was already chronologically old when I met him, but not in any other way. I had premiered a program of Emily Dickinson songs by various composers at the Library of Congress. Quite a number of Ernst's songs were included, and he came from California for the concert. He was, of course, introduced afterwards. He bounded out of his chair, sprinted down the aisle, and almost leapt onto the stage. I was later told that one lady in the audience said that it could not be Ernst Bacon, because, according to the program notes, he was in his 80s! Ernst was a wonderful pianist, but by the time this recording was planned, he had lost the sight of one eye and had glaucoma in the other. Later he had to have special, greatly enlarged staff paper in order for him to be able to compose. His Dickinson settings are miniatures, like the poems themselves, and he sometimes referred to them as "water colors." He continued to set them until the very end.

Hugo Weisgall probably had the most amusing response to my request for him to play. He said that he could play three of the songs, but that one song was simply too difficult. He truly wanted to play those three! We discussed it at great length and finally decided that the continuity just would not be there if accompaniment styles were drastically changed. So he worked with me along with Dixie Neill, the very talented accompanist for most of the recording, as did the other composers who did not accompany. But I have often wondered...

And then there is Jack Beeson. Energy and brightness come to mind. He was doing so many things—composing and teaching and heaven knows what else—that he simply had not practiced piano in too many years to begin at that time. But we worked and had many discussions concerning the style. I remember that for "The You Should Of Done It Blues," he always said to remember the "blue note." During one of our conversations, he mentioned that he had a song about a "Sinister Potato." Not long after that, I found a potato that had fallen behind a cabinet and was more curly green growing things than it was potato. Yes, I sent it to him!

I will bookend this introduction by ending, as I began, with someone who did play his own works—Lee Hoiby. Lee is a greatly talented concert pianist and was only too happy to play for the recording. Lee is a gentle and generous man. We spent a lot of time working together on these lovely, delicate pieces, and there is no better way to understand what a composer really wants than to hear him or her interpret it with the accompaniment. The experiences of making this recording were not only hard work and a lot of fun, but also a time of incredible learning and growth thanks to being able to listen to these extraordinary people. I learned to hear with my mind and with my heart, all while making music with friends.

— C.H. October 1999

**Jay Poûhe**, was born in Cicero, Illinois. At the age of seven he began music and piano lessons with the noted Czech violin and piano duo, Ada & Jan Gregor. His composing evolved from his first exposure to music.

When he entered high school he also began studying composition at the Sherwood Music School in Chicago. While in high school he composed a full-length opera, *Coatan*, based on the first English settlers in America. The work was performed by a student orchestra, chorus, and

principals and was subsequently broadcast (for propaganda reasons) by the Voice of America to Iron Curtain countries.

He continued his studies at the Eastman School where his teachers included Louis Mennini, Thomas Canning, and Howard Hanson. He received scholarships to Tanglewood and there worked with Roger Sessions and Boris Blacher.

His work at the opera department of the Eastman School enabled him to become a coach and stage director of the Metropolitan Opera, and in the same capacity he worked in Berlin and throughout Germany and Switzerland. This experience gave him a thorough background in all the practical disciplines of opera composition and production.

Leaving Europe for a post at the Santa Fe Opera, he decided to concentrate on writing. Armed with Rockefeller and BMI grants, he wrote two operas, *Chillon* and *The Haunted*. These were given readings by the Metropolitan Opera Studio and resulted in commissions for other works, including *Pantomime*, a one-act opera which received its first performance at the Toledo Opera in 1996.

Poûhe moved to upstate New York in the 1970s and formed (in partnership with his librettist Harrison Somers) the Pine Orchard Artists Festival, a summer-long opera and chamber music venue. He continues to live there writing, coaching, and teaching.

*The Amorous Line* was the first musical setting of the Millay sonnets given rights for publication by the poet's sister, Norma Millay Ellis.

**Amy Beach** (b Henniker, NH, 1867; d New York, 1944), under her formal name, Mrs. H.H.A. Beach, was the first woman composer to be performed by important musical organizations (such as the New York Philharmonic Society). She was also the first American woman to compose a symphony and—with Stephen Foster, John Philip Sousa, and Edward MacDowell—one of the first American composers to be regarded seriously in Europe. Beach began playing and inventing tunes before the age of four, and made her debut as pianist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra when she was eighteen. She claimed to be almost entirely self-taught in composition, using Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* as her textbook.

Her "Browning" Songs were great favorites during her lifetime. About "The year's at the spring," she recalled that she had delayed in working until time ran short. Then, sitting on a train from New York to Boston, "[I] did nothing in a conscious way; I simply sat still in the train, thinking of Browning's poem, and allowing it and the rhythm of the wheels to take possession of me. By the time I reached Boston, the song was ready."

**Jack Beeson** (b Muncie, IN, 15 July 1921) has composed eleven operas. All, with the exception of *Cyrano* (premiered in Germany in 1994, libretto by Sheldon Harnick), are based on American subjects, in part, perhaps, because the composer was born and raised in Muncie, Indiana, long known as Middletown USA. After an uncharacteristic Hoosier education (he decided to become an "opera composer" at age twelve and wrote three libretti as a teenager), he attended the Eastman School of Music and then studied with Béla Bartók in 1944–45. Immediately thereafter he served as coach and assistant conductor of the chamber operas performed at Columbia University and began a teaching career at Columbia that has endured for half a century.

Five of the operas have been recorded, three televised. The most widely performed is *Hello Out There*, which has been performed in four other languages. Its libretto, like two of the others based on plays, is by the composer. He has composed

over one hundred other works, some for chamber and orchestral forces, many of them text-settings for solo voice and chorus.

In addition to composing and teaching, Beeson has served many organizations that aid American composers, such as the NEA, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and ASCAP. The original New York City Opera cast recording of Beeson's opera *Lizzie Borden* (libretto by Kenward Elmslie) is available on CRI (CD 694, double CD).

"Death by Owl-Eyes" was composed in 1971 and is dedicated "to Otto [Luening] in admiration." The subtitle, "a history of music in 64-odd measures," speaks not only of the length of the song, but also of its reference to various musical styles from the sixteenth to the late twentieth centuries. This oddity provides a progression from consonance to dissonance that parallels the poet Richard Hughes's progression from simple ditty to chilly madness, a procedure he followed also in his novel, *A High Wind in Jamaica*.

"The You Should Of Done It Blues," also from 1971, is the rueful monologue of a woman who has lost a lover to someone else. The words are by Peter Viereck (several of whose lyrics Beeson has set).

"Eldorado," to the poem of Edgar Allan Poe, has been revisited twice since it was composed in 1951. Responding to the poet's image of endless riding, the accompaniment and the vocal line—horse and rider—are in rhythmic counterpoint, the accompaniment largely a chordal ostinato.

**Hugo Weisgall** (b Ivančice, nr Brno, 1912; d Long Island, NY, 1997) has been called America's preeminent composer of opera. His musical legacy includes ten important operas, each based on a major theatrical masterpiece or theme, ten song cycles, sacred choral music, with and without orchestra, and works for orchestra, various chamber combinations, and solo piano. As a life-long educator, Weisgall taught composition at Juilliard, the Aaron Copland School of Music (Queens College, CUNY), and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

Weisgall evolved a personal style of vocal writing in which the rhythms and contours of American speech characterize dramatic situations and emotions. His music is informed by his intimate and passionate knowledge of nineteenth- and twentieth-century opera and song literature drawn from his experience as a singer (he sang the role of the Umpire in the premiere of Schuman's *The Mighty Casey*), from his prowess on the podium (he conducted orchestras in London, Brussels, and Prague, and led the Italian repertory at the Prague National Opera in post-war Czechoslovakia), and from his thorough knowledge of synagogue music and cantillation (he conducted the choir in the Baltimore synagogue where his father, also a composer and singer, served as cantor). He was painstaking and slow-working as a composer, and all his music is intricate, complex, and carefully-wrought.

A double CD of Weisgall's vocal works, including the operas *The Tenor* and *The Stronger* is available on CRI (CD 757).

Weisgall was attracted to the poems of Adelaide Crapsey when he was in high school in Baltimore, and wrote the songs while he was in his early twenties. He says that he wrote "Old Love" after hearing Brahms's Symphony No. 2 for the first time, and "Oh, Lady, let the sad tears fall" is clearly influenced by the Prelude to Act III of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*.

**Lee Hoiby** (b Madison, WI, 1926), has written extensively in many areas of composition: some seventy songs, nine operas, two piano concertos, two oratorios, three orchestral suites, three ballets, eighteen choral anthems, numerous piano pieces,

and works for violin, flute, wind quintet, carillon, and music for more than twenty theatrical productions. His first opera, *The Scarf*, was premiered at the first Spoleto Festival (Italy) and has since had over fifty productions. *A Month in the Country* was commissioned and premiered by the New York City Opera. *Summer and Smoke*, with libretto by Lanford Wilson based on the Tennessee Williams play, was produced by the New York City Opera in 1972 and telecast nationally by the PBS network in 1981. His three-act opera *The Tempest*, after Shakespeare's play, was commissioned by the Des Moines Metro Opera and premiered there in 1986. It was seen at the Dallas Opera in 1997. In 1989 his work was the subject of a retrospective concert at the Kennedy Center on the American Composer Series.

Hoiby is also a pianist of note, appearing in recitals of the standard repertory, as soloist in his concertos, and as accompanist to singers and instrumentalists performing his work. He was composer-in-residence at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival in 1996. Hoiby also accompanies the baritone Peter Stewart in a disc of songs released on CRI (CD 685).

Hoiby wrote the following for the CD release of this recording:

"When I first discovered these poems of Adelaide Crapsey, they sent forth an immediate signal to be set to music. I was drawn to them as a person might be drawn to a lilac bush. The poems are very lyrical, simple, and direct, not intellectual. Within the framework of her carefully counted syllables, tremendous feeling is subdued and contained."

**Ernst Bacon** (b Chicago, IL, 26 May 1898; d Orinda, CA, 16 March 1990), whom Virgil Thomson called "one of America's best composers," was of that pioneering generation that found a voice for American music. Bacon's music reflects the dual heritage of his Austrian mother, who gave him a love of song and an early start on the piano, and his American father.

As with Schubert, whose music was especially dear to Bacon, a large body of more than 250 art songs is the heart of an oeuvre that also includes numerous chamber, orchestral, and choral works, as well as descriptive pieces for piano. According to Marshall Bialosky, Ernst Bacon was "one of the first composers to discover Emily Dickinson...and set a great number of her poems into some of the finest art song music, if not actually the very finest, of any American composer in our history."

Bacon's sixty-seven Dickinson settings, which he sometimes referred to as "water colors," match the poems in poignance and economy. In 1981, he wrote the following:

"My way of writing songs is a private matter, my methods, if any, might seem too childish. But I can reveal, as a fact, not a boast, that I have written perhaps three or four scores of songs to Miss Dickinson's verses and may even have been the first to avail myself of this privilege (beginning in about 1927). And it is a privilege, for these poems do not require music, and indeed possess in themselves a rare music of words."

**Carolyn Heafner** began a distinguished international opera career as a Scholarship Award Winner of the Metropolitan Opera's National Auditions, which brought her to New York as a member of the Metropolitan Opera Studio. She has performed with the Santa Fe Opera, the Opera Theater of Northern Virginia, and the Lake George Opera among many others in the United States. For five years she sang leading roles at the Bremen Opera Company in West Germany, with guest performances throughout Europe, to extraordinary acclaim for her exquisite lyric soprano voice, her compelling stage presence, and her superb musicianship. She is equally

distinguished in her career as soloist in oratorio and with symphony orchestra. Her New York orchestral debut was with the Little Orchestra Society in Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall.

As a recitalist with an affinity for the art song, Carolyn Heafner was recognized by both the Poetry and Music Divisions of the Library of Congress with her program, "The Poetess Sings —A Tribute to Emily Dickinson," which was chosen to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the birth of the poet. This unique program formed part of a series on Emily Dickinson which was broadcast nationally by PBS.

Carolyn Heafner has worked closely with numerous composers including Aaron Copland, Ernst Bacon, Lee Hoiby, Otto Leuning, Robert Baksa, Richard Hundley, and Jack Beeson. Along with her regular concerts and recitals, Carolyn Heafner continues to perform American song repertoire as well as American musical theater. She recently participated in a world premiere of Jay Poûhe's *Altar Pieces* for four solo voices.

In addition to her Metropolitan Opera National Auditions Scholarship Award, Carolyn Heafner was twice the recipient

of Martha Baird Rockefeller Grants, and among the first recipients of the prestigious National Endowment for the Arts Solo Recitalist Grants. She was also the winner of the Southwestern Region of the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, winner of the Advanced Division of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, and the winner of the Fort Worth Opera Guild Auditions. Miss Heafner is listed in *Who's Who in the Arts* in Germany's international edition.

**Dixie Ross Neill**, piano, has extensive experience as a vocal coach and accompanist. Her repertoire includes well over one hundred operas and a vast amount of concert and recital material, spanning the varying styles of over four centuries. Formerly a member of the musical staff of the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York City, Neill has prepared operas, including many world premieres.

A recognized expert in young artist training programs, she was for five years director of musical studies for the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble and is now director of opera studies for the Faculty of Music, McGill University, in Montréal. She recently compiled an operetta CD, *A Night in Vienna*, for BMG Canada.

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## Production Notes

Publishing:

Poûhe: *The Amorous Line*: E.C. Kerby (BMI)

Beach: Three Browning Songs: Arthur P. Schmidt (in the public domain)

Beeson: "Death by Owl-Eyes": Boosey & Hawkes; "The You Should Of Done It Blues" and "Eldorado": Galaxy Music (ASCAP)

Weisgall: Four Songs, Op. 1: Theodore Presser (ASCAP)

Hoiby: *Night Songs*: Classical Vocal reprints CVR8002 (ASCAP)

Bacon: "I'm Nobody": Dragon's Teeth Press (ASCAP); "Eden," "Poor Little Heart," "The Little Stone": Mercury Music (SESAC)

Poûhe song cycle was recorded live January 1999. Mixed and mastered by Todd Levine for Magnetic North, Saugerties, NY.

All other works originally released on CRI SD 462. Produced by Carter Harman. Recorded by David Hancock, engineer, New York, April 1981. This recording was made possible in part by a grant from the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University.

CD mastered by Robert Wolff, engineer, at Sony Music Studios, NYC.