

NWCR864

Solo Flights

Composers Collaborative



Andrew Violette
Two Sonatinas (1995) (5:48)
1. Sonatina I. (1:55)
2. Sonatina II. (3:53)
Andrew Violette, piano; Recorded live at
Independent Art HERE, NYC, November 3, 1997

Robert Helps
In Retrospect – 5 Pieces for Piano (1977) (9:18)
3. I. Prelude (1:06)
4. II. Dance (1:00)
5. III. Song (4:07)
6. IV. Pastorale (1:58)
7. V. Toccata (1:07)
Robert Helps, piano; Recorded live at
Independent Art HERE, NYC, December 2, 1997

Ursula Mamlok
Three Bagatelles (1987) (3:10)
8. I. Grazioso (:42)
9. II. Very calm (1:06)
10. III. Playful (1:22)
Sarah Cahill, piano; Recorded live at the Bloomingdale
House of Music, NYC, February 24, 1996

David Del Tredici
11. *Opposites Attract* (1996) (4:21)
David Del Tredici, piano; Recorded live at the New
School for Social Research, NYC, November 9, 1996

Virgil Thomson
12. *Solitude: A Portrait of Lou Harrison* (1945) (1:11)
David Del Tredici, piano; Recorded live at the New
School for Social Research, NYC, November 9, 1996

13. *Edges: A Portrait of Robert Indiana* (1966) (1:22)
Andrew Violette, piano

Eleanor Hovda
14. *Spring Music with Wind* (1973) (7:20)
Jed Distler, piano; Recorded live at the Bloomingdale
House of Music, NYC, May 9, 1995

Laura Kaminsky
15. *Triftmusik* (1991) (5:18)
Sara Laimon, piano; Recorded live at Independent
Art HERE, NYC, October 20, 1998

John Zorn
16. *Carny* (1992) (11:36)
Phillip Bush, piano; Recorded live at the Bloomingdale
House of Music, NYC, January 17, 1995

Jed Distler
17. *The Woman Who Danced* (1991) (7:57)
Jed Distler, piano; Recorded live at Independent Art HERE,
NYC, October 21, 1998

Molly Thompson
18. *Our Mingling Arms* (1997) (6:38)
Kathleen Supové, piano; Recorded live at Independent Art
HERE, NYC, October 21, 1998

Leopold Godowsky
19. *Studies on Chopin's Etudes, No. 45.* (6:02)
Robert Helps, piano

Jed Distler
20. *The Anthem at Woodstock* (1996) (3:51)
Jed Distler, piano; Recorded live at Independent Art
HERE, NYC, October 27, 1999

Total playing time: 74:33

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Notes

ComposersCollaborative Inc. (CCI) began in 1987 as the brainchild of a few friends who shared a common passion for new music and getting the word out. Since 1994, CCI's Solo Flights festival has provided a forum chiefly for solo pianists who champion a broad range of new music styles and philosophies. The festival also gives voice to an international scope of new works by young composers, emerging and emerged alike. Coming full circle back to the organization's early work with film and video artists, CCI's Non Sequiter summer festival instigates interdisciplinary collaborations

with writers, dancers, media and theater artists, all who thrive on turning the concert hall on its head. In this tradition, CCI and the New School co-produced 100 Portraits for Virgil, a daylong, multimedia festival featuring all Virgil Thomson's musical portraits with thirty-six participants. This led to a concert theater work based on Thomson's words and music, now in development with director Valeria Vasilevski. The music in your hands is live and unspliced. What Solo Flights audiences have shared for the past seven seasons is exactly what you hear, from different pianos and venues, as it

occurred, in the moment. Sometimes the composer happens to be the pianist. Other times the composer is sitting among the intimate gathering of music lovers. Afterwards an informal dialogue further binds artists and audience together. Questions and comments elicit unexpected insights, a few trade secrets, and a treasure trove of anecdotes. As another typical Solo Flights program wraps up, the good-byes, thank-yous, and let's-stay-in-touches take their sweet time.

Seeds for Solo Flights trace back as far as my impressionable New York student days in the 1970s. The late Paul Jacobs introduced his NYU recital of contemporary etudes with eloquent comments. His words made me hear the music differently. From then, I became hooked on new piano music. My piano teacher turned me on to his own teacher, Robert Helps, who answered my questions and put other backstage well-wishers and me at ease. Another composer/pianist, Frederic Rzewski, was a live wire, and another role model. He once played a new piece of his for the first time and asked the audience for suggestions, taping our comments on a hand-held machine. Imagine Chopin in a Parisian salon as he plays his latest *Nocturne*, asking you if the ending could be better. Then there was Yvar Mikhashoff, presiding over a seven-hour piano marathon like a bon vivant, transforming New York's cavernous Symphony Space into his living room. These events helped form my attitudes about performing and presenting new music. Tear down the Fourth Wall and chuck those pedestals out the window.

Piano music is more vital and variegated than ever as the twenty-first century finds its bearings. The works on this disc attest to the breadth of style, texture, timbre, and expression for which the instrument is capable. These qualities truly blossom in the hands of pianists who imbue the music with passion, commitment, sterling musicianship, and force of personality. A veteran critic I know claims that all modern

pianists sound the same. Not true. Listen to how Phillip Bush navigates John Zorn's split-second shifts in style with such debonair nonchalance. Andrew Violette's booming, whiplash sonority couldn't differ more from Sara Laimon's top-to-bottom tonal solidity and marble-tinged chord playing. While both Kathleen Supové and Sarah Cahill bring pinpoint articulation to the spikiest sequences in their selections, you know who's who without a scorecard.

If anything, CCI offers a congenial haven for trying out repertoire and programming ideas. You hear, for example, background noise during Molly Thompson's *Our Mingling Arms*. That's dancer/choreographer Nami Yamamoto, whose movement (directed by Valeria Vasilevsky) complements Kathy Supové's keyboard motions. While preparing for CCI's 1996 Virgil Thomson Portrait marathon, David Del Tredici phoned me, in a creative mood. Could he compose his own portrait of Virgil to play at the event? The result: the world premiere of *Opposites Attract*, played by its composer when the ink had barely dried on the manuscript page.

For his encore, Robert Helps treated us to a Chopin-/Godowsky etude. The E Major Study No. 45 subjects Chopin's A-flat Nouvelle Etude to an intoxicating web of contrapuntal and rhythmic elaboration. Whether or not this music belongs on a new music collection is beside the point when you consider Bob's poignant and profound interpretation. I'm glad we've included it.

To keep company with the remarkable artists, staff, board members, and music lovers who've made Solo Flights a success (including CCI's co-founder Célia Cooke, my wife and partner of 20 years) inspires and humbles me. I am grateful to all the musicians here, who open their honest, unfettered sound-worlds to us, keeping the dialogue alive.

—Jed Distler, July 21, 2000

Production Notes

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