

SONGS BY GEORGE PERLE

with BETHANY BEARDSLEE, soprano and MOREY RITT, piano

THIRTEEN DICKINSON SONGS (1977-1978)

FROM A CHILDHOOD

- 1. Perhaps you'd like to buy a flower**
- 2. I like to see it lap the miles**
- 3. I know some lonely houses off the road**
- 4. There came a wind like a bugle**

AUTUMN DAY

- 5. Beauty — be not caused — it is**
- 6. The wind — tapped like a tired man —**
- 7. These are the days when birds come back**
- 8. The heart asks pleasure — first —**

GRAVE HOUR

- 9. What if I say I shall not wait!**
- 10. If I'm lost — now —**
- 11. The loneliness one dare not sound —**
- 12. Under the light, yet under**

CLOSING PIECE

- 13. She bore it till the simple veins**

TWO RILKE SONGS (1941)

BETHANY BEARDSLEE, soprano GEORGE PERLE, piano

GEORGE PERLE (b. Bayonne, NJ, 1915) has been on the faculty of the City University of New York (Queens College) since 1961 and has also held teaching posts at the University of Louisville and the University of California (Davis) and visiting positions at Yale University, University of Southern California, the Juilliard School, State University of New York at Buffalo, University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, and Tanglewood. He was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1966-67 and in 1974-75, and in 1978 he was elected to membership in the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. He is the author of *Serial Composition and Atonality: an Introduction to the Music of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern*, now in its fourth edition, and *Twelve-Tone Tonality*. The latter sets forth the view that the seemingly disparate styles of post-triadic music share common structural elements, and that collectively these imply a new tonality, as “natural” and coherent as the major-minor tonality which has been the basis of a common musical language in the past. A third book, Volume One of *The Operas of Alban Berg* is now in preparation by the University of California Press.

Other works by George Perle recorded by CRI include *QUINTET FOR STRINGS* (CRI SD 148), *MONODY FOR SOLO FLUTE* (CRI SD 212), *SIX PRELUDES FOR PIANO* (CRI SD 288), *TOCCATA FOR PIANO* (CRI SD 306), *THREE MOVEMENTS FOR ORCHESTRA* (CRI SD 331), *STRING QUARTET No. 7* (CRI SD 387). His most recent composition, *Concertino for Piano, Winds, and Timpani* was commissioned by the Fromm Music Foundation for the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago (Ralph Shapey, cond.). His *STRING QUARTET No. 7* won the American Academy-Institute of Arts and Letters Award in 1977. He writes:

“Though every beginner in composition tries his hand at it before anything else, it has always seemed to me that the art song is the most subtle, sophisticated, and difficult of musical genres. Out of all the possible ways of reading and interpreting a poem, the musical setting fixes just one, and it must do so in the most spontaneous and authentic way, without seeming to encroach upon the prerogatives of the poet and the listener. Not only must it seem right, and seem so at once without also seeming coercive and demanding, but it must go beyond this and enhance and elucidate the words — otherwise why bother to put music to them at all? But then, what about the music itself, which has its *own* logic, its *own* proportions, its *own* kind of coherence? And what about the problem of combining two such uniquely characteristic and individual means of musical expression as voice and piano in such a way that the special personality of each is realized, and even heightened by contrast and association with the other?”

“Obviously, my concept of what an art song should be was formed by the achievements of the great German composers of *Lieder* in the 19th century, so it is not surprising that I should have chosen, for my first songs, composed in 1941, German verses that evoke, in their simplicity, immediacy, and self-contained lyricism, the world of the *Lied* — poems of the sort that inspired the early Romantic composers, though their author, Rainer Maria Rilke, was a very late Romantic. When Bethany Beardslee asked me to write some songs for her I again decided that what I wanted to write were *Lieder*, but in my own language, rather than in German. Many months passed before I found the verses that could lead my musical thoughts in the direction that I had decided upon — the English Romantic poets didn't work for me at all in this respect. The Dickinson Songs, commissioned for Bethany Beardslee by the National Endowment for the Arts, were composed in 1977-78 and were first performed by Ms. Beardslee and Ms. Rib at the Fifth Annual Arts Song Festival of the Westminster Choir College in Princeton on June 19, 1978. The two song cycles on this recording are my total output in the genre.”

BETHANY BEARDSLEE was the original singer who could make “difficult” contemporary art music sound as effortless as a popular song and she remains the reigning queen of the idiom. She has made numerous recordings, the most recent of Robert Helps' *GOSSAMER NOONS*, on CRI SD 384. MOREY RITT has been praised for her artistry in solo recitals and chamber music concerts in the U.S., Europe, Canada, Argentina, and Australia. In 1976 she presented the world premiere of George Perle's acclaimed *Six Etudes for Piano* at the ISCM's World Music Days in Boston, and then gave the work its first New York performance. In 1979 she was appointed Professor of Music at Queens College.

This record is dedicated to the memory of Barbara Phillips Perle.

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)