

LITA GRIER



**MATTIE J.T.
STEPANEK**



**EDGAR LEE
MASTERS**



**SONGS FROM
SPOON RIVER**

**REFLECTIONS OF
A PEACEMAKER**

**AND
OTHER VOCAL MUSIC**

BY LITA GRIER

Producer: James Ginsburg
Engineer: Bill Maylone
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Steinway Piano
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PUBLISHERS

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Songs from Spoon River, Reflections of a Peacemaker, and Other Vocal Music by Lita Grier

Five Songs for Children (1962/1999) (7:16)

1. Afternoon on a Hill (0:53)
2. The Seashell (0:58)
3. Someone (1:30)
4. Who Has Seen the Wind (1:57)
5. The Bluebird (1:48)

Michelle Areyzaga, soprano
Welz Kauffman, piano

6 Sneezles (1972)* (3:21)

Michelle Areyzaga, soprano
Anne Bach, oboe; Tina Laughlin, percussion
William Billingham, piano

Five Songs from A Shropshire Lad (1955)* (6:59)

- I. (0:53)
- II. (2:55)
- III. (0:42)
- IV. (1:14)
- V. (1:06)

Robert Sims, baritone
William Billingham, piano

Two Songs from Emily Dickinson (1961)* (6:26)

- I. (4:42)
- II. (1:41)

Michelle Areyzaga, soprano
Welz Kauffman, piano

*World Premiere Recording

Songs from Spoon River (2004–2008)* (30:38)

- 14 The Hill (Part I) (4:18)
- 15 Sarah Brown (2:28)
- 16 Zenas Witt (1:58)
- 17 Lucinda Matlock (2:52)
- 18 Anne Rutledge (2:37)
- 19 Petit the Poet (3:03)
- 20 Margaret Fuller Slack (4:01)
- 21 Fiddler Jones (1:53)
- 22 Rita Matlock Gruenberg (4:26)
- 23 The Hill (Part II) (2:44)

Elizabeth Norman, soprano 17 18 22 23
Michelle Areyzaga, soprano 15 16 20 23
Scott Ramsay, tenor 14 18 19 23
Alexander Tall, baritone 16 21 23
Levi Hernandez, baritone 18
Welz Kauffman, piano 15 17 18 20 22
William Billingham, piano 14 16 19 21 23

Reflections of a Peacemaker (2007)*

Poetry by Mattie J.T. Stepanek (12:31)

- 24 As it Was in the Beginning (1:11)
- 25 Eternal Role Call (3:04)
- 26 The Pirate Song (2:20)
- 27 About Living (Part III) (2:48)
- 28 I AM (2:59)

Chicago Children's Choir
Josephine Lee, conductor
John Goodwin, piano

Total Time: (67:45)

The Songs of Lita Grier

Notes by Ted Hatmaker

This recording of songs by Lita Grier brings us much to celebrate. It not only makes available a marvelous collection of vocal music, most of it for the first time; it also represents how an extraordinarily gifted composer was able to defy history and return to creating vibrant music after a 30-year hiatus. Such a return is virtually unprecedented, and the music community is fortunate to reap the benefits.

Having found her compositional voice early, Lita was awarded First Prize in the New York Philharmonic Young Composer's Contest at age sixteen, during her first year at Juilliard. After completing her degree, she went on to earn a Masters degree in composition at UCLA, where she studied with Lukas Foss and Roy Harris. Along the way, her early songs, some of which are included here, and chamber music garnered awards

and high praise. She seemed poised to settle in as one of the prominent composers of her generation. And then, suddenly, she walked away from it all.

Why would someone abandon the field of composition after such a promising start? To answer this question, one must return to the 1960s, when serialism, a compositional technique in which pitches (and other elements) are used in a specified order and manner to assure an atonal effect, reigned over the academic music establishment, and composers who did not conform were mocked as antiquated. In addition, female composers were not common, and many still felt composition should be an exclusively male domain.

Lita faced both of these prejudices. Rather than fight against the prevailing forces, she redirected her energies to other musical pursuits: artist management, public relations, writing, and finally, broadcast

production, as Vice President and, after the death of her husband, President of Inter-Continental Media, producing outstanding musical series such as nationally-distributed radio broadcasts of the Vienna Philharmonic and Salzburg Festival. In the wake of this career shift she had left a number of high-quality pieces, and these took on a life of their own. Her flute sonata, violin sonata, songs, and other chamber works were distributed among musician friends and performed throughout this period, to overwhelmingly positive reviews. By the mid-1990s, the demand for new works became too great for her to ignore. Commissions began to stream in, and a career previously derailed by unfortunate circumstances was righted and continues rolling along to this day. In recent years, Lita has had entire concerts dedicated to her music, seen numerous recordings and countless performances of her works, and was named a *Chicago Tribune* "Chicagoan of the Year" in 2005.

This CD is the first commercially-available recording devoted exclusively to the music of Lita Grier. It is fitting that it features her songs because this genre spans from her earliest to her most recent compositions. Grier has set the words of illustrious English language poets with a regard for ultimate conveyance of their meaning. These are not songs in which the music competes against the word; rather they form a marriage that seeks to become more than the sum of its components. Employing her rich harmonic vocabulary, from glorious sonorities to pungent dissonances, Grier is able to give a contemporary voice to these poets of the past, and thus connect them with the modern listener. The result is music that projects how we feel inside when reading these poems.

The *Five Songs for Children* offer a unique opportunity to experience the integrity of Grier's style. Although they seem cut from the same musical cloth, three of the songs were written

early in her musical life, the other two 37 years later. A listener would be hard-pressed to determine which are which, because her early works were so mature and her later ones bear the same youthful zeal and harmonic imprint. (The first three songs were written in 1962, the last two in 1999.) The irregular meter and compound (long-short) rhythms of "Afternoon on a Hill" (Edna St. Vincent Millay), its rolling lines and shouts of glee, aptly suit the youthful narrator's enthusiasm at an unchaperoned day on a hill overlooking town. In Amy Lowell's "The Seashell," voice and piano lines come to life to act out the stories told by the conch shell at the child's ear. The repeated downward intervals that open the piano and voice parts sound familiar to all children-at-heart. Grier's piano part serves here as a playfriend to the voice, playing first in counterpoint, then momentarily veering off on its own fantasy before rejoining the voice in its games. "Someone" (Walter de la Mare)

depicts the annoyance of answering a knock at the door at night to find no one there, only the busy sounds of woodland creatures. Sharp staccatos represent both the knocking and the narrator's perturbation. In the end, the voice part takes its leave after accepting it will never know who knocked. The piano, however, remains determined, and checks a couple more times before ending the song. The double quatrain of Christina Rossetti's "Who Has Seen the Wind?" is handled masterfully by Grier. Gestures that begin one way in the first quatrain are inverted in the second. The effect is to alter the stress of the words: "Who has seen the wind?" versus "Who has *seen* the wind?" Tremolo "leaves" in the piano part help paint a haunting mood. Nature's joyous song, complete with bird-chirp motive, bursts forth in "The Bluebird" (Emily Huntington Miller), which closes the set. This spirited waltz casts the bluebird as the harbinger of spring in a fervent

song, with a vocal line spanning more than two octaves. The largely stepwise harmonic progression counterbalances the joyous leaps of the melody.

The setting of A.A. Milne's "Sneezles," from the collection *Now We Are Six*, is the lone work composed during Ms. Grier's inactive period, which stretched from 1965 to 1995. She composed "Sneezles" in 1972, when she was reading from Milne's collection to her young son, to whom the work is dedicated. Set for soprano, oboe, percussion, and piano, it features the exploits of Milne's favorite character, Christopher Robin, as he occupies the adults in his life with a slight illness. The charm of Christopher Robin's secret language of rhymes and the pomp of the various personages who attend him are skillfully exposed through the supple melody. The instruments supply appropriately descriptive commentary, but the percussion in particular adds a new dimension.

The nearly-continuous shift among the battery of percussion instruments must make this work as delightful to watch as to hear.

Composed while still in her teens, the *Five Songs from A Shropshire Lad* is Grier's earliest work on this recording. The simple, *carpe diem* message of A.E. Housman's collection, from which these were taken, is neatly revealed in her music. The effect of love on a young man's behavior is the topic of the first song. The skipping meter of the accompaniment mirrors the customary wanton behavior of the unattached narrator, not the well-heeled character of his former infatuated self. The poignant second song relates an eerie scenario: a young man walks with his lass beneath an oracle-like aspen, which predicts her death and, a year later, his own. The widely contrasting third and fourth songs are told in the second person from well-meaning, but clearly different counsels. To a jaunty, dance-like melody, the former

prescribes a life of laughing, dancing, and drinking, since thinking too much will hasten death; in a more somber air, the latter recalls the biblical prescription to cut off any part of the body that causes you to sin, and to end it all “When your sickness is your soul.” The final song sets the best known poem of the collection, “When I was one and twenty.” Grier gives an edginess to the folk-like melody through polytonal references and metric shifts. Its spirited tempo slows only at the end to deliver the woeful moral.

While studying at UCLA, Lita Grier composed *Two Songs from Emily Dickinson*. It is hard to imagine a more powerful setting for Dickinson’s “I Cannot Live with You” than Grier’s heard here. Through logical argument, the narrator explains why love cannot be allowed between her and her beloved. The accompaniment lends a restrained forbearance to this wistful message of love’s impossibility. Despite this restraint, Grier lets the

music reflect the emotional surge hidden behind the argument’s logic, as well as the disconsolation felt on the final word, “despair.” Poignant shifts of key and subtle integration of melodic motives give this song a gravity far exceeding that of the poem alone. “I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed,” Dickinson’s high-on-nature poem, is set to impressionistic colors and moto perpetuo arpeggiations and tremolos. It is a virtuosic song that taxes both vocalist and pianist.

Lita Grier’s longest and most ambitious work to date is the cycle *Songs from Spoon River*. Its ten vocal masterpieces are the product of three separate commissions from Ravinia Festival CEO Welz Kauffman for the festival’s Steans Institute for Young Artists. The first set, comprising songs one through four and the finale, was premiered in 2004 and is dedicated to Ravinia’s centennial year celebration. An overwhelmingly positive response led to a subsequent commission that yielded songs six through nine. Song

five, “Anne Rutledge,” was added in 2009 in commemoration of the bicentennial of Lincoln’s birth. The texts come from Edgar Lee Masters’s *Spoon River Anthology*, a set of over two hundred poems that unveil a shockingly scandalous lifestyle in rural Illinois through fictional characters speaking from their graves. Grier’s brilliant array of expressions complements the characters’ diverse accounts, and offers vocal tours-de-force for high soprano, second soprano or mezzo-soprano, tenor, and baritone voices, accompanied by piano.

The opening song, “The Hill (Part I),” for tenor, introduces us to ten residents of the cemetery and their various fates, and sets the stage for the remaining songs. Its funeral dirge tempo and dark harmonies cast a touch of melodrama to the setting, and introduce the death motive (“all are sleeping on the hill”), which reappears in several songs. This song and its bookend counterpart, “The

Hill (Part II),” are sung in the third person. All of the other characters speak for themselves. “Sarah Brown,” the second song, cautiously carves the poignant plight of a woman who loved another man as well as her husband. The singer’s final and highest note culminates her rationale: “There is no marriage in heaven, but there is love.” With the agitated “Zenas Witt,” the baritone portrays a student who suspects he is mortally ill, and has his suspicion confirmed when he reads his symptoms in an advertisement. A cough ensued, sending him to an early grave, where he “slept the sleep without dreams.” To a waltz, the matriarchal “Lucinda Matlock” outlines her happy, full life, and flippantly directs sharp criticism to mopey youths who don’t know how to enjoy themselves. The entire ensemble joins together for the first time in “Anne Rutledge,” a slow, dignified portrait of Abraham Lincoln’s early beloved. Grier brings back the dark harmonies

from the opening song to capture Rutledge's soliloquy. Even in death, "Petit the Poet" still obsesses over poetic meter, his thought processes apparently continuing by inertia. The accompaniment's witty metric interplay with the tenor's melody recedes only when he stops to reflect on how life passed him by. The ambitious novelist "Margaret Fuller Slack" finds herself undone by the "old problem" of sex, which drew her to matrimony: her eight children left her no time to write, and she died of lockjaw from an accident sustained while performing domestic chores. A rustic drone escorts the sprightly dance tune for the baritone's joyous "Fiddler Jones," a musician who was ill-equipped to thrive in his farming profession. A reprise of Lucinda Matlock's waltz allows her granddaughter "Rita Matlock Gruenberg" to respond movingly to her ancestor's criticism from a nearby grave. It was not lack of "strength, nor will, nor courage"

that kept her from a happy, full life, but circumstances of fate. The ensemble reunites for the finale, "The Hill (Part II)," continuing the survey of various characters, as in part I, and concluding with an assessment of Fiddler Jones's capricious life and comments over strains of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." The colorful, the distracted, the maligned, the self-righteous — all are sleeping on the hill.

The life and writings of Mattie J.T. Stepanek (1990–2004) have been celebrated for many years now. Mattie understood more in his short life than most of us ever will, and his message of hope, peace, and courage inspired all who knew him, or knew of him. When commissioned by the Chicago Children's Choir to write a work for its 50th anniversary in 2007, Lita chose to set five Stepanek poems for children's choir and piano and call the set *Reflections of a Peacemaker*, the title of Mattie's last published volume of poetry.

Mattie saw beauty and awe in the everyday; nowhere is this more apparent than in "As It Was in the Beginning." Grier's glistening harmonies spotlight key words such as "sunshine" and "glee," while crescendos over each "-ing" of "thriving, reverberating, exhilarating" drive home how amazing a playground full of children can be. In "Eternal Role Call," lush, rolling piano chords lead the children to delight in what each season brings to them. Even death contributes, for it gives them a chance to recognize those gifts that are part of life. The cycle of seasons is reflected in the end by a return to the opening harmony. "The Pirate Song" exemplifies Mattie's "play" mode, which should be an important part of all our lives. Here the chorus members become fearsome pirates, with sound effects to punctuate their chantey. A more circumspect outlook is presented in "About Living (Part III)." Its message — live life to the fullest while you're

here — is captured movingly by the a cappella setting of this gracious anthem. The set culminates in "I AM," an anaphoric feast in which the "I" is each one of us, and no matter what makes us the way we are, we are all miraculous just by being. This mature viewpoint from such a young man concludes the disc, neatly balancing the opening five children's songs from celebrated adult poets.

Ted Hatmaker is a music theorist and composer who teaches at Northern Illinois University.

TEXTS

Five Songs For Children

- ① **Afternoon on a Hill**
Edna St. Vincent Millay

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I will be the gladdest thing
Under the sun!
I will touch a hundred flowers
And not pick one.

I will look at cliffs and clouds
With quiet eyes,
Watch the wind bow down the grass,
And the grass rise.

And when the lights begin to show
Up from the town,
I will mark which must be mine,
And then start down.

- ② **The Sea Shell**
Amy Lowell

Sea Shell, Sea Shell,
Sing me a song, O, please!
A song of ships and sailor-men

Of parrots and tropical trees;
Of islands lost in the Spanish Main
Which no man ever may find again,
Of fishes and corals under the waves
And seahorses stabled in great green
caves.

Sea Shell, Sea Shell,
Sing of the things you know so well.

- ③ **Someone**
Walter de la Mare.

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Some one came knocking
At my wee, small door;
Someone came knocking,
I'm sure-sure-sure
I listened, I opened,
I looked to left and right,
But nought there was astirring
In the still, dark night;
Only the busy beetle
Tap-tapping in the wall,
Only from the forest
The screech-owl's call,
Only the cricket whistling
While the dewdrops fall,
So I know not who came knocking,
At all, at all, at all.

- ④ **Who Has Seen the Wind**
Christina Rossetti

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you;
But when the leaves hang trembling
The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I;
But when the trees bow down their heads
The wind is passing by.

- ⑤ **The Bluebird**
Emily Huntington Miller

I know the song that the bluebird is singing
Out in the apple tree where he is swinging
Brave little fellow! The skies may look
dreary—
Nothing cares he while his heart is so
cheery.

Hark! How the music leaps out from his
throat!
Hark! Was there ever so merry a note?
Listen awhile and you'll hear what he's
saying,
Up in the apple tree swinging and swaying.

"Dear little blossoms down under the
snow

You must be weary of winter, I know;
Hark, while I sing you a message of cheer
Summer is coming and springtime is here!

"Little white snowdrops, I pray you arise;
Bright yellow crocus, come, open your
eyes;
Sweet little violets, hid from the cold,
Put on your mantles of purple and gold!
Daffodils, daffodils! Say, do you hear?
Summer is coming and springtime is
here!"

- ⑥ **Sneezles**
A.A. Milne

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Christopher Robin
Had wheezles
And sneezles,
They bundled him
Into
His bed.
They gave him what goes
With a cold in the nose,
And some more for a cold
In the head.
They wondered
If wheezles
Could turn
Into measles,

If sneezles
Would turn
Into mumps;
They examined his chest
For a rash,
And the rest
Of his body for swellings and lumps.
They sent for some doctors
In sneezles
And wheezles
To tell them what ought
To be done.
All sorts and conditions
Of famous physicians
Came hurrying round
At a run.
They all made a note
Of the state of his throat,
They asked if he suffered from thirst;
They asked if the sneezles
Came after the wheezles,
Or if the first sneeze
Came first.
They said, "If you teazle
A sneeze
Or wheeze,
A measle
May easily grow.
But humour or pleazle
The wheeze
Or sneeze,
The measle

Will certainly go."
They expounded the reazles
For sneezles
And wheezles,
The manner of measles
When new.
They said "If he freezles
In draughts and in breezles,
Then PHTHEEZLES
May even ensue."

Christopher Robin
Got up in the morning,
The sneezles had vanished away.
And the look in his eye
Seemed to say to the sky,
"Now, how to amuse them to-day?"

Five Songs from a Shropshire Lad
A.E. Housman

7 I

Oh, when I was in love with you,
Then I was clean and brave,
And miles around the wonder grew
How well did I behave.

And now the fancy passes by,
And nothing will remain,
And miles around they'll say that I
Am quite myself again.

8 II

Along the field as we came by
A year ago, my love and I,
The aspen over stile and stone
Was talking to itself alone.
'Oh who are these that kiss and pass?
A country lover and his lass;
Two lovers looking to be wed;
And time shall put them both to bed,
But she shall lie with earth above,
And he beside another love.'

And sure enough beneath the tree
There walks another love with me,
And overhead the aspen heaves
Its rainy-sounding silver leaves
And I spell nothing in their stir,
But now perhaps they speak to her,
And plain for her to understand
They talk about a time at hand
When I shall sleep with clover clad,
And she beside another lad.

9 III

Think no more, lad; laugh, be jolly:
Why should men make haste to die?
Empty heads and tongues a-talking
Make the rough road easy walking,
And the feather pate of folly
Bears the falling sky.

Oh, 'tis jesting, dancing, drinking
Spins the heavy world around.
If young hearts were not so clever,
Oh, they would be young for ever:
Think no more; 'tis only thinking
Lays lads underground

10 IV

If it chance your eye offend you,
Pluck it out, lad, and be sound:
'Twill hurt, but here are salves to friend
you,
And many a balsam grows on ground.

And if your hand or foot offend you,
Cut it off, lad, and be whole;
But play the man, stand up and end you,
When your sickness is your soul.

11 V

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
'Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;

Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free.'
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,

'The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue.'
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

Two Songs from Emily Dickinson

12 I

I cannot live with you,
It would be life,
And life is over there
Behind the shelf

The sexton keeps the key to,
Putting up
Our life, his porcelain,
Like a cup

Discarded of the housewife,
Quaint or broken;
A newer Sevres pleases,
Old ones crack.

I could not die with you,
For one must wait
To shut the other's gaze down,
You could not.

And I, could I stand by
And see you freeze,

Without my right of frost,
Death's privilege?

Nor could I rise with you,
Because your face
Would put out Jesus'.
That new grace

Glow plain and foreign
On my homesick eye,
Except that you, than he
Shone closer by.

They'd judge us — how?
For you served Heaven, you know
Or sought to;
I could not,

Because you saturated sight,
And I had no more eyes
For sordid excellence
As Paradise.

And were you lost, I would be,
Though my name
Rang loudest
On the heavenly fame.

And were you saved,
And I condemned to be
Where you were not,
That self were hell to me.

So we must keep apart,
You there, I here,
With just the door ajar
That oceans are,
And prayer,
And that pale sustenance,
Despair!

13 II

I taste a liquor never brewed,
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not all the vats upon the Rhine
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew,
Reeling, through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue.

When the landlord turn the drunken bee
Out of the foxglove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Leaning against the sun!

Songs from Spoon River

Poems from the *Spoon River Anthology*
Edgar Lee Masters

*For more information contact Samuel
French, Inc. 45 West 25th Street, New York,
NY 10010. Used by Permission.*

14 The Hill (Part I)

Where are Elmer, Herman, Bert, Tom and
Charley,
The weak of will, the strong of arm, the
clown, the boozier, the fighter?
All, all are sleeping on the hill.
One passed in a fever,
One was burned in a mine,
One was killed in a brawl,
One died in a jail,
One fell from a bridge toiling for children
and wife—
All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on
the hill.

Where are Ella, Kate, Mag, Lizzie and
Edith,
The tender heart, the simple soul, the
loud, the proud, the happy one?—
All, all are sleeping on the hill.

One died in shameful child-birth,
One of a thwarted love,
One at the hands of a brute in a brothel,

One of a broken pride, in the search for
heart's desire;
One after life in far-away London and Paris
Was brought to her little space by Ella and
Kate and Mag—
All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on
the hill.

16 Sarah Brown

Maurice, weep not, I am not here under
this pine tree.
The balmy air of spring whispers through
the sweet grass,
The stars sparkle, the whippoorwill calls,
But thou grieveest, while my soul lies
rapturous
In the blest Nirvana of eternal light!
Go to the good heart that is my husband,
Who broods upon what he calls our guilty
love:—
Tell him that my love for you, no less than
my love for him,
Wrought out my destiny — that through
the flesh
I won spirit, and through spirit, peace.
There is no marriage in heaven,
But there is love.

18 Zenas Witt

I was sixteen, and I had the most terrible
dreams,

And specks before my eyes, and nervous
weakness.
And I couldn't remember the books I read,
Like Frank Drummer who memorized
page after page.
And my back was weak, and I worried and
worried,
And I was embarrassed and stammered
my lessons,
And when I stood up to recite I'd forget
Everything that I had studied.
Well, I saw Dr. Weese's advertisement,
And there I read everything in print,
Just as if he had known me;
And about the dreams which I couldn't
help.
So I knew I was marked for an early grave.
And I worried until I had a cough,
And then the dreams stopped.
And then I slept the sleep without dreams
Here on the hill by the river.

17 Lucinda Matlock

I went to the dances at Chandlerville,
And played snap-out at Winchester.
One time we changed partners,
Driving home in the moonlight of middle
June,
And then I found Davis.
We were married and lived together for
seventy years,
Enjoying, working, raising the twelve

children,
Eight of whom we lost
Ere I had reached the age of sixty.
I spun, I wove, I kept the house, I nursed
the sick,
I made the garden, and for holiday
Rambled over the fields where sang the
larks,
And by Spoon River gathering many a
shell,
And many a flower and medicinal weed—
Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to
the green valleys.
At ninety-six I had lived enough, that is all,
And passed to a sweet repose.
What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,
Anger, discontent and drooping hopes?
Degenerate sons and daughters,
Life is too strong for you—
It takes life to love Life.

18 Anne Rutledge

Out of me unworthy and unknown
The vibrations of deathless music;
"With malice toward none, with charity for
all."
Out of me the forgiveness of millions
toward millions,
And the beneficent face of a nation
Shining with justice and truth.
I am Anne Rutledge who sleep beneath

these weeds,
Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln,
Wedded to him, not through union,
But through separation.
Bloom forever, O Republic,
From the dust of my bosom!

19 Petit the Poet

Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick
Tick, tick, tick, like mites in a quarrel—
Faint iambs that the full breeze wakens—
But the pine tree makes a symphony
thereof
Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus;
Ballades by the score with the same old
thought:
The snows and the roses of yesterday are
vanished.
And what is love but a rose that fades?
Life all around me here in the village.
Tragedy, comedy, valor and truth,
Courage, constancy, heroism, failure—
All in the loom, and oh what patterns!
Woodlands, meadows, streams and
rivers—
Blind to all of it all my life long.
Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus,
Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick
Tick, tick, tick, what little iambs
While Homer and Whitman roared in the
pines?

20 **Margaret Fuller Slack**

I would have been as great as George
Eliot
But for an untoward fate.
For look at the photograph of me made
by Penniwit,
Chin resting on hand, and deep-set
eyes—
Gray, too, and far-searching
But there was the old, old problem:
Should it be celibacy, matrimony or
unchastity?
Then John Slack, the rich druggist, wooed
me,
Luring me with the promise of leisure for
my novel,
And I married him, giving birth to eight
children,
And had no time to write.
It was all over with me, anyway,
When I ran the needle in my hand
While washing the baby's things
And died from lockjaw, an ironical death.
Hear me, ambitious souls,
Sex is the curse of life!

21 **Fiddler Jones**

The Earth keeps some vibration going
There in your heart and that is you
And if the people find you can fiddle
Why, fiddle you must, for all your life.

What do you see, a harvest of clover?
Or a meadow to walk through to the river?
The wind's in the corn; you rub your hands
For beebes hereafter ready for market;
Or else you hear the rustle of skirts
Like the girls when dancing at Little Grove.
To Cooney Potter a pillar of dust
Or whirling leaves meant ruinous drouth;
They looked to me like Red-Head Sammy
Stepping it off, to "Toor-a-Loor"
How could I till my forty acres
Not to speak of getting more
With a medley of horns, bassoons and
piccolos
Stirred in my brain by crows and robins
And the creek of a windmill — only these?
And I never started to plow in my life
That some one did not stop in the road
And take me away to a dance or picnic
I ended up with forty acres;
I ended up with a broken fiddle—
And a broken laugh, and a thousand
memories,
And not a single regret.

22 **Rita Matlock Gruenberg**
(From *The New Spoon River*)

Grandmother!
You who sang to green valleys,
And passed to a sweet repose at ninety-
six,

Here is your little Rita at last
Grown old, grown forty-nine;
Here stretched on your grave under the
winter stars,
With the rustle of oak leaves over my head;
Piecing together strength for the act,
Last thoughts, memories, asking how I am
here!
After wandering afar, over the world,
Life in cities, marriages, motherhood—
(They all married, and I am homeless,
alone.)
Grandmother! I have not lacked in
strength,
Nor will, nor courage. No! I have honored
you
With a life that used these gifts of your
blood.
But I was caught in trap after trap in the
years.
At last the cruelest trap of all.
Then I fought the bars, pried open the
door,
Crawled through — but it suddenly sprang
shut,
And tore me to death as I used your
courage
To free myself!
Grandmother! Fold me to your breast
again.
Make me earth with you for the blossoms
of spring — Grandmother!

23 **The Hill (Part II)**

Where are Uncle Isaac and Aunt Emily,
And old Towny Kincaid and Sevigne
Houghton,
And Major Walker who had talked
With venerable men of the revolution?—
All, all are sleeping on the hill.

They brought them dead sons from the
war,
And daughters whom life had crushed,
And their children fatherless, crying—
All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on
the hill.

Where is Old Fiddler Jones
Who played with life all his ninety years,
Braving the sleet with bared breast,
Drinking, rioting, thinking neither of wife
nor kin,
Nor gold, nor love, nor heaven?
Lo! he babbles of the fish-frys of long ago,
Of the horse-races of long ago at Clary's
Grove,
Of what Abe Lincoln said
One time at Springfield.

Reflections of a Peacemaker

Mattie J.T. Stepanek

24 As it Was in the Beginning

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When the playground is
Roaring with kids...
When the sky is
Thundering with sunshine...
When the atmosphere is
Electrified with glee...
Then is when we know
For sure that life is
Thriving...
Reverberating...
Exhilarating...
It is good, indeed.

25 Eternal Role Call

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I will paint rainbows.
When the spring comes.
And children will dance
And smile in the music of my colors.
I will shape clouds

When the summer comes,
And children will chant
And dream in the melody of my creations.
I will whistle winds
When the fall comes,
And children will listen
And hum in the understanding of leaves.
I will jingle stars
When the winter comes,
And children will laugh
And believe in the ballads of the season.
I will revolve seasonally
When my death comes,
And children will remember
And share their Heartsongs,
Celebrating the gifts in the circle of life.

26 The Pirate Song

From Reflections of a Peacemaker:
A Portrait Through Heartsongs
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Shiver my temper,
Shiver my soul,
W-O-E...
W-O-E...
W-O-E...
Shiver my temper,
Shiver my soul,
Woe, ho, hum,
And a bucket of rum!

I am a pirate
So nasty and mean,
I never take a bath
And my teeth are all green.
I snarl and I snortle
And I gurgle my juice,
My clothes are all dirty
And my socks are too loose!
Shiver my temper,
Shiver my soul,
W-O-E...
W-O-E...
W-O-E...

Shiver my temper,
Shiver my soul,
Woe, ho, hum,
And a bucket of rum!
I've sailed the high seas
And a backyard pool.
I've buried my treasure
'Cause I am no fool.
I've hidden the maps
In a secret-somewhere,
And if you try to find them
You'd better beware!
Shiver my temper,
Shiver my soul,
W-O-E...
W-O-E...
W-O-E...

Shiver my temper,
Shiver my soul,
Woe, ho, hum,
And a bucket of rum!

Don't try to dig
In the sand or the night
Or you just might shake
From a terrible fright
'Cause even if my ghost
Is a skinless dust of bone
I'll be guarding my treasure
With a plundering moan!
Shiver my temper,
Shiver my soul,
W-O-E...
W-O-E...
W-O-E...

Shiver my temper
Shiver my soul
Woe, ho, hum
And a bucket of rum!

27 About Living (Part III)

From Reflections of a Peacemaker:

A Portrait Through Heartsongs,
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I wanted to live
To be
One hundred and one
Years old.
But that is no
Longer my goal.
When I die,
I die.

I cannot predict.
I cannot control.
I cannot change
What is to be,
Which is what it is
And will be
What it will be.
I wanted to live
To be,
And not die.
But,
While I'm alive,

I live
To the fullest.
I treasure each sunrise.
I remember each sunset.

I dance every dance and
I sing every song and
I celebrate every moment.
I wanted to live
To be.
And,
I am spending my time
On earth before death
Living,
Rather than dying,
And not wasting a moment
Of the precious gifts of time and
Of life and
Of being, for now.

28 I AM

From Celebrate Through Heartsongs
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I am black.
I am white.
I am all skins in between,
I am young.
I am old.
I am each age that has been.
I am scrawny.
I am well-fed.
I am starving for attention.
I am famous.
I am cryptic.

I am hardly worth the mention.
I am short.
I am height.
I am any frame or stature.
I am smart.
I am challenged.
I am striving for a future.
I am able.
I am weak.
I am some strength, I am none.
I am being.
I am thought.
I am all things, said and done.
I am born.
I am dying.
I am dust of humble roots.
I am grace.
I am pain.
I am labor of willed fruits.
I am slave.
I am free.
I am bonded to my life.
I am rich.
I am poor.
I am wealth amid strife.
I am shadow.
I am glory.
I am hiding from my shame.
I am hero.
I am loser.
I am yearning for a name.
I am empty.

I am proud.
I am seeking my tomorrow.
I am growing.
I am fading.
I am hope amid the sorrow.
I am certain.
I am doubtful.
I am desperate for solutions.
I am leader.
I am student.
I am faith and evolutions.
I am spirit.
I am voice.
I am memory, not recalled.
I am chance.
I am cause.
I am effort, blocked and walled.
I am him.
I am her.
I am reasoned without rhymes.
I am past.
I am nearing.
I am present in all times.
I am many.
I am no one.
I am seasoned by each being.
I am me.
I am you.
I am all souls now decreeing.
I AM.

Lita Grier

Named a "Chicagoan of the Year" in 2005 by the *Chicago Tribune* for her dual achievements as a composer and radio producer, native New Yorker, Lita Grier won early recognition as a composer. She was awarded First Prize in the New York Philharmonic Young Composer's Contest at age sixteen; her winning composition was presented at Carnegie Hall and published by Carl Fischer. A graduate of Juilliard, she went on to study under Lukas Foss and Roy Harris at UCLA, earning a Masters degree and an Atwater Kent Prize before abandoning composition for 30 years.

After a varied career in music, as a writer, teacher, artist manager, public relations consultant, and finally broadcaster, her return to composition in the past several years has been welcomed with a growing number of performances, recordings, magazine and newspaper features, TV and radio broadcasts, and numerous commissions and

grants from organizations including Ravinia, Music in the Loft, the Illinois Philharmonic, Chicago Flute Club, Meet-the-Composer, and the Chicago Children's Choir.

Grier's works have been widely heard throughout Chicago at major venues including Symphony Center and Ravinia and prestigious Midwest schools including the University of Indiana at Bloomington, Northwestern, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, De Paul, Roosevelt University, and the Music Institute of Chicago. Many of these have presented full length programs devoted to her music. Her Flute Sonata, composed while still a student at Juilliard, was described by the late flute virtuoso Julius Baker as "a new classic in the Standard flute repertory." It has been performed on five continents, and its orchestral adaptation, titled "Renaissance," was broadcast nationally on NPR's Performance Today, with Chicago Symphony Orchestra principal flutist Mathieu Dufour as soloist. Published

by Theodore Presser, it is featured on Cedille Records' *American Flute Concertos* with soloist Mary Stolper and the Czech National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul Freeman.

Lita Grier's output also includes a variety of chamber music and numerous vocal works, including *Sonnets to Orpheus*, based on poems by Rilke, for soprano, piano, cello and horn. This was presented by The Chicago Chamber Musicians at Buntrock Hall in Symphony Center and described by *Chicago Sun-Times* critic Andrew Patner as "an extraordinary piece . . . of remarkable complexity and haunting power." *Songs from Spoon River*, based on Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* was commissioned by the Ravinia Festival for its 2004 Centennial celebration. Premiered in July 2004 in Ravinia's Martin Theater, the original version consisted of five songs and was hailed by *Chicago Tribune* critic John von Rhein, who wrote the songs "leave your ears hungering for more."

Ravinia obliged by commissioning five more songs to expand the cycle to a full half-hour.

Lita Grier has also composed five works for musical theater, all of which have been produced locally. Additionally, she was a longtime producer of US radio broadcasts by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and other programming from Austria. For the Mozart 250th Birthday Celebration, her company won the exclusive radio rights to live coverage from Salzburg, heard throughout the US on FM as well as the US and Canada on XM Satellite Radio. The network for these concerts comprised the largest ever for a classical music radio series. Lita Grier has since returned full time to composition. Her unusual musical journey has been featured in *Chicago Magazine* and documented on local PBS Channel 11's "Artbeat Chicago."

Michelle Areyzaga

Named Chicago's "Artist of the Year" for 2006 by the *Pioneer Press*, Michelle Areyzaga has appeared in a wide range of principal operatic roles for organizations including Chicago Opera Theater, Chicago Lyric Opera's "In the Neighborhoods," Opera Birmingham, Opera Theatre North, DuPage Opera Theatre, Light Opera Works, Chicago's Silk Road Initiative, and Orquesta Sinfónica del Estado de México. Ms. Areyzaga's extensive concert work includes performances with London's Royal Academy of Music, the Phoenix and San Antonio Symphonies, the Minnesota Orchestra, members of the Israel Philharmonic, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (with James Conlon at the Ravinia Festival). An avid solo recitalist and chamber musician with performances through-out the United States, she has appeared with the New York Festival of Song for the past four seasons, including opening its 20th Anniversary season (2007–2008) on a program titled "No Song is Safe from Us."

Ms. Areyzaga's awards include top prizes from the Metropolitan Opera Regional Auditions and the William C. Byrd International Young Artist, Marguerite McCammon, Union League Civic & Arts Foundation, American Opera Society, and Bel Canto Foundation Midwest Competitions. Ms. Areyzaga's recent CD, *The Sun Is Love*, featuring music by Gwyneth Walker, is available on the Proteus label.

Robert Sims

Highly praised for his moving interpretations of African American spirituals, baritone Robert Sims has given numerous recitals throughout the United States, Europe, Africa, and Asia. He has appeared with many orchestras in the U.S., and toured Japan with the Pacific Music Festival Orchestra, where he was featured in a nationally televised performance of Leonard Bernstein's Opening Prayer. In 2005, Sims made his Carnegie Hall recital debut and was invited by Jessye Norman to participate in Honor! A Celebration of the African

American Cultural Legacy at Carnegie Hall in 2009. He has performed in concert at New York's Lincoln Center and the Smithsonian Institution; the Ravinia, Chautauqua, Savannah, Grant Park, and Big Arts summer music festivals; the Latour de France International Music Festival; and the celebrated American Church in Paris. Under the auspices of Canti Classics, Community Concerts, and the Live On Stage Series, Sims has performed more than 150 recitals throughout the United States. His awards include the Gold Medal at the 1999 American Traditions Competition.

Elizabeth Norman

A winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Finals, Lynn Harvey, and Bel Canto Competitions, and The American Opera Society and Union League Civic & Arts Foundation Awards, soprano Elizabeth Norman appears annually with the Grant Park Orchestra in Chicago as well as with members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Her active career ranges from solo recitals and chamber music

performances to television and radio recordings. Norman has performed concerts and oratorios around the world on prestigious stages including the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City, the White House and Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., Chicago's Symphony Center, and the Musikverein in Vienna, Austria. She has also performed in Italy, Israel, and the African Countries of Madagascar, Mauritius, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda for the United States Information Agency. Ms. Norman has served as Music Consultant for the Chicago Public Schools and is currently a professor of voice at Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts.

Scott Ramsay

Praised by *The New York Times* for his "impressive . . . bright-voiced tenor," Scott Ramsay is establishing himself as a leading tenor on the opera and concert stages of America and abroad. An alumnus of Lyric Opera of Chicago's prestigious Ryan Opera Center, Mr. Ramsay has sung principal

roles in 13 Lyric productions including *Edgardo/Lucia di Lammermoor* opposite Natalie Desasy, Mark/*The Midsummer Marriage* and the Painter/Sailor in *Lulu*. Additional leading roles have been sung at the Dublin International Opera Festival, Michigan Opera Theater, Opera Boston, Arizona Opera, Austin Lyric Opera, Opera New Jersey, Syracuse Opera and the Kentucky Opera. In concert, Mr. Ramsay has appeared as soloist with the Ravinia Festival, Grant Park Music Festival, Music of the Baroque, Berkshire Choral Festival, Bach-Collegium Stuttgart, Terezin Memorial Commemoration in Prague, and with the Chicago, Toronto, American, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Nashville, Louisville, Albany, and Pasadena Symphony Orchestras.

Alexander Tall

Praised by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* for his “pleasing presence, splendid diction and a rich, expressive voice with a wide range,” Alexander Tall is rapidly gaining acclaim as one of America’s rising young baritones.

He has sung with the New York City Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Chicago Opera Theater, Florida Grand Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Fort Worth Opera, the San Francisco Opera’s Merola Opera Program, Opera Birmingham, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Curtis Institute, Music Academy of the West, the Ashlawn Music Festival, and the Berkshire Choral Festival. An active concert performer, Mr. Tall has appeared in recital in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, St. Louis, France, and Portugal. Mr. Tall was recently awarded the Theodor Uppman Award from the William Matheus Sullivan Foundation. He has also received grants from the George London Foundation, Opera Index, Inc., and Opera Theater of St. Louis, and awards from Houston Grand Opera’s Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers, the Mario Lanza Foundation, and the Marian Anderson Foundation.

Levi Hernandez

With a velvety tone and stage presence that exudes confidence and charm, Baritone Levi Hernandez is quickly becoming a sought after artist on the operatic stage. A recent graduate of Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Ryan Opera Center, he has performed with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Opera, Cedar Rapids Opera, Lake George Opera, Opera Colorado, and the Cheyenne and Kalamazoo Symphonies. He will join the rosters of the San Francisco, Houston Grand, and Metropolitan Operas in the 2009–2010 season. A 2002 Metropolitan Opera National Council Awards and Operalia finalist, his many awards include a Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation grant.

Welz Kauffman

Pianist Welz Kauffman doubles as president and CEO of the Ravinia Festival, ensuring the accessibility of classical music to Chicagoland residents of diverse backgrounds. As such, Kauffman has expanded the The Steans Institute for Young Artists,

the professional studies wing of North America’s oldest music festival, which transforms gifted musicians into expert performing artists. He has commissioned new work for Steans Artists from noted composers included Ned Rorem, Jake Heggie, and Lita Grier. The newest addition to Grier’s Ravinia-commissioned *Songs from Spoon River* — “Ann Rutledge” — is part of the festival’s 2009 season-spanning, bicentennial salute to the birth of Abraham Lincoln. As a pianist, Kauffman won the Tanglewood Young Artist Award and performed concertos with five prestigious orchestras. He is a regular performer at the Ravinia Festival, where he often accompanies Ravinia-commissioned projects. He has also participated in master classes with John Browning, Alicia de Larrocha, Alfred Brendel, Tamás Vásáry, Lang Lang, Peter Serkin, and Karl Ulrich Schnabel.

William Billingham

Pianist William Billingham has served as an Assistant Conductor for

Lyric Opera of Chicago since 1995. Active as a recital accompanist and chamber musician, Dr. Billingham holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory, Peabody Conservatory, and University of Southern California, where he studied accompanying with Gwendolyn Koldofsky and Brooks Smith. He started his opera career in Germany, spending five years as a repetitor in the opera houses of Heidelberg and Düsseldorf. He has also been a pianist/coach for the Aspen Music Festival and School, Cleveland Orchestra, Florentine Opera (Milwaukee, WI), Los Angeles Opera, Midsummer's Music Festival (Door County, WI), and Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Opera Center.

Anne Bach

Originally from Rochester, NY, oboist Anne Bach studied with Richard Killmer at the Eastman School of Music, where she received her Performer's Certificate. Since moving to Chicago in 2001, she has performed with the Lyric Opera, Chicago Symphony, and Chicago Philharmonic, as well

as at numerous area festivals. Anne currently holds the second oboe position in Chicago's Grant Park Orchestra and maintains an active private studio.

Tina Laughlin

Born in Elgin, Illinois, Tina Laughlin received her B.M. and M.M. in Percussion Performance from DePaul University. Her training also included eight years with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, where she performed under the direction of Daniel Barenboim, Zubin Mehta, Pierre Boulez, and Sir Georg Solti. A freelance artist, Laughlin performs with organizations throughout the Chicago area including Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Grant Park Orchestra, Lake Forest Symphony, San Francisco Ballet (on tour), Joffrey Ballet, Chicago Sinfonietta, Light Opera Works, and Elgin Symphony. A strong advocate of new music, Laughlin became a core member of the acclaimed Fulcrum Point New Music Project in 2000. She also appears regularly on the New Music DePaul concert series and with CUBE.

chicago children's choir



Founded in 1956, the Chicago Children's Choir is a multiracial, multicultural choral music education organization, shaping the future by making a difference in the lives of children and youth through musical excellence. The Choir currently serves 2,800 children, ages 8–18, through choirs in 45 schools, afterschool programs in eight Chicago neighborhoods, and the internationally acclaimed Concert Choir. Under Artistic Director Josephine Lee, the Choir has undertaken many highly successful national and international tours, received a Chicago/Midwest Emmy Award for the 2008 documentary *Songs on the Road to Freedom*, and been featured in nationally broadcast television and radio performances, most recently on NBC's Today show and the 2007 PBS series *From the Top: Live from Carnegie Hall*.

In 2004, Chicago Children's Choir released its first studio recording,

Open Up Your Heart, and in March 2006, the soundtrack for the musical *Sita Ram*. In February 2008, the Choir released *Songs on the Road to Freedom* featuring music from and inspired by the Civil Rights Movement. These recordings are available from Amazon.com, iTunes, and www.ccchoir.org.

Appearing on this recording are Chicago Children's Choir members:

Phillip Armstrong
Michael Ann Angone
Victoria Bain
Samantha Bakall
Marianne Bellorin
Elise Croteau-Chonka
Emma Daniels
Leo Daube
Jihan Dubose
Timothy Fett
Adriana Flocco
Neil Geistlinger
Julia Henderson
Terry Henderson
Mary Jones
Caroline Kagan
Joseph Kern

Ellie Kleber
 Loren Kole
 Brandon Lampkin
 Aimee Lucido
 Clifton Lyons
 Rebecca Marks
 Ashley Marsh
 Samantha Peltz
 David Perez
 Robert Raymond
 Stephanie Ricoy
 Lakeyah Scales
 Isaac Sherman
 Michael St. Peter
 Taylor Varndell
 Jonathon Wenzel
 Max Witherspoon
 Kyra Woods

Josephine Lee

Born in Chicago, Josephine Lee, a classically trained pianist, conductor, arranger, and producer, was appointed Chicago Children’s Choir Artistic Director in 1999. In June 2002, Chorus America named Ms. Lee the first Robert Shaw Conducting Fellow; in 2006, the *Chicago Tribune* proclaimed Ms. Lee “Chicagoan of

the Year in the Arts”; she was honored as a Distinguished Musician by The Union League Club of Chicago in 2007; and in 2008, she received the 3Arts Artist Award and was named one of the Anti-Defamation League’s “Rising Stars — Women 40 and under defining the future.”

Ms. Lee has conducted and performed concerts and master classes in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, South Korea, Thailand, Canada, and Japan. Not only a choral conductor, Ms. Lee has conducted the Chicago Symphony, Oregon Symphony, Grant Park, and Lyric Opera Orchestras.

John Goodwin

John Goodwin is Principal Pianist/Resident Conductor of the Chicago Children’s Choir. He also works with the Chicago Symphony Chorus and Roosevelt University Chorus, and is Music Director of the Park Ridge Orchestra Chorus. He has performed around the world and is in great demand as a recitalist, chamber musician, and collaborative artist.



Michelle Areyza



Robert Sims



Elizabeth Norman



Scott Ramsay



Alexander Tall



Levi Hernandez



Welz Kauffman



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