

SONGS FROM CHICAGO
THOMAS HAMPSON

KUANG-HAO HUANG



CEDILLE

SONGS FROM CHICAGO

THOMAS HAMPSON baritone
KUANG-HAO HUANG piano

ERNST BACON (1898–1990)
poems by Walt Whitman

- 1 Lingering Last Drops (1:34)
- 2 World Take Good Notice (0:54)
- 3 The Last Invocation (2:02)
- 4 On the Frontiers (3:42)
- 5 The Divine Ship (2:00)
- 6 Darest thou Now, O Soul (3:59)
- 7 Grand Is the Seen (2:30)

FLORENCE PRICE (1888–1953)
poems by Langston Hughes

- 8 Song To The Dark Virgin (1:55)
- 9 My Dream (2:02)

JOHN ALDEN CARPENTER (1876–1951)
from *Four Negro Songs*, poems by Langston Hughes

- 10 Shake your brown feet, honey (2:03)
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MARGARET BONDS (1913–1972)
poems by Langston Hughes

Three Dream Portraits

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poem by Walt Whitman

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JOHN ALDEN CARPENTER

Gitanjali, poems by Rabindranath Tagore (21:40)

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TT: 60:31

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

by Thomas Hampson

I have long been a fan of Cedille Records and its mandate to record the works of Chicago-based composers and performers. It was a casual conversation with the label's President and producer, James Ginsburg, about when he might make a recording of Chicago-based song composers that led to the birth of this album. Knowing that Ernst Bacon and John Alden Carpenter were local originals, I immediately took up the challenge to explore what other colleagues might be Chicago-based and was surprised at the list of prominent, yet still relatively unknown American composers of song who emanated from or settled in Chicago.

The composers on this recording have distinguished themselves in history as great voices of the artistic American narrative. Their songs and their choices of poets consistently show a dedicated purpose to explore the psyche and circumstances of all Americans. With the inclusion of Margaret Bonds and Florence Price, some may raise their eyebrows at a Caucasian male attempting to sing this very African-American-rooted offering. But my point and answer would be simply: these are, first and foremost, American stories seen through the prism of the African-American narrative. We can learn so much from the various cultures that comprise the very kaleidoscopic culture called "American."

The tangible connections between Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, and Rabindranath Tagore — their intense celebrations of personal awareness,

independence of mind, and compassion for those around us — will not be lost on the casual listener nor student of American poetry. The musical responses by the composers on this album are at most times revelatory, and at all times passionate. That they find themselves "on the radar" of Chicago makes it all the more interesting.

Ernest Bacon spent most of his song-writing life fascinated by Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman; these two poets provide the overwhelming inspiration for most of his songs. John Alden Carpenter truly changed the landscape of American song with his inspired use of impressionistic musical elements, innovative text setting, and predominantly through-composed structure. He was the first composer to base a song cycle on 1913 Nobel Peace Prize-winning poet Rabindranath Tagore and his collection of love and life poems called *Gitanjali*.

Florence Price and Margaret Bonds, teacher and student, mentor and friend, were devoted to the young Langston Hughes and the genius of his new poetic language celebrating the African-American experience and illuminating the tragic ironies so often apparent in the everyday life of his characters.

Lewis Campbell-Tipton was simply one of those rare private chapters of creativity often found in the buried history of American song. His output, however limited, is of significant and beautiful quality, deserving of continued respect.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Compiled and edited by Thomas Hampson and Christie Finn

The Chicago-born **Ernst Bacon** (1898–1990) boasts a staggering compositional output of more than 250 songs, as well as numerous symphonies, operas and other musical theater works, piano concertos, and pieces of chamber music. Bacon studied at Northwestern University, the University of Chicago, and the University of California. Throughout his life, he enjoyed a multifaceted musical career, not only as a composer but also as an accomplished conductor and pianist — and later as a writer with his books *Words on Music* and *Notes on the Piano*. Largely self-taught in composition, Bacon sought to resist what he viewed as the cynicism of the post-war European avant-garde and turned instead to American themes, and the language of American poetry, for inspiration and musical energy. His songs are particularly masterful in their naturalistic setting of the English language.

The musical life of **Margaret Bonds** (1913–1972), also a native of Chicago, began in her family’s living room, where her mother (an accomplished organist) facilitated gatherings of important black artists, writers, and musicians. It was here that Bonds met Florence Price, with whom she studied piano and composition. In 1933, Bonds performed Price’s Piano Concerto with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra during the World’s Fair; with this performance, she holds the distinction of being the first African-American woman to perform as a soloist with a major American orchestra. In 1939, Bonds moved to New York and became an important figure in the artistic scene in Harlem. Her close friendship with Langston Hughes led to many of her

celebrated vocal compositions, such as the choral work *The Ballad of the Brown King* and the four songs included on this album: “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” (1941) and the songs collected under the title *Three Dream Portraits* (1959).

Although a resident of Paris beginning in 1901, **Louis Campbell-Tipton** (1877–1921) was a native of Chicago. Convinced that his works could never be published or performed with popularity in the United States, he settled in Europe and focused on compositions on a smaller scale. His output is concentrated in songs, which were favorites of foreign singers on American recital tours and which make up his legacy today.

John Alden Carpenter (1876–1951) was a lifelong Chicagoan whose early musical inspiration came from his mother, a professional singer. He studied music at Harvard and returned to Chicago after his studies to divide his time between working as a businessman at his father’s firm, George B. Carpenter & Co., and composing music. Although the Metropolitan Opera produced his ballet *Skyscrapers* (a work commissioned by Russian Impresario Serge Diaghilev) and American orchestras continue to program his *Adventures in a Perambulator* with some regularity, his songs are his most enduring musical legacy, bringing together a warm gracefulness, inspired by Impressionism, with humorous and eclectic elements, often deriving from jazz or patriotic themes. Carpenter’s most famous songs include

his cycle of Rabindranath Tagore poems, *Gitanjali*, and his *Four Negro Songs* to Langston Hughes texts — the works included on this album.

Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, **Florence Price** (1887–1953) is known as the first African-American woman to have an orchestral piece played by a major American orchestra: her Symphony in E Minor was performed by Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1932. After she earned two artist diplomas at the New England Conservatory, beginning her studies at the age of 16, Price’s early career was as an educator based in the South, first at two schools in Little Rock, and then eventually as the head of the music department at Clark University in Atlanta until 1912. Her life in Chicago began after her family joined the Great Migration and moved north following racial incidents in 1927. This move led to a burst of compositional creativity and widespread recognition for Price’s compositions beginning in the 1930s. By the end of her life, Price’s works numbered over 300 (unfortunately most remain unpublished); her most lasting works are vocal, including the Langston Hughes settings on this album, “My Dream” (1935) and “Song to the Dark Virgin” (1941). Her Spiritual arrangements were frequently performed during her lifetime by singers such as Marian Anderson and Leontyne Price and remain important to the American vocal canon.

For more information about the composers, poets, and songs heard on this album, please visit the Hampsong Foundation’s online educational resource: www.songofamerica.net/songs-from-chicago

TEXTS

Texts below reflect the original poems; words sung may differ in some places. Significant portions of text that are not sung are indicated with brackets.

1. Lingerin Last Drops

Walt Whitman

AND whence and why come you?
We know not whence, (was the answer,) [bracketed]
We only know that we drift here with the rest,
That we linger’d and lagg’d — but were wafted at last, and are
now here, [bracketed]
To make the passing shower’s concluding drops.

2. World Take Good Notice

Walt Whitman

World, take good notice, silver stars fading,
Milky hue ript, weft of white detaching,
Coals thirty-six, baleful and burning,
Scarlet, significant, hands off warning,
Now and henceforth flaunt from these shores.

3. The Last Invocation

Walt Whitman

At the last, tenderly,
From the walls of the powerful fortress’d house,
From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the well-closed doors,
Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;
With the key of softness unlock the locks — with a whisper,
Set ope the doors O soul.

Tenderly — be not impatient,
(Strong is your hold O mortal flesh,
Strong is your hold O love.)

4. “On the Frontiers,” lyrics from **Whispers Of Heavenly Death**

Walt Whitman

WHISPERS of heavenly death murmur’d I hear,
Labial gossip of night, sibilant chorals,
Footsteps gently ascending, mystical breezes wafted soft and low,
Ripples of unseen rivers, tides of a current flowing, forever flowing,
(Or is it the plashing of tears? the measureless waters of human
tears?)

I see, just see skyward, great cloud-masses,
Mournfully slowly they roll, silently swelling and mixing,
With at times a half-dimm’d sadden’d far-off star,
Appearing and disappearing.
(Some parturition rather, some solemn immortal birth;
On the frontiers to eyes impenetrable,
Some soul is passing over.)

5. “The Divine Ship,” lyrics from **One Thought Ever at the Fore**

Walt Whitman

One thought ever at the fore —
That in the Divine Ship, the World, breasting Time and Space,
All Peoples of the globe together sail, sail the same voyage,
Are bound to the same destination.

6. **Darest Thou Now, O Soul**

Walt Whitman

Darest thou now, O Soul,
Walk out with me toward the Unknown Region,
Where neither ground is for the feet, nor any path to follow?
No map, there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.
I know it not, O Soul;
Nor dost thou — all is a blank before us;

All waits, undream’d of, in that region — that inaccessible land.

Till, when the ties loosen,
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds, bound us.

Then we burst forth — we float,
In Time and Space, O Soul — prepared for them;
Equal, equipt at last — (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfil, O Soul.

7. **Grand is the Seen**

Walt Whitman

Grand is the seen, the light, to me — grand are the sky and stars,
Grand is the earth, and grand are lasting time and space,
And grand their laws, so multiform, puzzling, evolutionary;
But grander far the unseen soul of me, comprehending, endowing all those,
Lighting the light, the sky and stars, delving the earth, sailing
the sea,
(What were all those, indeed, without thee, unseen soul? of what
amount without thee?)
More evolutionary, vast, puzzling, O my soul!
More multiform far — more lasting thou than they.

8. Songs to the Dark Virgin

Langston Hughes

I.

Would
That I were a jewel,
A shattered jewel,
That all my shining brilliants
Might fall at thy feet,
Thou dark one.

II.

Would
That I were a garment,
A shimmering, silken garment,
That all my folds
Might wrap about thy body,
Absorb thy body,
Hold and hide thy body,
Thou dark one.

III.

Would
That I were a flame,
But one sharp, leaping flame
To annihilate thy body,
Thou dark one.

9. "My Dream," lyrics from **Dream Variations**

Langston Hughes

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,

To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
Dark like me —
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening...
A tall, slim tree...
Night coming tenderly
Black like me.

10. "Shake Your Brown Feet, Honey!" lyrics from **Song for a Banjo Dance**

Langston Hughes

Shake your brown feet, honey,
Shake your brown feet, chile,
Shake your brown feet, honey,
Shake 'em swift and wil'—
Get way back, honey,
Do that rockin' step.
Slide on over, darling,
Now! Come out
With your left.

Shake your brown feet, honey,
Shake 'em, honey chile.

Sun's going down this evening —
Might never rise no mo'.
The sun's going down this very night —
Might never rise no mo'—
[So dance with swift feet, honey,
(The banjo's sobbing low)
Dance with swift feet, honey —
Might never dance no mo'.]

Shake your brown feet, Liza,
Shake 'em, Liza, chile,
Shake your brown feet, Liza,
(The music's soft and wil')
Shake your brown feet, Liza,
(The banjo's sobbing low)
The sun's going down [this very night] —
Might never rise no mo'.

11. "The Cryin' Blues," lyrics excerpted from **Blues Fantasy**
by Langston Hughes

Hey! Hey!
That's what the
Blues singers say.
Singing minor melodies
They laugh,
Hey! Hey!

My man's done left me,
Chile, he's gone away.
My good man's left me,
Babe, he's gone away.
Now the cryin' blues

Haunts me night and day.
Hey!...Hey!

Weary,
Weary,
Trouble, pain.
Sun's gonna shine
Somewhere
again.

12. "Jazz-Boys," lyrics from **Harlem Night Club**
Langston Hughes

Sleek black boys in a cabaret.
Jazz-band, jazz-band,—
Play, plAY, PLAY!
Tomorrow...who knows?
Dance today!

White girls' eyes
Call gay black boys.
Black boys' lips
Grin jungle joys.

Dark brown girls
In blond men's arms.
Jazz-band, jazz-band,—
Sing Eve's charms!
White ones, brown ones,
What do you know
About tomorrow
Where all paths go?
Jazz-boys, jazz-boys,—

Play, pLAY, PLAY!
Tomorrow...is darkness.
Joy today!

13. Minstrel Man

Langston Hughes

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter
And my throat
Is deep with song,
You do not think
I suffer after
I have held my pain
So long?

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter,
You do not hear
My inner cry?
Because my feet
Are gay with dancing,
You do not know
I die?

14. "Dream Variation," lyrics from *Dream Variations*

Langston Hughes, text on pp. 12–13

15. I, Too

Langston Hughes

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.
Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed —
I, too, am America.

16. The Negro Speaks of Rivers

Langston Hughes

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

**17. "Elegy" lyrics excerpted from *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*
Walt Whitman**

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.
Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely die.)

Sing on there in the swamp,
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your call,
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me,
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me.

Gitanjali
Rabindranath Tagore

18. CREDO

I believe in the deep blue sky and the smiling water.

I can see through the clouds of the sky and I am not afraid of the waves of the sea.
I believe in the living friendship given by flowers and trees;— outwardly they die, but
in the heart they live forever.

Little paths through green woods I love, and the sound of leaves on the ground, or of
a nut falling, or even of a breaking twig.

I believe that the days to come already feel the wonder of the days that have
passed, and will permit that wonder to endure and increase.

I believe in and love my belief in, and my love for, all of these things; and most of all I
believe in and love The Source of my belief and of my love.

19. When I bring to you colour'd toys

When I bring to you colour'd toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play
of colours on clouds, on water, and why flow'rs are painted in tints — when I give
colour'd toys to you, my child.

When I sing to make you dance, I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why
waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth — when I sing to
make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands I know why there is honey in the cup
of the flowers and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice — when I bring sweet
things to your greedy hands.

[When I kiss your face to make you smile, my darling, I surely understand what
pleasure streams from the sky in morning light, and what delight that is that is
which the summer breeze brings to my body — when I kiss you to make you smile.]

20. On the day when death will knock at thy door

On the day when death will knock at thy door, what wilt thou offer to him?

Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life; I will never let him go with
empty hands.

All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings
and gleanings of my busy life, will I place before him at the close of my days when
death will knock at my door.

21. The Sleep that flits on Baby's Eyes

The sleep that flits on baby's eyes — does anybody know from where it comes? Yes, there is a rumour that it has its dwelling where, in the fairy village among shadows of the forest dimly lit with glow-worms, there hang two timid buds of enchantment. From there it comes to kiss baby's eyes.

22. I am like a Remnant of a Cloud of Autumn

I am like a remnant of a cloud of autumn uselessly roaming in the sky, O my sun ever-glorious! Thy touch has not yet melted my vapour, making me one with thy light, and thus I count months and years separated from thee.

If this be thy wish and if this be thy play, then take this fleeting emptiness of mine, paint it with colours, gild it with gold, float it on the wanton wind and spread it in varied wonders.

And again, when it shall be thy wish to end this play at night, I shall melt and vanish away in the dark, or it may be in a smile of the white morning, in a coolness of purity transparent.

23. On the Seashore of Endless Worlds

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. The infinite sky is motionless overhead and the restless water is boisterous. On the seashore of endless worlds the children meet with shouts and dances.

They build their houses with sand and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boats and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds.

They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets. Pearl fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasures, they know not how to cast nets.

The sea surges up with laughter, and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach. Death-dealing waves sing meaningless ballads to the children, even like a mother while rocking her baby's cradle. The sea plays with children, and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach.

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships get wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play. On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children.

24. Light, My Light

Light, my light, the world-filling light, the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light! Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the centre of my life; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love; the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.

The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light. Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.

The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion.

Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad.

25. EPILOGUE

The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day. I have spent my days in stringing and unstringing my instrument.

The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set; only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.

THOMAS HAMPSON

Thomas Hampson, America's foremost baritone, has received many honors and awards for his captivating artistry and cultural leadership. Honored as a Metropolitan Opera Guild "Met Mastersinger" and inducted into both the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and *Gramophone's* "Hall of Fame," Hampson is one of the most respected and innovative musicians of our time.

With an opera repertoire of over 80 roles sung in all the major opera houses of the world, his discography comprises more than 170 albums, which include multiple nominations and winners of Grammy Awards, the Edison Award, and the Grand Prix du Disque. He received the 2009 Distinguished Artistic Leadership Award from the Atlantic Council in Washington, DC and was appointed the New York Philharmonic's first Artist-in-Residence.

In 2010, he was honored with a Living Legend Award by the Library of Congress, where he has served as Special Advisor to the Study and Performance of Music in America. He has also received the famed Concertgebouw Prize. Hampson was named honorary professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Heidelberg and holds honorary doctorates from the Manhattan School of Music, New England Conservatory, Whitworth College, and San Francisco Conservatory, and is an honorary member of London's Royal Academy of Music. He carries the titles of Kammersänger of the Vienna State Opera and Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres of the Republic of France, and was awarded the Austrian



Medal of Honour in Arts and Sciences. In 2017, Hampson received the Hugo-Wolf-Medal from the International Hugo-Wolf-Academy together with his long-time musical companion, pianist Wolfram Rieger for their outstanding achievements in the art of song interpretation.

Thomas Hampson enjoys a singular international career as an opera singer, recording artist and "ambassador of song," maintaining an active interest in research, education, musical outreach, and technology. Through the Hampsong Foundation, which he founded in 2003, he employs the art of song to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding.

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KUANG-HAO HUANG

Pianist Kuang-Hao Huang is most often heard as a collaborator, performing recitals and radio broadcasts with Chicago's finest musicians, from instrumentalists of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to singers with the Lyric Opera. An advocate of new music, Mr. Huang is a member of Fulcrum Point New Music Project and has given numerous premieres, including solo works by Louis Andriessen and Chen Yi at Weill Hall as part of Carnegie Hall's Millennium Piano Book Project. He can be heard in recordings on the Cedille, Centaur, Naxos, and Neos labels. He serves on the faculties of the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University and Concordia University-Chicago. As Associate Artistic Director for the International Music Foundation, Mr. Huang is the driving force behind Make Music Chicago, a day-long, citywide celebration of music on the summer solstice.



www.khpiano.net

CREDITS

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