Elliott Carter
(b. 1908)

for piano and chamber orchestra
Nicolas Hodges, piano
London Sinfonietta
Oliver Knussen, conductor

Boston Concerto (2002) (16:54)
for orchestra

2 I Allegro staccatissimo (1:20)
3 II Lento, teneramente (1:54)
4 III Tempo Primo (0:46)
5 IV Meno mosso (1:26)
6 V Piu Mosso, tempo primo (0:53)
7 VI Meno mosso (1:28)
8 VII Tempo primo (1:08)
9 VIII Lento, sostenuto (1:50)
10 IX Tempo primo (1:00)
11 X Piu mosso (1:14)
12 XI Tempo primo (1:08)
13 XII Maestoso - molto espr. (1:54)
14 XIII Tempo primo (0:47)

BBC Symphony Orchestra
Oliver Knussen, conductor

Cello Concerto (2001) (20:06)
for cello and orchestra

15 I Drammatico (1:27)
16 II Allegro appassionato (2:08)
17 III Giocoso (2:39)
18 IV Lento (3:49)
19 V Maestoso (2:46)
20 VI Tranquillo (3:28)
21 VII Allegro fantastico (3:46)

Fred Sherry, cello
BBC Symphony Orchestra
Oliver Knussen, conductor

22 ASKO Concerto (2000) (10:38)
for chamber ensemble

Asko Ensemble
Oliver Knussen, conductor

This recording is dedicated to the memory of Helen Carter.

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Elliott Carter continues...

Shortly before his 80th birthday, Stravinsky was asked, “How does a man grow old?” He replied, “I don’t know, or why I am old, if I must be (I don’t want to be), or if ‘I am ‘he’. All my life I have thought of myself as ‘the youngest one’, and now, suddenly, I read and hear about myself as ‘the oldest one’.” Elliott Carter, in his turn, must be long since inured to hearing himself hailed as the oldest one. Yet no significant composer in the history of Western music has grown old in quite the way Carter continues to do.

The four substantial scores recorded on this disc have all appeared since his 90th birthday, yet it is difficult to detect the slightest symptom of aging in technique or invention. True, Carter’s later textures are generally less crowded than those of his tumultuous middle-period scores of the 1960s and ’70s. But, as we know from such composers as Webern, fewer notes on the page can actually encapsulate an increased richness of relationships, while Carter’s ear for colour, balance and detail has grown, if anything, more precise.

Perhaps it is less the challenging character of his music that has changed over the decades than his approach to its composition. As a consecrated modernist from the start, he seemed to feel the need in his heroic mid-career to develop an entire new musical language for each major project. In more recent years, by contrast, he has recurrently returned to a handful of favourite forms and techniques, discovering, in the process, that by skillful variation of such ‘given’ schemata, he can invent music quite as adventurous as he could by reformulating everything from scratch.

One of these favourite schemata has been a kind of concerto grosso form in which periodic tutti are interspersed by sections focussing upon various sub-groupings of the salient ensemble – the piece completing its trajectory when every one of the sub-groupings has had its say. In their very different ways, the ASKO Concerto (2000), the Cello Concerto (2001) and the Boston Concerto (2002), all comprise variants of this formal idea.

Yet, as if to confound any suspicion of routine, Carter’s Dialogues (2003) dispenses with it for quite a different concept. To highlight this, the composer has asked that Dialogues should be placed first on this disc, with the works leading up to it heard in the reverse order of their date of composition.

**Dialogues for piano and chamber orchestra (2003)**

This terse chamber concerto was a BBC Radio 3 commission for the brilliant young British pianist Nicolas Hodges and an ensemble comprising flute/piccolo, oboe/English horn, clarinet, bassoon/contrabassoon, two horns, trumpet, trombone, four violins, two violas, two cellos and two contrabasses – though the strings may be increased proportionately. Carter’s note reads: “Dialogues for piano and chamber orchestra is a conversation between the soloist and the orchestra: responding to each other, sometimes interrupting one another or arguing. The single varied movement is entirely derived from a small group of harmonies and rhythms.”

And in relying on his now virtuoso ability to unpack the most varied stream of spontaneous invention from the most limited means, Carter seems here to dispense with all his more formal schemata. There is little evidence of the tutti-subsection alternations of the preceding concerto grosso works. Nor does Carter appear to have set up one of those background polymetrical structures he deployed in so many of his previous works to help him create the effect


of music proceeding in more than one tempo at once. Trusting more than ever to the contextual moment, it is as if he has returned, but with a new concentration, to his old idea of scores as “auditory scenarios for the players to act out with their instruments,” as he first defined it back in 1960.

The English horn proposes a tentative line. The piano responds with a rising choral gesture. The woodwinds, brass and strings interject a few angular rhythmic figures. The piano launches a more expansive paragraph prompting further interjections. The English horn resumes with bassoon counter comments. Sometimes piano and ensemble pass chords back and forth musingly, sometimes the piano skitters away with the instruments in pursuit, sometimes the argument gets rough. So it goes. We are indeed invited to listen from moment to unpredictable moment as in a real conversation – until the piano, curving downwards to lowest C, softly shuts the door.

**Boston Concerto** (2002)

Unlike some of his younger contemporaries in the post-war European avant-garde, Carter has never regarded technical innovation as an end in itself, but always as a means towards increased freedom and vividness of expression. Nor has he scrupled to invoke extra-musical associations where they might help him characterise ideas or enable his listeners to get to grips with his structures. Just as his *Concerto for Orchestra* (1969) was inspired by a poetic vision of America swept by great winds of change and *A Symphony of Three Orchestras* (1976) by the vista of New York as evoked by Hart Crane, so the *Boston Concerto*, commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, was suggested by
the opening lines of the early William Carlos Williams poem "Rain":

As the rain falls
So does
your love

bath the every
open
Object of the world —

Part of Carter's purpose in choosing this quotation was to convey his enduring love for his wife Helen, the work's dedicatee, whose sad death occurred only weeks after the Boston premiere on 3 April 2003. But the rain imagery also suggested a striking reversal of the concerto grosso form-scheme. Where one would naturally expect the fullest, weightiest textures to occur in the tutti links — as indeed they do in the ASKO Concerto and, to a degree, in the Cello Concerto — the tutti of the Boston Concerto prove immaterial, evanescent, with the work's more sustained writing confined to the intervening episodes for various sub-sections of the orchestra.

This pattern is immediately established in the opening tutti, marked Allegro staccatissimo and comprising an iridescent collage of tiny pattering and rippling figures, as of a myriad raindrops. In due course this yields to the first episode marked Lento, teneramente, a slowly revolving sextet for three flutes and three clarinets, with only minimal comments from the rest of the orchestra.

A second, more fragmentary rain-tutti, in which vibraphone, piano and harp remain silent, leads to a resonant trio episode for these three instruments; and a third tutti links to a rhetorical dialogue between the violas and double basses — their lines occasionally dividing into dense chords.

In the next not-quite tutti, the four horns, three trumpets, three trombones...
and tuba are withheld for the ensuing *Lento, sostenuto* episode of solemn, chiming chords, initially tranquil, swelling to a climax and dying away as a penultimate rain-tutti leads through to a *Maestoso*—*molto espressivo* episode for first and second violins and cellos—the three jagged contrapuntal lines in their exalted interactions seeming to soar back to the transcendental spirit of those early American moderns Charles Ives and Carl Ruggles, who excited Carter’s youth.

At the close of this episode, one expects a culminating full orchestral climax, only to hear the rain music sputter away to nothing. Retrospectively, one realizes the transcendental string episode was the climax. Yet it remains a curiously weightless one; indeed, despite occasional deep sonorities, the whole work has a kind of distanced lightness, seeming to hover in mid-air. Was this, one asked oneself after the early performances, the onset, at last, of Carter’s ‘late’ style? The answer came back quickly enough from the tough directness of such ensuing scores as *Dialogues*; not even yet.

**Cello Concerto (2001)**

Any composer attempting a concerto for solo instrument and orchestra is faced with the primary decision of whether to cast the soloist as principle voice in a symphonic argument set up by the orchestra, or whether to allow the solo instrument to lead from the start, confining the orchestra more to a supporting and commentating role. Like Carter’s preceding four solo concertos, the *Cello Concerto* inclines strongly to the latter procedure. Although a large orchestra is required—the work was commissioned for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by the Edward F. Schmidt Family Commissioning Fund—much of the scoring is spare and transparent out of concern for the modest volume of the solo instrument.

Carter supplied the following note for the premiere: “My *Cello Concerto* is introduced by the soloist alone, playing a frequently interrupted cantilenanot yet later to be expanded into movements. These movements are connected by episodes that often refer to the final *Allegro fantastico*. In this score, I have tried to find meaningful, personal ways of revealing the cello’s vast array of wonderful possibilities.”

The resulting structure falls into seven linked sections, differentiated by tempo and scoring and playing continuously for 20 minutes. It should be said, however, that the connecting episodes are far less demarcated from the movements they intersperse than the tuttis in either the *ASKO Concerto* or the *Boston Concerto*, and only in the opening sequence and the climactic tutti shortly before the end is the full weight of the orchestra briefly released. To the extent that the connecting episodes pre-echo this final section, they also lend an evolutionary impetus to the structure in sharp contrast to the feeling in the *ASKO Concerto* of working out a plan given from the start.

After the recitative-like introduction with its abrupt orchestral ripostes, marked *Drammatico*, the cello launches into an *Allegro appassionato* accompanied mainly by strings, horns and lower woodwind, though invaded towards the end by the more eruptive textures of the next connecting episode leading to a skittish *Giocoso* backed by light percussion and harp. Here the off-the-beat, syncopated solo writing almost seems to echo the New York jazz the young Carter took an interest in back in the farr-off 1940s. This, in turn, slows into a *Lento* movement, in which long cello phrases wind their way through textures of rustling strings and pattering woodwind in some of the most exquisitely sensitised scoring Carter has yet given us.
This eventually fragments in a link to the ensuing Maestoso, in which the cello contends against jagged brass outbursts culminating in what could be the tutti link to the final section, except that Carter dares to suspend its up-beat tension for a space in an almost timeless drift of lines and chords marked Tranquillo, with the cello floating high above the cavernous tones of the contrabass clarinet. Finally the pent-up energy is released in the scherzo-like Allegro fantastico, culminating in one of the most searing chord sequences ever in Carter's output - as if defiantly to proclaim, in an era of 'cross-over' and 'easy listening', that Modernism Lives! But, as the orchestra falls away, the cello plays on alone, signing off with an almost quizzical gesture.

Yo-Yo Ma gave the premiere of the Cello Concerto in the Autumn of 2001, but during its composition Carter frequently consulted his trusted interpreter and friend the New York cellist Fred Sherry over technical details, and it is fitting that he should record this first release on disc.


Carter completed this concise 12-minute single-movement work in January 2000 to a commission from the Asko Ensemble of Amsterdam and the recording on this disc is of its first performance in the Concertgebouw on 26 April of that year. As his brief programme note described it: "My **ASKO Concerto** for sixteen players features each of them participating in one of the following groups - two trios, two duos, a quintet and a solo. These six sections are framed by the entire group playing together. Although the music is in light-hearted mood, each soloistic section approaches ensemble playing in a different spirit."

In fact, as the opening bars immediately reveal, the tutti sections are, themselves quite complex: cross-cutting fierce choral sonorities with turbulent textural wheelings. Nor are the group sub-sections entirely free of punctuating noises from the rest of the ensemble. After 20 bars of opening tutti marked Quasi maestoso, we are at once pitched into the first trio, a frisky polychromatic invention marked Giocoso, in which the horn plays in rhythmic groupings of three against the fours of the viola and fives of the oboe.

A second, slightly shorter, tutti leads to an Allegro lyrico duo in which the clarinet and double bass interchange volatile figures and long phrases. After a third tutti (shorter again; one begins to suspect this process will continue through the work), bass clarinet, muted trombone and cello pursue a more conjunct trio marked Tranquillo - though kept moving by impatient little flickerings of flute and pizzicato strings. The relatively brief fourth tutti introduces a second duo in which trumpet and first violin resolutely stick to their contrary characters - the one chattering away in close-formation triplets, the other soaring in long, passionate phrases.

A fifth tutti, now reduced to some six bars, launches a diaphanously decorative quintet for piccolo, xylophone, celesta, harp and second violin - though the harp has some feisty clusters too and the rest of the ensemble is increasingly inclined to add amplifying harmonies. The abrupt penultimate tutti introduces the only solo, a humorous one for cartwheeling bassoon, much interrupted by peremptory tutti chords. Just as these seem to be quickening towards a final rampge, the music cuts off - an ending no less unexpected for all its long structural preparation.

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Nicolas Hodges was born in London in 1970 and studied with Susan Bradshaw and Sulamith Aronovsky. Hodges is equally active in several fields: nineteenth century, early twentieth century and contemporary music. His substantial repertoire prior to 1900 includes works by Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt and Brahms, while his twentieth century repertoire includes works by Debussy, Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Bartók, Stravinsky and Busoni. In the field of contemporary music he plays both the classics of the avant-garde (such as Barraqué, Cage, Feldman, Nono and Stockhausen) and works from the latter decades of the 20th Century and first years of the 21st. As well as his association with Bill Hopkins' Etudes en Série (1965-72) - a major work edited, premiered and recorded by Hodges - he has also premiered works written especially for him by Ablinger, Boehmer, di Bari, Cappelli, Carter, Clarke, Dillon, Finnissy, Furrer, Päst, Alwynne Pritchard, Scarrino and Wuorinen. He also has close working relationships with many composers including Birtwistle, Carter, Ferneyhough, Harvey, Kagel, Knussen, Lachenmann, Neuwirth, Nørgård and Stockhausen.

Nicolas Hodges gave the European premiere of Elliott Carter's Two Divisions at London's South Bank Centre in June 2000. Subsequently Carter wrote for Hodges his concerto Dialogues, commissioned by the BBC. The premiere took place in January 2004, with

Helen and Elliott Carter at Darlington Hall, Totnes, Devon, England 1975.
the London Sinfonietta under Oliver Knussen. Hodges subsequently gave the US premiere with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Daniel Barenboim, the French premiere with the London Sinfonietta under Martyn Brabbins, the Netherlands premiere with Asko Ensemble under Oliver Knussen, the Japanese premiere with Tokyo Sinfonietta under Yasuaki Ikura, and the New York premiere with the MET Chamber Ensemble under James Levine, as well as further performances with Knussen.

Hodges' career has taken him around the world, to continental European festivals such as Witten, Darmstadt, Berlin, Wien Modern, Graz (MusikProtokoll), Innsbruck (Klangspuren), Luzern, Paris (Festival d'Automne), Brussels (Ars Musica) and Zurich (Tage für Neue Musik); to all the major UK festivals; and to Scandinavia and the US, including Zankel Hall (Carnegie Hall, NY), Alice Tully Hall (Lincoln Center, NY) and Orchestra Hall (Chicago). His concerto engagements have included performances with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Bamberg Symphony, Philharmonia Orchestra, WDR Sinfonieorchester, SWR Sinfonieorchester, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, MET Chamber Ensemble, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, under conductors such as Barenboim, Brabbins, Knussen, Levine, Masson, Nott, Ropphé, Rundel, Saraste, Slatkin, Otaka, Valade, Volkov and Zender.

An energetic recording artist, critically acclaimed CDs have been released on Metronome (Birtwistle, Finnissy and Gershwin), col legno (Hopkins), BVHAAST (Boehmmer), Dischi Ricordi (Di Bari), Metier (Connolly) and Nonesuch (Adams). Other upcoming Metronome releases will include discs of music by Schumann, Sciarrino and Antheil.

Nicolas Hodges is Professor of Piano at the Musikhochschule in Stuttgart, Germany.

A pioneer and a visionary in the music world, cellist Fred Sherry has introduced audiences on five continents and all fifty United States to the music of our time through his close association with such composers as Babbitt, Berio, Carter, Davidovsky, Foss, Knussen, Lieberson, Mackey, Takemitsu, Wuorinen and Zorn. Mario Davidovsky, Steven Mackey, Somei Satoh and Charles Wuorinen have written concertos for Mr. Sherry and he gave the European premiere of the Elliott Carter Cello Concerto with Oliver Knussen and the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the 2002 Aldeburgh Festival.

He has been a member of the Group for Contemporary Music, Berio's Juilliard Ensemble, the Galimir String Quartet and a close collaborator with jazz pianist and composer Chick Corea. Mr. Sherry was a founding member of Speculum Musicae and Tashi. His work with Tashi includes a number of premieres and performances with the Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New Japan Philharmonic, Montreal Symphony and L’Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.

Mr. Sherry has been an active performer with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center since the 1970's, an Artist Member since 1984 and was the Artistic Director from 1988 to 1992. He has been a guest at festivals including the Aldeburgh Festival, Casals Festival, Tanglewood, Spoleto, Scotia
Festival of Music, Toru Takemitsu's Music Today, Chamber Music Northwest, OK Mozart and the Mostly Mozart Festival. He is a member of the cello and chamber music faculty of the Juilliard School and the cello faculty of the Mannes College of Music.

Mr. Sherry created the series "Bach Cantata Sundays" at St. Ann's Church and conceived and directed the acclaimed "Arnold Schoenberg: Conservative Radical" series at Merkin Concert Hall. He was the creator and director of "A Great Day in New York," the groundbreaking festival featuring 52 living composers presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and Merkin Concert Hall.

In the vast scope of his recording career, Fred Sherry has been a soloist and "sideman" on hundreds of commercial and esoteric recordings on RCA, Columbia, Vanguard, CRI, Albany, Bridge, ECM, New World, Arabesque, Delos, Vox, Koch and Naxos. Mr. Sherry's long-standing collaboration with Robert Craft has produced recordings of the Schoenberg Cello Concerto and String Quartet Concerto and other major works by Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Webern.

Fred Sherry considers himself to be a tree-hugger.

Oliver Knussen's music occupies a respected and regularly revisited place in concert and opera programmes worldwide. His Third Symphony, his opera Where the Wild Things Are and Violin Concerto are among the most frequently performed British works of recent times. As an acclaimed and much-invited conductor, the force of his presence and influence on contemporary music has been felt in many parts of the world.

Born in Glasgow on June 12th 1952, Oliver Knussen grew up near London, where his father was principal double bassist of the London Symphony Orchestra. In his youth, while studying composition with John Lambert, Oliver was also encouraged by Benjamin Britten, and later studied for several summers with Gunther Schuller at Tanglewood, where he subsequently became Head of Contemporary Music Activities (1986-93). Other posts have included Principal Guest Conductor of the Hague Residentie Orchestra (1992-96), Co-Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival (1983-98) and Music Director of the London Sinfonietta (1998-2002) of which he is now Conductor Laureate.

His conducting activities are characterised by repeated re-invitations and sustained relationships: Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, Finnish Radio
Symphony and BBC Symphony Orchestras; Asko/Schönberg, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and Ensemble Modern; regular visits to Japan; and BBC Promenade Concerts. He has also been the subject of Composer Portrait events in London, New York, Tokyo and the Netherlands.

He has enjoyed long and close collaborations with many distinguished composers, including Elliott Carter, Alexander Goehr, Hans Werner Henze, Mauricio Kagel, Toru Takemitsu, Magnus Lindberg, George Benjamin and Mark Anthony-Turnage, as well as encouraging many younger composer-colleagues through his work at Tanglewood and the Contemporary Composition and Performance courses (which he co-founded with Colin Matthew) at the Britten-Pears school in Snape, Suffolk, where he now lives.

Oliver Knussen is an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society and of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He holds an Honorary Doctorate from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and was made a CBE in the June 1994 Birthday Honours. In January 2005 he was presented with the Association of British Orchestras Award for his exceptional contribution to Britain's orchestral life.

In the 2005-6 season, Oliver Knussen returns to the Atlanta Symphony, BBC Symphony, New World Symphony Orchestras and National Arts Centre Orchestra, Ottawa and makes his first appearances with the Gürznerich Orchestra, Cologne, San Francisco Symphony, Gothenberg Symphony Orchestras as well as the Orchestre de l'Opéra-Bastille.

His many recordings are mainly found on the DGG, EMI and NMC labels.

"Oliver Knussen is – or ought to be – a national treasure"  
~Gramophone April, 2004
BBC Symphony Orchestra

Cello
Graham Bradshaw
Marie Strom
Janice Brodie
Clare Hinton
Judith Herbert

Bass Trombone
Stephen Saunders

Tuba
David Powell

Timpani
Chris Hind

Percussion
Alex Neal
Sam Walton
Joseph Cooper

Bassoons
Graham Sheen
Susan Frankel

Contrabassoon
Simon Estell

Horns
Michael Murray
Alexa Cammish

Trumpets
Gareth Bimson
Paul Cosh

Trombones
Roger Harvey
Michael Lloyd

London Sinfonietta

Sebastian Bell
Gareth Hulse
Mark van de Wiel
John Orford
Michael Thompson
Martin Owen
Andrew Crowley
Simon Wills
Cho Gould
John Atherton
David Alberman
Miranda Fullerlove
Simon Smith
Galina Solodchin
James Boyd
Jane Atkins
Andrew Parker
Timothy Gill
Lionel Handy
Zoe Martlew
Corin Long
Graham Mitchell

flute/piccolo
obo/clar she

Bassoon/contrabassoon
horn
horn
trumpet
trombone
violin
violin
violin
violin
violin
violin
violin
violin
violin
cello
cello
double bass
double bass
clarinet
bar
bass clarinet
bassoon
french horn
trumpet
trumpet
violin
violin
viola
viola
viola
cello
cello
double bass
double bass

Asko Ensemble

Eleonore Pameijer
Marielle Schut
Barre Bouman
Harry Sparnaay
Alan Wesley
Jan Harshagen
Hendrik Jan Lindhout
Toon van Ulsen
Jan van der Tempel
Erik van der Alten

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet
Bass Clarinet
Bassoon
French Horn
Trumpet

Peppe Wiersma
Percussion
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Justin Brown, conductor; Donald Palma, conductor
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Producers: Colin Matthews (Dialogues);
Sonya Knussen (Boston Concerto/Cello Concerto)
Produced in association with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and BBC Radio 3.
Executive Producer: Virgil Blackwell
Recording Engineer: Trygvi Tryggvason
Recording Engineer, ASKO Concerto: Willem Muller
Assistant Engineer: Andrew Hallifax
Producer (Post production): David Frost
Editing Engineer: Tim Martyn/Phoenix Audio LLC.
Graphic Design: Alexis Napoliello
Cover Painting: 'Prince Charming' 1956, Pavel Tchelitchew courtesy of
Elliott Carter
Booklet Photos of Helen & Elliott Carter: courtesy of Elliott Carter
Photo of Elliott Carter & Oliver Knussen: Betty Freeman
Photo of Oliver Knussen: Clive Barda
Photo of Fred Sherry: Josef Astor
Photo of Nicolas Hodges: Philippe Gontier
Traycard Photo of Elliott Carter: Becky Starobin

Publisher: Hendon Music Ltd./Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. (BMI)
Dialogues recorded January 24, 2004; London Sinfonietta;
BBC Maida Vale Studio 1
Boston Concerto recorded April 6, 2004; BBC Symphony Orchestra;
BBC Maida Vale Studio 1
Cello Concerto recorded April 7, 2004; BBC Symphony Orchestra;
BBC Maida Vale Studio 1

ASKO Concerto recorded April 26, 2000; Asko Ensemble; World Premiere
performance recorded live at The Concertgebouw, Amsterdam
by © VPRO Radio: Wim Laman, Anneke van Duiklen

Special thanks to: Anthony Fogg, Betty Freeman, Halley Harrisburg, Willem
Hering, Paul Hughes, James Kendrick, Phil Lesh, Ann McKay, Holly Mentzer,
Edward Peterson, David Ravden, Andre Tchelitcheff and Claude Wilson.

This recording was made possible through the generous support of the Musical
Explorations Society, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc. and the
Unbroken Chain Foundation.

Elliott Carter and Bridge Records thank
Virgil Blackwell for coordinating this recording.

For Bridge Records: David and Becky Starobin, Ashley Arrington, Alexis Napoliello,
Brad Napoliello & Robert Starobin

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