



Robert Helps

“The Last Romantic”

Piano playing is “one-to-one combat—a scene that still after all these years is able to produce in me a sensation, an anticipation, unlike any other musical situation. One personality with one instrument projecting musical canvases of tremendously varied sizes, shapes and periods.” *Robert Helps*

Great Hall of Cooper Union - June 15, 2002 at 8:00PM

Introductory Words by Milton Babbitt and Bethany Beardslee

Homage à Fauré (1971)

Richard Goode

Fantasy for Violin and Piano (1963)

Jorja Fleezanis and Alan Feinberg

Postlude - Trio for Horn, Violin and Piano (1964)

Karl Kramer, Philip Wharton and David Del Tredici

Two Songs for Voice and Piano (1950) Poems by Herman Melville from *Mardi*

Haleh Abghari and Idith Meshulam

Three Etudes for Piano (1956)

David Del Tredici

Quartet for Piano, Violin, Viola and Cello (1997)

Idith Meshulam, Jorja Fleezanis, Ira Weller and Robert Martin

Song Transcriptions for Piano

Schilflied (Mendelssohn-Helps, 1988)

Chanson Pour Jeanne (Chabrier-Helps, 1998)

Alan Feinberg

Video Presentation of *The Life and Playing of Robert Helps* by Hilton Jones (2002)

Hosted by Ensemble π

“Perhaps the last Romantic, Bob Helps graced music with instinctive elegance and virtuosity, all but vanished.” *David del Tredici*

“His music, rooted in tonality but ever ready to explore what lay on the edges of that world and outside it, is passionate, quiet, gallant, suffused with dark under-currents — like Bob himself.” *Michael Steinberg*

Melville Songs

I.

Her bower is not of the vine,
But the wild, wild eglantine!
Not climbing a moldering arch,
But upheld by the firgreen larch
Old ruins she flies:
To new valleys she hies;
Not the hoar mosswood,
Ivied trees each a rood
Not in Marama she dwells,
Hollow with hermit cells,

'Tis a new, new Isle!
An infant's it's smile,
Soft rocked by the sea,
It's bloom all in bud;
No tide at its flood,
In that freshborn sea!

Spring! Spring! Where she dwells,
In her sycamore dells,
Where Mardi is young and new:
It's verdure all eyes with dew
There, there in the bright balmy morns
The young deer sprout their horns,
Deep tangled in new branching groves,
Where the red rover robin roves,
Stooping his crest to his molting breast

Rekindling the flambeau there!
Spring! Spring! Where she dwells,
In her sycamore dells where,
Fulfilling their fates,
All creatures seek mates
The thrush, the doe, and the hare!

II.

Departed the pride, and the glory of Mardi:
The vaunt of her isles sleeps deep in the sea,
That rolls o'er his corse with a hush,
With a hush.
His warriors bend over their spears,
His sisters gaze upward and mourn.
Weep, weep for Adondo is dead!

The sun has gone down in a shower;
Buried in clouds the face of the moon,
Tears stand in the eyes of the starry skies,
And stand in the eyes of the flowers:
And streams of tears are the trickling brooks,
Coursing down the mountains,
Departed the pride, and the glory of Mardi:
The vaunt of her isles sleeps deep in the sea,
Fast falls the small rain on its bosom that sobs,
Not showers of rain, but the tears, the tears, of Oro.

ROBERT HELPS (1928 – 2001) was a composer, pianist, and teacher who received many honors and awards during his lifetime. Recognition for his compositions came from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Fromm Foundation, Naumberg award, and others. Among his pieces are two symphonies, two piano concerti, piano quartets, and trios.

He remained active as a recording artist and solo and chamber music performer, appearing with several orchestras. Helps toured extensively with internationally renowned performers including vocalists Bethany Beardslee and Phyllis Curtin, violinists Isidore Cohen and Rudolf Kolisch, and composer/pianist Aaron Copland. Known for his expertise in performing nineteenth and twentieth-century music, he presented recitals of music by composers as diverse as Chopin, Ravel, Roger Sessions, John Ireland, Milton Babbitt, and Virgil Thompson. Helps' recordings, including those of his own music have been released on the Victor, Columbia, CRI, Deutsche Grammophon, New World, Desto, Son Nova, and GM labels.

Helps was a professor of piano at the New England Conservatory, the San Francisco Conservatory, Princeton University, Stanford University, the University of California at Berkeley, the Manhattan School of Music, the San Francisco Conservatory, and at the University of South Florida. He was artist-in-residence at the University of California at Davis in 1973, and a recipient of an honorary *Doctor of Humane Letters* from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the San Francisco Conservatory. His major teachers Abby Whiteside and Roger Sessions.

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