

GLSG Newsletter

For the Gay & Lesbian Study Group
of the American Musicological Society
Volume Eight, Number Two • October 1998

ISSN: 1087-8564

introduction

Welcome to the fall issue of the Newsletter of the Gay & Lesbian Study Group of the American Musicological Society (AMS). The GLSG is a recognised special interest group of the AMS. A list of GLSG officers and their addresses appears at the end of this issue.

Our objectives include promoting communication among lesbian & gay music scholars, increasing awareness of issues in sexuality and music in the academic community, and establishing a forum for the presentation of lesbian & gay music studies. We also intend to provide an environment in which to examine the process of coming out in academia, and to contribute to a positive political climate for gay & lesbian affirmative action and curricula. We welcome all scholars interested in these topics.

Subscriptions & Contributions: Issues appear twice a year in March and October. We ask (US) \$15 per year for subscribing individuals, \$20 for institutions, and \$10 for the unwaged. Subscribers outside North America should add \$2 to the appropriate category. Subscriptions cover the calendar year. Back issues are available for half the subscription price. Please make cheques out to *GLSG-Judith Peraino* and mail to the address listed at the end of this issue. If you need a receipt (in addition to your cancelled cheque) please say so.

The financial burden of producing this Newsletter is not eased by any institution or grant. We welcome contributions in any amount. A Supporting Member subscription is \$25, which goes toward production of the Newsletter.

Mailing List: We encourage you to send names for the mailing list to Judith Peraino at the address listed at the end of this issue. Names and addresses of your colleagues are welcome, as well as addresses of lesbian & gay musical institutions. The GLSG mailing list is not offered to any other organization.

Announcements & Articles should be sent to Gillian Rodger, co-editor, by 15 February and 15 September of each year. E-mail submissions are preferred, if possible.

We welcome news items, announcements of conferences, concerts, and workshops, special bibliographies, syllabi, suggestions, and letters (even complaints).

Photocopying: Libraries are authorized to photocopy materials in this Newsletter for the purposes of course reserve reading at the rate of one copy for every fifteen students, and may reuse copies for other courses or for the same course offered subsequently.

Gentle Readers: Our apologies for the excessive delay in distributing the March issue of the newsletter; we do trust that all paid subscribers have received theirs by now. As I come to the end of my tenure as co-editor of the newsletter, I would particularly like to thank my two co-editors, Martha Mockus (who showed me the ropes) and Gillian Rodger. I am pleased to be able to leave you with some Canadian content (apart from the inadvertent Canadian spellings that have slipped in occasionally), in the form of a profile of the French-Canadian composer Claude Vivier, murdered by a hustler in Paris in 1983. Special thanks to Paul Griffiths for graciously allowing us to publish this piece.

[Stephen McClatchie]

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a special thank you

The GLSG would like to thank the following donors who made publication of the fall issue a possibility:

Paul Attinello

Philip Brett
Paul Borg
Lyn Burkett
Suzanne Cusick
J. Michele Edwards
Scott Hale
Nadine Hubbs
Luke Jensen
Fred Maus
Bill Meredith
Mitchell Morris
Judith Peraino
Jennifer Rycenga

Particular thanks to Bill Meredith for organising the fund-raising drive.

report from the co-chairs

We want first to remind readers of a few events at the imminent annual meeting of the AMS that we expect will be of special interest:

- Thursday afternoon, October 29, on a session scheduled from 2 to 3:30, Philip Brett's paper "Musicology, Sexology, and the Cultural Politics of Edward J. Dent (1876-1957)" will focus on the relationship of sexuality to a scholarly career.
- Friday afternoon, October 30, from 12:15 to 12:45, the GLSG will hold its annual business meeting. We will announce then the winner of this year's Philip Brett Award; we will elect new officers and board members; and we will discuss ongoing issues of concern. (Nominations for female co-chair, male co-editor, one male and one female board member are still open, and may be submitted to continuing co-chair Chip Whitesell by e-mail at Lwhitesell@ccmail.sunysb.edu until Monday, October 26.)
- Friday, October 30, from 12:45 to 2, the GLSG presents Ellen Harris of MIT, who is eager to share her research on Handel's sexuality, and to hear and incorporate feedback from our group. Her talk is entitled "Handel as Orpheus II: The Cultural Context of a Literary Reading".
- Saturday afternoon, October 31, plan to attend the business meeting of the AMS for the second annual presentation of the Philip Brett Award.
- Saturday evening, October 31, beginning at 10 pm, the GLSG will host its annual (and fabulous!) cocktail party.

Second, however, we want to apologize publicly for the

lateness of newsletters this year, and to confront the fundamental problem that lay behind it. It is especially important that you know that the editors have had copy ready to mail in a timely and professional way. Various difficulties bedevilled the actual mailing, for which we as co-chairs accept responsibility. By far the most serious problem was beyond our immediate control, however: the GLSG is seriously short of funds. We needed to have a special fund drive electronically to pay postage on the most recent issue. (The fund drive was organized by the indefatigable Bill Meredith, to whom we all owe our thanks.)

The funding shortfall amounts, we think, to an actual crisis. As many of you will recall, the GLSG has always had a difficult time collecting subscriptions/membership fees. Last year, in an effort to cover the anticipated shortfalls, we changed the rate structure. But our list of fully paid subscribers remains dangerously low. In particular, we have very, very few institutional subscriptions—the kinds of subscriptions that often provide a kind of subsidy for individual subscribers to more established publications. We again urge all readers of this newsletter to ask librarians they know to subscribe their institutions, by arranging to send \$20 as an institutional subscription to our Secretary/Treasurer Judith Peraino, c/o Department of Music, Cornell University, Ithaca NY 14853.

It has occurred to us, however, that we might always find the cost of producing the newsletter in physical form, delivered by "snail mail," to be prohibitive. Yet we think it would be simply awful if this publication were to disappear—awful for all of us, awful for students and scholars yet to come. Thus we want to ask you—our membership and our readers—to help us consider the alternative of transforming this newsletter into an on-line publication. We hope to engage you in a discussion of the possibility at the GLSG business meeting on Friday, October 30: please come with thoughts, ideas, perhaps even offers of institutional help (technical, financial, etc).

Your humble (and humbled) servants,

[Suzanne Cusick & Chip Whitesell, Co-Chairs]

feature article

The following profile of Claude Vivier was written several years ago for The New Yorker but did not appear in that magazine. The editors have decided not to alter its informal style. We are most grateful to the author for allowing it to appear here.

Lonely Child

I first met the Canadian composer Claude Vivier ten years after his death. Someone had sent me a tape—the piece was *Lonely Child*, for soprano and orchestra—and what I heard was as simple as a nursery rhyme, as tragic as a Mahler adagio, as formal as a nō play. It went on its way with harmonies glistening high above the slow vocal melody. It was like nothing I'd ever heard, and it was beautiful. To be drawn into this music was indeed to meet another person and, through that other person, another world.

Such experiences, arriving out of the blue, are rare: I had to hear more, know more. I got hold of all the Vivier recordings that were available, all of them Canadian releases, and from the liner notes I gathered a few items of information about the composer, though not much more than the fact that—after just a decade of accomplished work, and little more than three years of total mastery—he had been killed in Paris in 1983, at the age of thirty-four. The fuller story—the story of a life lived, right to the point of death, for music—only began to come together after I'd spent a while in Montréal, studying the scores at the Centre de Musique Canadienne, reading the composer's articles and interviews, and talking to people who'd known him.

Vivier was born on April 14th, 1948, in Montréal, and put into an orphanage. He never knew his natural mother: that was the first big fact in his life. The second—the fact of his homosexuality—emerged several years later. He'd been adopted, when he was two and a half, by a working-class couple who already had two children of their own, both by then in their early twenties; the family lived in the industrial suburb of Laval. He didn't speak comprehensibly until he was six years old, but after that his sister Gisèle remembers him affectionately as a little boy who would bombard her with questions, and who discovered a love for music. “He was always in the church playing the organ: that was why my parents bought him a piano.”

Gisèle Vivier seems to have been the first of the many surrogate mothers he found for himself. Thérèse Desjardins—whose comfortable and civilized household was open to him during his last years, and who clearly still thinks of him warmly as a son—told me the story he had told her, of how, as a boy of eight or nine, he had been seduced by an uncle.

“He had to tell the priest, in confession, and the priest said he had to tell his mother. So eventually he did. It was a storm. They sent the uncle away from Montréal, and they put Claude in a church school—which saved him. Suddenly he was in a place where people were nice, he had his own piano with a key, he had friends who would

listen to his music, all boys, good meals, no worries about money, and he could study: it was perfect. He needed nothing else.”

No doubt Vivier felt that too. In a contribution to a gay symposium, published in Montréal in 1978, he recalled his awakening to his vocation during his schooldays. “From that time dates my encounter with music, at a midnight mass. That would change my whole life. Unconsciously I had found the ideal instrument to express my search for purity, and also the entire reason for my future existence.” Presumably he had been thinking already of this moment of illumination when he had written, earlier in the article, that “having finished a work or part of a work, the question that comes to me is this: Do I feel the same as on Christmas Day?” He went on to say, in the historic present, how he'd resolved the conflict between his sexuality and his continuing religious faith. “Still a Catholic, it is difficult for me to believe I am homosexual. But more and more another certainty grows within me: I am a composer! And the transmitter that I am cannot bother himself with what is, after all, a minor problem.”

That might seem a glib solution, but Vivier demanded very much more of himself than is revealed in this short article, which was surely written with an intention to accentuate the positive. (The book was called *Sortir*, and these were still early days for gay liberation, not least in Montréal.) If his work was his way, as he said, “of achieving my own redemption,” it would need to know all about him, and it would need finally to transcend him. This caused him no public embarrassment. He seems to have had no anxieties about coming out, for the simple reason he was never in. There was no need for him to atone for himself: the “search for purity” was to take place not through a denial of his sexuality but through a rejoicing in it, through a living of life to the utmost, in order to discover what lay on the other side. He had to exhaust life, exhaust the passing time of day-to-day existence, so that all that would be left to him would be eternity, out of which he would make music. The goal of purity, of a recovered innocence, was one that an adult could achieve in reality only by dying, and only by dying after the ultimate experience of life. Music would be a way of visiting death in advance.

His way toward that goal took him from the seminary—from which he was expelled at the age of eighteen, allegedly for being sexually too hot to handle—to the Montréal Conservatory, where he studied composition with Gilles Tremblay, himself a pupil of Messiaen and one of Canada's most prominent composers. Walter Boudreau, who was in the same class, remembers his first impressions of the young Vivier: “Horrible. Noisy. Obnoxious. Very self-centered. A bit condescending on everything that was not part of his

world. He smelled really bad. And that's about it."

Not much was to change—certainly not the obliviousness to personal hygiene or decorum. Flamboyant, theatrical, extravagant, ostentatious in his sexuality, exaggerated in his behavior: these are the terms in which he's recalled by all who knew him. As Georges Nicholson, a musician who now works for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, put it to me: "The switch was always *on*." Vivier was evidently an embarrassing friend to have—one who would think nothing of charging across the street, or across a crowded concert hall, to come shrieking your name and embrace you. Yet he was also generous with whatever money he had, with his time, and with his consideration, outside of any sexual encounter. Rober Racine, an artist and writer some years younger, remembers these aspects of his personality with obvious fondness: "He lived well. He was a fine person. I had a lot of pleasure with him, a lot, a lot."

In 1971 Vivier graduated from the conservatory and went to Cologne, in the hope of studying with Karlheinz Stockhausen. But Stockhausen sent him to spend a year in Utrecht first with Gottfried Michael Koenig, one of the earliest generation of Stockhausen associates. He then went back to Cologne, and, as Professor Tremblay tells it, Stockhausen asked him why. "Vivier said: Because you are the greatest composer in the world. That was enough: the only entrance test!"

Vivier arrived at an opportune time. Stockhausen was working on a new version of his *Momente*, an exuberant festival of love and music for a cheerful soprano soloist with choirs, brass, percussion and electric organs. For the young Canadian, following the rehearsals "revealed the very essence of musical composition, and brought about a sort of baring of my soul." In December 1972 he began a new work of his own, which he would think of as his opus one: *Chants*, for seven women singing. (The prominence of sevens in Vivier's output must be an inheritance from Edgard Varèse's orchestral score *Arcana*, of which he'd made an analysis at the conservatory. The Varèse score has an epigraph from Paracelsus speaking of six stars and a seventh, which is that of imagination.)

Chants started with a visionary night, as Vivier's works seem often to have done. "My whole life unfolded before me, allowing me to glimpse in filigree the face of a sad child who would have liked to express something grandiose, and who had not yet been able to do so. These memories tumbled together into a bizarre dream: in a great cathedral there were three tombs; one of them broke open; I ran to alert the priest. This good old man spoke to the dead person who came out of the tomb, and who strangely changed into a white eagle, which seized me in its immense talons to carry me over the earth."

Typically untroubled by all this news from Eros and Thanatos, he set about making the dream a reality, feeling he must create "a veritable ritual of death" for "three women in the presence of death and their three shades," the seventh voice being his own, that of the sad child. This was not entirely a new departure. *Musik für das Ende*, a choral piece dating from the year before, is also a requiem, apparently prompted in part by the suicide in 1970 of a close friend, the young Canadian actor Yves Sauvageau. *Chants* is different, though, in being about birth as much as death. It's amniotic music—music that floats in the gentle, warm support of static harmonies, that babbles with the syllables of the "invented language" Vivier used in all his subsequent vocal works (which means the great majority of his works altogether), and that hears almost nothing outside women's voices and odd percussive knocks. It's also music that looks back toward the origins of the art: one can imagine it in an Anonymous 4 concert. Finally, it's music in which Vivier effects his own birth as a composer.

The piece he'd written immediately before, the balefully titled *Désintégration* for two pianos, had been "entirely predetermined: no note at any moment was left to chance." Now he sought just the reverse: music that would flow, like water, from one situation to another, supported by no conscious system, channelled by words and images that came in dreams. To use terms he would develop later, *Désintégration* had been the triumph of Idea: a work entirely objective, saying nothing about its creator other than that he had taken the decision to initiate it. *Chants*, on the other hand, is the projection of the "Moi," the first-person singular. It's the piece in which Vivier began to teach his music about what mattered to him: the hope for purity, the fear and lure of death. It pointed the way in which he would go.

"Purification" was his first idea for a title: the piece was to be, in German, "Reinigung"—until he discovered it would then sound like a laundry. "That period in my life as a composer," he recalled, "had, on the one hand, to purify me from all influences, allow me to rediscover the condition of a child; and, on the other hand, it had to express me, express the me that I am." Yet, for all the cleansing of language going on in *Chants*, the piece still owes something to Stockhausen, whether by way of influence or confirmation. Like Stockhausen, Vivier was offering his works as sacred ceremonials, elaborating them from melody (though here Olivier Messiaen was also an important example), and seeing them as communicating with the self and—beyond the self—the divine.

The last piece he wrote in Cologne, *Lettura di Dante* (1973-4), brings a glimpse of his mature style—a style which lay only five years in the future, though in his case that was half a creative lifetime away. Slow, and ample

yet light, the music unwinds as long melody for a soprano with instrumental septet. Even so, nothing else quite lives up to the *coup de théâtre*, when the soprano, who hitherto has sung from behind a curtain, is disclosed deaf-signing and then speaking the words “I have seen God.” The drama here might even seem a conscious compensation for the lack of what the music can’t yet express.

Vivier returned to Montréal, and in his note for the first performance of *Lettura di Dante*, which was given there in September 1974, he said he was no longer thinking of the future, nor of the past, but of “a sort of vanished present, a sort of impalpable joy mixed with the sadness of a child who has lost his mother.” This image was to recur in his music, not least in *Lonely Child*. The personal relevance is obvious. From the age of six, Vivier recalled, his knowledge of his adoption allowed him to “make up my origins as I wished, pretend to speak in strange languages.” Here surely is one of the origins of his “invented language”—of such phrases as “ku-ruk-shé-tra” and “pu-ru-sha-ti-ca-se” that calmly interpose themselves among the words of the Divine Comedy in *Lettura di Dante*. The fact that he was late in speaking, too, might help explain his predilection for prattle, as well as his use of deaf-signing. And the notion of the “vanished present” comes out strongly in his recollection that as a child he had felt “reality was not the one I was, in fact, living but one I was taken from in a very strange fashion.”

The idea of an alternative, better present—which would have to be an absent present—was also to become important in his musical theorizing. A late note, written half a year before his death, asks: “What does music provide, if not a disposition into ‘historical’ time of an opening into another temporality? Music rends historical time and, for brief moments, shows us the beyond-time, ambiguous flow of musical space.” Expressing the same thought on an earlier occasion, he had said how music allowed human beings to “transgress the great order of celestial mechanics.... That’s why people construct their time machines known as music.”

However, for Vivier to make his own vessels time-tight would take a little while. He had no other aim. He taught for a short while at the University of Ottawa, in 1976, but otherwise he was determined to live as a composer, supported by grants, commissions, and performing rights. And he was no slouch. During the two years after his return from Cologne, he wrote two big scores—*Liebesgedichte* for four singers and eight wind players (1975), and the orchestral *Siddhartha* (1975-6)—as well as a bunch of solos and duos. *Liebesgedichte* is, like *Lettura di Dante*, a sprawling piece that keeps flashing forward to the later Vivier. It has some wonderful moments, as when the bass whistles and sings at the same time, or when oboe and clarinet jostle against one another in a faintly Iranian melodic interplay. It also

suggests another virtue of the “invented language,” to camouflage the names of lovers. In *Bouchara*, a subsequent love song, the soprano keeps singing the name of one of Vivier’s Montréal boyfriends, to whom the work is dedicated. In *Liebesgedichte*, the tenor comes back again and again to “Dieter.”

Siddhartha is a more expert composition, but also a less individual one, close to the recent Stockhausen (especially *Inori*) and at times to Varèse or Skryabin. Vivier never heard it. He had written it for the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, who turned it down on grounds of difficulty, and the disappointment would seem to have been one of the spurs that sent him on a long journey through Asia in 1976-7. First he visited Japan; then he spent several weeks on Bali.

“Here I’ve been given a Balinese name, ‘Nyoman Kenyung’ (the laughing third-born),” he wrote back to a Canadian music magazine. He studied Balinese music; he took part in performances; and he discovered how hard it was to maintain a regular rhythm. (By all accounts, he had no great skill as a practical musician; creation alone was what was important to him.) Finally he had to leave. “A lesson in love, in tenderness, in poetry, and in respect for life: that was my journey on Bali. These words may seem strange when I’m talking about music,” (again he was writing for the monthly *Musicanada*) “but how can one not speak of love when a friend dances for me as a way of saying farewell, when this old woman offers me a fruit for my journey to Java, because that for her is as far from Bali as one can go!... One thing on Bali: music has its ultimate place in the depths of the heart; one understands music because it speaks to the heart.”

While still there he’d said: “I absolutely don’t want to write Balinese music!” Once back, though, he found it hard to resist exactly that. *Pulau Dewata* (“The Island of the Gods”)—written for the McGill Percussion Ensemble, and recorded by them on an array of xylophones and metallophones strongly suggestive of the Indonesian gamelan—is Bali come to Montréal, and in two other works composed soon after his return, *Love Songs* and *Nanti Malam* (“Later This Evening”), he tried for a Balinese integration of music and dance in ritual.

The music became more interesting as the memories dimmed, and sank to a deeper musical level. One of the features of Balinese music that had most impressed Vivier was what he called “interlocking.” One pattern (note-rest-note-rest-note-rest) is played simultaneously with its displacement (rest-note-rest-note-rest-note), and so the result is a regular rhythm (note-note-note-note-note-note). This duly happens in *Pulau Dewata*, but the principle is used more subtly in the virtuoso piano piece *Shiraz*, which was completed later in 1977, and which also introduced another kind of mobile interlocking, between

melody and harmony. With *Pulau Dewata*, Vivier had divested his music of counterpoint, to leave just a melody line and accompanying chords—chords which at this stage were blissfully elementary. *Shiraz* has more complex harmonies, often Messiaenesque, and by its speed and fracturedness it suggests a faceted jewel: the eponymous town, which Vivier had visited on his way back from Bali, he described as “a pearl of a city, a roughly cut diamond,” and he included in the dedication of the piece “two blind singers I followed for many hours in the market place of Shiraz.”

He'd always identified himself with the rejects and misfits of society. In one of his earliest interviews he'd talked about an encounter on a train in Holland, during the time he was studying in Utrecht: “I met an old Corsican, completely drunk, of whom everybody was afraid. I, for my part, decided to make conversation with him, and I got the idea to record him discreetly with the little machine I had with me. I wanted to eternalize him, transcend him, take him out of the context of the train, transform this meeting into an ecstatic vision.” The result was his 1972 electronic piece *Musique pour un vieux corse triste*.

Later, when he was in Montréal, he used to frequent not only the favorite artists' bar of the time (“The Pit,” on the Avenue du Parc), and not only gay bars, but also another establishment that Rober Racine told me about: “He took me once to a place on the Rue St. Laurent where all the prostitutes and tramps and transvestites hung out. It was like the whole of human misery was there. And he told me he'd spent Christmas there once, and he introduced me to some people who'd been in the same orphanage. He was thoroughly at home there: that was his family. And he said that these people were the inspiration for his music.” Indeed, *Greeting Music*, a piece for five instrumentalists written in 1978, was intended as a greeting to the growing numbers of people living on the streets.

In *Greeting Music*, and in another chamber piece from the same year, *Paramirabo* for four players, he continued his explorations into the strange world of high-treble harmony, letting his ear scan overtones on strings, sounds sung into the flute, and, again, whistling. In this world, as he was evidently aware, the abrasion of frequencies on each other can produce ghostly lower pitches, such as residue tones, which are the spectral fundamentals of the sounding high notes, and natural harmonics can interfere with tones played in the equal temperament that western music has made normal; sound becomes misted, iridescent. But still these works of 1978 are only foreshadowings, and the same is true of Vivier's second work for orchestra, *Orion* (another sevenfold composition, and a starry one), which goes a bit too eagerly after effectiveness and likability, with its brave

trumpet calls and its chugging minimalism. Only near the end does it open into new space, when forward drive gives way to more listening upwards, and a percussion player twice sings “Hé-o” into a tam-tam, the second time to be met with silence—silence which is the seventh, unsaid part of the score.

Orion was composed in 1979 for Charles Dutoit and the Montréal Symphony, whose first performance of it, in 1980, was not a success. That same year, though, Vivier made a breakthrough with his first opera, *Kopernikus*, which became a signature piece for the concert series he had founded with some friends, “Les Evénements du Neuf” (“neuf” for the newness of what went on, and also for the fact that the “événements” always took place at 9 p.m. on the ninth of the month). *Kopernikus* is not, though, his best piece: it's another ritual of death, bubbling with the infantilism that was also an embarrassing feature of his choral autobiography *Journal* of 1977. Both are among the works in which his attempt to recuperate childhood experience resulted in a descent into kitsch. “You always feel like a little child anyway,” he said in an interview. “You don't see yourself grow old. I think that's what makes the unity of a human being.” So it may be, but he had to find a way to speak as a child, not show himself as an adult playing children's games, and he discovered his infant voice much more by pursuing the weird harmonies of *Paramirabo* than through the miminy-piminy fairy talk of *Kopernikus*.

Then suddenly that infant voice arrived. In March 1980, just five months after finishing *Orion*, Vivier completed *Lonely Child*. Thérèse Desjardins, whose closeness to him dates from this period, told me something of what his life was like.

“When he finished a piece, during the two or three days following the *point final*, he was out of his mind with nerves, because for him the only point in life was to compose. I don't think he could have lived with anybody, because he had to compose, and for that he had to be alone. He had a very structured life. He would wake up at seven, go to the same restaurant every morning for his breakfast, come back to his place, and compose. At eleven he would call me and other people, put the telephone on his piano and play what he had just composed.” (Everyone I spoke to told me of this habit.) “I heard *Lonely Child* like that, day by day. I remember once I said: I don't like it. And he said: Who are you? I don't *mind* if you don't like it!”

Lonely Child, which plays for about twenty minutes, concentrates even more than the preceding works on slow melody, but with harmonic auras that are suddenly more complex. The change is striking: we're in a new world. And the fantastic orchestration—which is what makes this world new—hasn't been prepared by anything in Vivier's

earlier music, or anyone else's. It's possible he'd learned something from French composers of his generation, such as Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail, who were working with natural harmonics; however, his music doesn't sound like theirs. It's also possible he'd been listening intently to bells and gongs, for the huge chords that march along with—around—the voice in *Lonely Child* commonly have deep fundamentals with a fizz of interfering higher tones, rather as metallic resonances do. Vivier's own explanation, though, was in terms of his spiritual quest: "This urge for purity, it's created a style of its own."

Purity, he seems to have felt, entailed polishing the music with his preoccupations until it would shine. *Lonely Child* moves that way on the level of its text, which is intimately personal in being partly the lullaby of an idealized mother, partly a prayer to the Virgin Mary, partly a love song addressed to the boy in *Death in Venice*. But where these urgings might imply a deep holy-carnal sentimentality, the work is redeemed by its candid gaze. It sounds innocent—a voice we haven't heard before, and couldn't have expected. It evades camp, which can only arise where there is shared experience and prevarication. Everything in this music is open to view: the slow melody, and the wide chords that chime with each note, while often suggesting a different fundamental. Vivier's harmony works as it had, for instance, in the short piece *Pour violon et clarinette* of 1975: there are essentially two lines, which come together (often in a major third) and meander away from each other. But perhaps what makes *Lonely Child* importantly different came from its sexuality.

In an interview he gave in 1981 to a French gay magazine, *Le Berdache*, Vivier suggested a link between the traditional view of manhood ("strong, big, dominating") and the traditional view of music as moving toward a goal, which he rejected. Other statements of the same period, without making that link explicitly, say how, in his music, something quite different was happening—how, for instance, "I just have statements, musical statements, which lead nowhere." Vivier was not claiming that this was entirely new. "I could compare myself," he went on to say, "with some Japanese musics or Balinese musics. Among the western composers I could compare myself with Mozart and Chopin." (Louise Duchesneau, who came across Vivier when she was a student in Ottawa, told me that he was always playing the same two pieces on the piano, Mozart's "Alla turca" and Chopin's "Revolutionary" Etude, and that he never got to the end of either of them before breaking off into improvisation.) Nevertheless, what certainly was new in *Lonely Child* was the particular form taken by the directionlessness, by the dropping into our time world of moments of eternity.

During the year and a half after *Lonely Child*, Vivier

wrote *Cinq chansons* for mostly Asian percussion instruments, *Wo bist du Licht!* for mezzo-soprano and orchestra, and a group of works centered on the figure of Marco Polo: *Prologue pour un Marco Polo* (more suite than overture, consisting of eight linked scenes devised for radio performance), *Zipangu* for string orchestra (named for the Japan that was, for Polo, unreachable), the wordless love song *Bouchara*, and *Samarkand*, a big slow movement for wind quintet and piano. Discussing Marco Polo on tape, Vivier used words that echo what he said of his self-projection in *Chants*: "I have the impression that Marco Polo is above all, is also the image of this one who has tried to say something and has not succeeded. I find that, as an image, I find that quite desperate." It's moving to find Vivier still feeling this, just as he was musically coming into his own; but listening to heaven's time had to be a hope ultimately frustrated as long as the hope remained alive.

Hitherto he'd written his own texts, sometimes incorporating or embroidering on classic poetry or the words of the Catholic liturgy, but on *Prologue pour un Marco Polo* he worked with the poet Paul Chamberland, who gained perhaps the greatest insights into Vivier as an artist.

"He was inhabited," M. Chamberland told me, "by his figures: Mozart, Lewis Carroll, Copernicus, Marco Polo. The figure of Marco Polo he already had in his head, and so for me it was—well, 'easy' would not be the word, because I had to work, but it was a question of being on that level. And that excited me. From the beginning I listened attentively to what Claude said, and to the rhythm of how he spoke, which was very rapidly, staccato: da-da-da-da-da. What was very important, quite apart from the musical aspect, was his way of describing the character of Marco Polo. He was always very precise—above all, what he said always had this seriousness. When I got home I wrote down things, sometimes phrases, and let that work, one might say. Then I would go to his place—which was in indescribable disorder, scores everywhere. He played what he had written at the piano, and I came with my words, and a kind of circuit was formed.

"He was a seer, a *listener*. There was one writer we had in common, as a reference: Aurobindo. What fascinated me was that he already was in that visionary world, as if mental structures had become physical structures. But it was completely natural: that's what struck me. He was not an adept of any particular theory or doctrine: of course, nobody is entirely self-sufficient, but he had an autonomy in his thinking. He had a passion to make something *be*. He felt himself—the term is over-used, but he felt himself inspired, at the service of something. Yet at the same time he wasn't egocentric. There was a complete absence of vanity in him, and never the slightest

trace of wanting to convince. Either you play with me or you don't: it's all the same.

"He was a complex person, but relatively transparent. There coexisted in him an abandoned child and a kind of being like an angel, who had completely a sense of his gravity."

Prologue pour un Marco Polo and the other works of 1980-81 find Vivier, Polo-like, exploring the continent that had loomed into view in *Lonely Child*. *Bouchara* is the most perfect of them. *Wo bist du Licht!* is an elegy for our age, and owes its power much more to the long lament sung by a low mezzo (perhaps a portrait of the composer's grandmother, "who I knew only very slightly, but who was for me a little island of affection and security") than to the incorporated news recordings, which include Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech and noise of Robert Kennedy's assassination. Perhaps that's the point. Vivier was, as he said, removing his work from history—both from the course of human events and from the course through time that western compositions had sought to make their own. *Wo bist du Licht!* goes in search of non-history, or trans-history, with the figure of a blind singer (memories of Shiraz) from a poem by Hölderlin. "In a divine sound landscape," the composer's note on the score concludes, "there still rings out the voice of the wounded man, who incessantly repeats to God his despair, without which he would not even be sure that God exists."

Soon after finishing *Wo bist du Licht!* Vivier celebrated his thirty-third birthday, with Thérèse Desjardins and her family. As she told me: "He played 'Happy Birthday' with my mother at the piano, and he had this cake I'd made, with thirty-three candles, and he didn't want to blow them out. Normally after dinner, when my daughters were there, they would help Claude with his make-up, because he was going out to the park, or I don't know where. But that night he didn't go out. And he started to cry, because this was the first time in his life that he'd had a birthday party."

Apart from the works in highly refined, teased-out harmonies ("great sheafs of colors," as he called them), Vivier also in 1981 worked on and starred in a short videotape, *L'homme de Pékin*: the movies were important to him, and he spoke of doing more in this line. Then, toward the end of that year, he returned to bald octaves and a joke. *Et je reverrai cette ville étrange*, the octave piece, locks together six instrumentalists in melody almost without color, and *A Little Joke* for chorus is the odd, tiny fruit of a one-night stand with a woman. After that he was silent for some months. He felt he had to leave Montréal again for the sake of his musical development, and in June 1982 he went, to Paris. Most of his Canadian friends never saw him again.

The letters he wrote back to Thérèse Desjardins, however, give us windows into his life during the nine months that remained. In July comes the first idea for "a dramatic work without subject, where the drama would be the music itself"—a notion he was later to develop into the project of an "opéra fleuve" that would move through "Prologue pour un Marco Polo" and the pieces he'd placed along the Silk Road: *Shiraz, Samarkand, Bouchara, Zipangu*. By August he was composing *Trois airs pour un opéra imaginaire*, which he felt represented a stage he had to get through before he could write the new opera: "a rediscovery," as he said, "of counterpoint and of a more dramatized musical time." In September he heard Mahler's Seventh Symphony at a concert, and reported that: "Mahler is perhaps the musician to whom I feel closest—an exacerbated sensibility, schmaltz, and at the same time profound desire for purity, but for a purity that's almost libidinal." Relevant here is his intuition that he might be Jewish himself, and his horror at the racism he found in Paris directed against Jews and North Africans.

The next month he announced definite operatic plans: the work would have the form of a Requiem mass, out of which would come scenes from the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian and from another martyrdom, Pyotr Tchaikovsky's, with singers doubling roles (the tenor would be Sebastian and Tchaikovsky, the bass Emperor/Alchemist and Tsar, the coloratura soprano Sorceress and Mme. von Meck), and with Joan of Arc and Gilles de Retz also among the dramatis personae. That Vivier should be attracted to homoerotic hagiography was inevitable; the appeal of Tchaikovsky would have been heightened by the story, then gaining currency, that the Russian composer had been forced to commit suicide in order to avoid involving his old school in the shame and scandal of a homosexual liaison. "I place the opera," Vivier stated with his unaffected boldness, "in the line of Dante, Mozart, and Bataille."

By November 1982 he had a commission from the Groupe Vocal de France, and was planning a *Dies irae*, which presumably was to be related to, or part of, the Tchaikovsky-Sebastian opera. Meanwhile, he was living ever more dangerously, as Philippe Polini—a video artist who had worked with him on *L'homme de Pékin*, and who was now in Paris—told me.

"It was very frenetic, but with an energy that doesn't go towards life: it goes towards death, somehow provoking death. That wasn't completely new: he had always walked a thin line between life and death. Because he was adopted, he was alone. He had no connections: no family, no stable lovers, no real parents. He was suspended, and in a state of constant vibration. In Paris it just got more. It was a very clean energy that he was putting into his music, but as soon as he left the composition—outside of

that border—everything was disorganized.”

More testimony to the danger and chaos of his life at this time comes almost certainly in the pages of Christopher Coe’s novel *Such Times*, for there’s compelling evidence to identify Vivier with the composer “Claude” of that book. Coe’s Claude is said to look like the Memling *Portrait of a Man* in the Frick; Vivier’s photographs show a longer face and a more down-turned nose, but the mouth, chin, prominent cheekbones, and thinning hair are similar. Timothy, the narrator of the novel, hears a six-minute piece by Claude for oboe and piano, and thinks it sounds like Xenakis; Vivier wrote a piece of that sort of length for flute and piano, and the similarity with Xenakis is plausible for a character who doesn’t know much music. Claude lives in squalor; so did Vivier. But what really clinches it is the laugh. Everyone I spoke to mentioned Vivier’s laugh, which he unleashed—whether the occasion was appropriate or not—to show what he thought of people or of music. His laughter was, Louise Duchesneau told me, “very loud, very Mephistophelean.” The musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez imitated it for me: a harsh cackle. Gilles Tremblay told me of a time he’d been at a concert in Paris, and had not known Vivier was in the auditorium—until he heard the laugh. And this is the first sound that greets us from Claude in *Such Times*: “He let out the highest, most out-of-control laugh I had ever heard....It was the laugh of someone who probably didn’t care much, or at all, about what people in a place like this thought of him. Or it was the laugh of someone who doesn’t know how to laugh.”

Not knowing how to laugh, Vivier had discovered how to sing. In early January he made a last attempt to escape his fate, writing to Thérèse Desjardins of his wretchedness at having “nobody to telephone when I compose, nobody to confide in, nobody with whom I can talk about my anguish of spirit.” Parisians were cold; most of his fellow composers were useless; he would come back to Montréal in April or May. Only four days later, however, he could write reassuringly that “the crisis has quite passed,” and that he had completed six minutes of his new piece, which was now not a *Dies irae* but had the title *Glaubst du an die Unsterblichkeit der Seele?* (“Do you believe in the immortality of the soul?”).

Also in January 1983 he wrote of a love affair with an American, “Christopher” (who must surely be Christopher Coe), and of being violently raped. “I don’t think my music can be the same after what I’ve just lived through....I’m afraid, Thérèse, and I think it’s myself I’m afraid of. I’m afraid of this infinite void that I’m not afraid of. Death is totally demystified.”

“You know that this year in Paris has been vital for me,” he went on. “I’m maturing at an absolutely phenomenal speed, and the music I’ll write—in particular my

opera—will have a human meaning that no music has been able to achieve until now....I must compose on the hoof, give human beings a music that will prevent them once and for all from making war. A phrase comes to my mind: ‘It’s my own death I will celebrate.’ I don’t know why, it seems to me I want to conquer death on its own ground, make it the liberator of beings open to eternity, give humans such a music that their consciousness spills directly into eternity without passing through death, without paying tribute to the old Ferryman of Acheron!”

Such hopes. They were the hopes they’d always been: to counter the aggressiveness written into the conventional role of the male, to feel the silent pulse of heaven. They were hopes that could only be entertained by one who was risking a martyrdom of his own—one who was, as Philippe Polini records, spending his nights drinking heavily, having lots of partners, not asking questions, and behaving that way in preparation for the next day’s work on *Glaubst du*.

“Listen to me, listen to me!” says a tenor near the start of the piece. “You know I always wanted to die for love but...how strange it is, this music that doesn’t move.” “Speak,” says a contralto, and the tenor goes on: “I never knew—.” “Knew what?” “Knew how to love.” The contralto then asks him to sing a love song, and one follows—in the “invented language,” as usual. But it fades away, and the voices turn to what sounds even more alarmingly like autobiography. One of the synthesizer players, speaking into a vocoder, recounts an episode that Vivier told as a dream in a letter to Thérèse Desjardins. The narrator is attracted to a young man on a Métro train, who sits down next to him, introduces himself, pulls out from his black jacket a dagger, “and thrusts it right into my heart.” There the score ends. On March 12th, 1983, Vivier was found in his apartment, where he’d lain dead for five days. There were forty-five knife wounds in his body.

His death appalls by its inevitability. “You know I always wanted to die for love;” his whole life, quite apart from his erotic life, seems to have been headed in one direction. Nobody I spoke to could imagine a Vivier grown middle-aged; everyone saw him as blazing towards extinction. And he probably had the same certainty himself. In one of several depositions he made against the conservatism and provincialism of cultural life in Québec, he listed some of the artists who’d killed themselves or died young. “It seems to me that in Québec people die easily, and it’s in a completely Québécois (adolescent) sensibility that we must look for the solution. Extreme sensibility which, alas, because of a pseudo-male environment, very often cannot but suffer.” What Vivier seems to be describing here is a retardation that must be countered by retardation, by a celebration of adolescence, such as his later music achieved in its freshness, its libido,

and its tenderness—a celebration that machismo and conformity would have to want to terminate.

The judicial case concerning his death was soon resolved, and a boy of nineteen was convicted of the murder. Justice for the music has been longer in coming—partly because of the musical remoteness of Montréal, partly because of tussles between the composer's friends and his adoptive family, partly because of an excess of protectiveness on the part of those who've taken responsibility for the scores, and won't allow anything to be published without scrupulous cross-checking of the sort that might be justified in the case of a scholarly edition of a Beethoven symphony. But with the new Philips recording of *Lonely Child* and other works conducted by Reimbert De Leeuw—the composer's first international release—Vivier may at last be crossing the threshold from death into life.

[Paul Griffiths]

Paul Griffiths, currently music critic for the New York Times, certainly needs no introduction. Formerly of The New Yorker, he is the author of numerous books and articles on twentieth-century music.

A Bibliographical Note on Claude Vivier

Much of Paul Griffiths' profile of Vivier is based on interviews and unpublished letters. Portions appeared in the *New York Times Arts and Leisure* section, Sunday, 1 December 1996, 31, 40, under the title "From the Edge of Experience, A New Sound."

The basic source of information on Vivier is Gilles Potvin's article in the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, 2nd ed., edited by Helmut Kallmann, Gilles Potvin, and Kenneth Winters. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1992). Writings and texts by the composer were published in *Circuit 2*, no. 1-2 (1991). Many of the direct quotations of Vivier come from this source.

Volume 36 of the *Anthology of Canadian Music* (Radio Canada International RCI 36 [1990]) is devoted to Vivier and is probably the best single source of information. There are recordings of fifteen pieces, including *Chants*, *Lonely Child*, *Siddhartha*, *Lettura di Dante*, *Pulau Dewata*, and *Prologue pour un Marco Polo*. The excellent booklet includes a brief biography, full texts and translations of the vocal works, and an English transcription of the French documentary included on the CDs. This documentary includes many of the direct quotations of Vivier used in Griffiths' profile. The *ACM* volumes are not readily available outside of Canada, but may be purchased through the Canadian Music Centre (see below).

Other of Vivier's works are found on CBC Records,

including the complete "opéra-rituel de mort," *Kopernikus* (CBC MVCD 1047). The De Leeuw release, *Lonely Child*, alluded to at the end of the profile, is on Philips 454 231-2. It includes neither texts nor translations. A film on Vivier, entitled *Lonely Child*, was released by Silverfilm in 1988.

Claude Vivier is a posthumous Associate of the Canadian Music Centre, a non-profit organization devoted to the dissemination of Canadian music. The CMC acts as an archival repository and distribution centre for scores and other information about Canadian composers. Scores are lent, free of charge, to anyone interested. Personal copies may be purchased at a reasonable cost. Most of Vivier's music is available for loan from the CMC. For further information, and a complete catalogue of the CMC's holdings, see <http://www.ffa.ucalgary.ca/cmc/>

[Stephen McClatchie]

announcements

Report on Fund Raising for the Brett Award

As the volunteer coordinator for the fund-raising efforts for the Philip Brett Endowment, I thought I should report on our current status. Since November 1995, we have had 12 donors to the award. Some have made multiple gifts. One is a pledge of \$1,000 to be paid out over 5 years. At the moment, we have \$3,270 in hand. Of this amount, \$500 will go to pay for the 1998 award, and the remaining \$2,760 will soon be deposited in the AMS endowment pool. (They asked us to save all donations until we collected \$2,500.) In total, we have collected \$3,770, but paid out \$500 to the 1997 recipient, Liz Wood.

I think this is quite admirable for a small study group such as ours, especially when one considers that we have a high percentage of graduate students in our ranks. (And sadly, some famous gay and lesbian middle and senior career musicologists remain too daunted to become members.) That said, I would like to put out another call for donations for the endowment for the award. We need at least \$10,000 in the endowment to pay out \$500 a year for the annual award, so we are 27.6% there.

Donations are indeed tax deductible, and should be sent (marked GLSG-Brett Endowment) to the GLSG treasurer, Judith Peraino, whose address appears at the end of the issue. Donations have ranged from \$10 to \$1,000. Please join us in this fund-raising effort. Surely more than 12 people in the GLSG could support us!

It has been worth every penny raised to see gay and lesbian musicology become such a visible part of the national AMS at the business meeting. And you are insuring a perpetual award!

[Bill Meredith]

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The 13th Annual National Feminist Graduate Student conference is presently accepting proposals for our March 4-7, 1999 conference in Austin, Texas. The conference is entitled *Feminist Identities: Around the Globe and in the Academy*. This year's conference will provide a venue for an interdisciplinary gathering of graduate students doing feminist work. Proposals may be positioned as a feminist intervention in a given field, a contribution to existing feminist debates, or an application of feminist theory, research methods or praxis. We seek diverse and innovative perspectives, voices, formats and performances that will enlarge our understanding, challenge our assumptions, and prompt our thinking. The conference organized by and for graduate students. Our hope is to create a space for conversations and for the development of relationships with similarly interested and focussed students.

Currently we have organized two full days of paper presentations and two evenings with prominent speakers, one nationally known and one local feminist. The key note speaker will be Chandra Talpade Mohanty, associate professor of Women's Studies at Hamilton College. At this time we have asked Joni Jones, professor at the University of Texas, Austin and performance artist to perform. Other planned conference events include: grassroots activism workshops with Gen Vaughn from the Foundation for a Compassionate Society; Lisa Sanchez from PODER; and Rachel Muir, founder and director of Smartgirls; and a roundtable of feminist faculty members from local universities to discuss their negotiations of feminism in pedagogy and in research. There will also be two afternoon screenings of graduate students films and an art exhibit.

Proposal submissions should include: (1) one copy of a 750-1000 word proposal; (2) a cover letter complete with:

- (a) name, address, phone and e-mail;
- (b) institution, department, program and year of study;
- (c) audio visual requests;
- (d) information about co-authors/presenters;
- (e) format of contribution (paper, performance, slide/film/multi-media);
- (f) a 50 word abstract for conference materials; and
- (g) other personal needs such as child care, wheelchair access, sight and hearing impaired concerns, or others.

We will accept proposals for individual papers and

panels. Those proposing a panel must include a proposal for each paper and a description of the panel.

Because of the size of the conference we will only be able to allow one appearance per person and will not be able to make accommodations for time or day of presentation.

Submissions must be received by November 1, 1998 and may be sent by e-mail (no attachments please) to inramsey@mail.utexas.edu, or mailed to:

Feminist Graduate Student Network
SOC #69
100-C West Dean Keeton Street
Austin, Texas 78712

Visit us at: <http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~femconf/>

Notification of acceptance will be in January 1999.

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The community of graduate students at The Graduate School and University Centre of the City University of New York is pleased to announce the formation of GSIM, an association devoted to promoting the interests of graduate students specializing in music theory, musicology, ethnomusicology, composition, and performance throughout the City University of New York system of affiliated colleges. The primary function of GSIM will be to encourage the production and presentation of scholarly work among its members. Proposed activities include the establishment of a monthly series of colloquia at which graduate students will be able to present works-in-progress, the formation of study groups geared towards preparing for comprehensive examinations, and the establishment of an annual symposium where graduate students from across North America will be invited to present conference papers on a wide variety of topics in a more relaxed and less intimidating setting.

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<i>current bibliography</i>

Current Bibliography is a regular list of books, articles, online resources, and other materials relating to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and queer meanings in music. It focusses on recent publications. We encourage you to send us articles and entries for this list.

Brett, Philip. "Piano Four Hands: Schubert and the Performance of Gay Male Desire." *19th-Century Music* 21/2 (Fall 1997): 149-76.

Dellamora, Richard, and Daniel Fischlin, eds. *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood, and Sexual Difference*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

your humble servants

Graduate Students' Symposium at the City University of New York, 25 April 1998. [The theme of the conference was gay and lesbian issues in music.]

- Alison P. Deadman, "Images of Sodomy, Incest and Rape: Handel's Flutist and William Hogarth's 'Marriage A-La-Mode'."
- Susan Lee, "Queer Subjectivity in Schubert's 'Winterreise'."
- Kathleen McGuire, "Requiem in Memory of All Those Who Have Died of AIDS and Other AIDS-Related Works: Will They Survive?"
- Dana Reason, "The New Vocal Utterance: The Music of Meredith Monk."
- Kailan Rubinoff and Tamara Schwartzentuber, "Exploring the 'Girl Zone': Construction of Feminist Identity in the Music of Tori Amos."
- Keynote speaker: Elizabeth Wood, "Speed, Attitude, Invention, Spin: Riding New Millenium Musicology."

Suzanne Cusick, co-chair

Chip Whitesell, co-chair

Harris, Ellen T. "Twentieth-Century Farinelli." *Musical Quarterly* 81/2 (Summer 1997): 180-189.

Stephen McClatchie, co-editor

Ivry, Benjamin. *Francis Poulenc*. 20th-Century Composers. London: Phaidon, 1996.

Gillian Rodger, co-editor

Kay, Jackie. *Bessie Smith*. Bath, England: Absolute Press, 1997.

Larner, Gerald. *Maurice Ravel*. 20th-Century Composers. London: Phaidon, 1996.

Judith Peraino, membership secretary

McKay, Elizabeth Norman. *Franz Schubert: A Biography*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

Noble, Yvonne. "Castrati, Balzac and Barthes/Z." *Comparative Drama* 31/1 (Spring 1997): 28-41.

J. Michele Edwards, bibliographer

Oliver, Michael. *Benjamin Britten*. 20th-Century Composers. London: Phaidon, 1996.

Secrest, Meryle. *Stephen Sondheim: A Life*. New York: Knopf, 1998.

Ivan Raykoff, member-at-large

Szulc, Tad. *Chopin in Paris: the Life and Times of a Great Composer*. New York: Scribner, 1998. [Describes Chopin as 'asexual' and quickly stamps upon any indications of his homosexuality.]

Wolf, Stacey. "The Queer Pleasures of Mary Martin and Broadway: the Sound of Music as a Lesbian Musical." *Modern Drama*, no. 39 (Spring 1996): 51-63.

J. Peter Burkholder, member-at-large

[J. Michele Edwards]

Kelley Harness, member-at-large

Nadine Hubbs, member-at-large

in future issues

We give up trying to predict. It'll be a surprise to all of us. As always, however, we welcome your contributions and suggestions!