



CAROLYN ENGER
**AMERICAN
ETHOS**



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CAROLYN ENGER, PIANO

- John Corigliano
1. **An Anniversary for Lenny** 2:02
- Leonard Bernstein
Thirteen Anniversaries
2. No. 1, For Shirley Gabis Rhoads Perle 1:20
3. No. 2, In Memoriam: William Kapell 0:30
4. No. 3, For Stephen Sondheim 1:14
5. No. 4, For Craig Urquhart 1:10
6. No. 5, For Leo Smit 0:35
7. No. 6, For My Daughter, Nina 2:42
8. No. 7, In Memoriam: Helen Coates 2:16
9. No. 8, In Memoriam: Goddard Lieberson 1:16
10. No. 9, For Jessica Fleischmann 1:55
11. No. 10, In Memoriam: Constance Hope 2:44
12. No. 11, For Felicia, On Our 28th Birthday (& her 52nd) 1:23
13. No. 12, For Aaron Stern 2:46
14. No. 13, In Memoriam: Ellen Goetz 2:05
- Craig Urquhart
15. **The Awakening** 2:18
16. **Adieu** 5:39
- William Grant Still
Seven Traceries
17. I. Cloud Cradles 3:34
18. II. Mystic Pool 3:49
19. V. Woven Silver 1:49
20. VI. Wailing Dawn 5:28

JJ Hollingsworth		
Under the Blue Dome		
21.	V. The Vastland	4:57
Ned Rorem		
Recalling		
22.	II. The Wind Remains (Remembering Paul Bowles)	2:33
Soundpoints		
23.	I. Looking Forward	2:57
24.	III. Short Bridge	0:51
25.	V. Looking Back	2:17
Daron Hagen		
Five Nocturnes		
26.	No. 5, Gwen Leone Hagen, in memoriam	2:13
Aaron Copland		
Our Town, Three Piano Excerpts from the Film Score		
27.	I. Story of Our Town	2:27
28.	II. Conversations at the Soda Fountain	2:16
29.	III. The Resting-place on the Hill	3:33
Margaret Ruthven Lang		
30.	Twilight	4:28
Florence Price		
31.	Adoration	3:15

Total playing time 78:53

WHAT DEFINES A SINGULAR AMERICAN ETHOS?

Carolyn Enger is an artist unafraid of pondering how cultural pursuits, civic duties, and ethical concerns come together. For evidence, look to her last recording: *Resonating Earth*, an artistic response to the contemporary climate crisis. If the notion behind Enger's newest recording, *American Ethos*, is harder to pin down, that's only because the idea is so personal and open to interpretation.

Ethos, one of Aristotle's three modes of rhetorical persuasion, is defined as "the distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature, or guiding beliefs of a person, group, or institution." But *distinguishing* according to who? In a day when divisions among individuals, parties, and nationalities are sharply drawn, what character, sentiment, or guiding belief binds us? And when American composition encompasses so many different stylistic -isms, what music represents common cause?

Convention holds that three factors contribute to ethos: authority, trustworthiness, and expertise. Seeking equivalents in the musical world, one might venture to suggest qualities like craft, communicativeness, and continuity— notions fundamental to the journey Enger invites us to take with her on *American Ethos*.

"I wanted to have a broad feeling of Americana," Enger explains. "Voices that have been overlooked over the years then come to light, because they influenced voices that we're very familiar with."

For Enger, the journey begins with **Ned Rorem (1923–2022)**, whose music she has championed in concert and on a widely admired 2013 album. "He studied with Margaret Bonds, who studied with **Florence Price (1887–1953)**," Enger points out. "And Florence Price was companionable with **William Grant Still (1895–1978)** at the Eastman School of Music." Still, regarded as the "Dean of Afro-American Composers," and Price, whose music has enjoyed a widespread recent resurgence, even attended the same Little Rock elementary school just a few years apart.

Rorem, widely hailed as America's greatest purveyor of the art-song tradition, is represented here with three instrumental works. "Since non-vocal music cannot be proved to have literary meaning, but since my nature is oral as well as aural, I like to adorn my abstract work with concrete titles," Rorem wrote of his 2003 triptych *Recalling*.

The second part, “The Wind Remains,” is a gentle homage to Paul Bowles, a fellow composer better known for his 1949 novel, *The Sheltering Sky*. Rorem’s contemplative piece quotes a descending minor third motif Bowles had used in a 1942 musical-theater work of the same title, based on Federico García Lorca’s *Así que pasen cinco años* (“Once Five Years Pass”). Rorem composed *Soundpoints*, a set of five brief vignettes, for a Naumburg Foundation commission in 2002. Enger offers three selections, each an instance of distilled emotion encased in a crystalline sliver of time.

Price – who composed over 300 works, including symphonies, concertos, art songs, and chamber music – is represented here by *Adoration*. Originally written in 1951 as an organ piece for liturgical use, the songful ballad evokes the robust sacred-music tradition that trained and influenced many American composers.

Working in a more complex mode in *Seven Traceries: A Suite for Solo Piano* (1940), Still also evokes the divine. According to his daughter, Judith Anne Still, the seven pieces (of which Enger plays four) are musical portraits of God as reflected in nature. “In clouds, in pools, and in the rising sun,” she writes, “God is portrayed as a nurturer, as a teacher, as a humorist, as a stern commander, as a dazzling beauty, as an enthroned glory, and as a lighthearted onlooker.”

Daron Hagen (b. 1961) was Rorem’s first student, and like his teacher is most widely admired for his consistently fine, imaginative vocal music, including 13 operas and more than 250 songs. But Hagen, like Rorem, also has a gift for creating instrumental works that can evoke characters, situations, and stories even without voices and words.

That knack is evident in *Five Nocturnes* (2021), brief pieces that together amount to autobiography. “Arranged in the form of a nocturnal suite, together the *Five Nocturnes* for piano tell the story of a family settling down for the night in a sprawling old Victorian somewhere in Dutchess County, New York,” Hagen writes in a composer’s note. The family is Hagen’s: his late brother, wife, two sons and, in the *Fifth Nocturne*, his mother.

Beyond providing a lineage of teachers and pupils, Rorem is a natural bridge to two celebrated friends and peers, **Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990)** and **Aaron Copland (1900–1990)**. For any American involved with concert music at the heart of the 20th century, these two loom large: Bernstein the debonair maestro whose music echoed big city bustle and swing, and Copland, whose orchestral music became the sound of this nation’s open skies, broad prairies, and mythic heroes of history and folklore.

That Bernstein should be included in a project devoted to describing an American ethos in music seems inevitable. No one has expressed the social principles and cultural power of music more potently than the artist who, in the aftermath of President John F. Kennedy's assassination, proclaimed:

This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.

Those words have been repeated in the aftermath of so many tragedies now that their efficacy might seem diminished. But their intent is explicitly ethical: Bernstein held music up not only as a healing balm, but also – through its aspects of creativity, community, and collaboration – as the antithesis of an urge toward violence and vengeance.

In contrast to his popular orchestral works, Bernstein's chamber and solo music demonstrated a more private, intimate side of this flamboyant public figure. He wrote *Thirteen Anniversaries* between 1964 and 1988, extending a practice he'd begun with *Seven Anniversaries* (1943), *Four Anniversaries* (1948) and *Five Anniversaries* (1949–51). By turns tender and whimsical, the pieces celebrate 13 people who played significant roles in his life—family members, friends, and colleagues.

One of those dedicatees, **Craig Urquhart (b. 1953)**, had previously honored Bernstein in the same manner—and Bernstein provided the icing on the cake, as it were. Recalls Urquhart:

In August 1986, having served as Leonard Bernstein's assistant since the start of the year, I wanted to honor the Maestro's birthday on August 25th. Inspired by his own *Anniversaries*, I composed a short piano piece as a gift. As always, LB was deeply appreciative. My own birthday followed on September 3rd, and on September 6th, he returned the gesture with a belated gift: "Birthday Bar 6." These few bars of music were intended to be inserted directly into the piece I had written for him. Through this exchange, the work became a composition we truly shared together.

A successful, prolific composer in his own right, Urquhart is represented here by that collaborative birthday offering, *The Awakening*, along with *Adieu*, a pensive meditation composed in the wake of the global pandemic and political upheavals of 2020.

Much as *Thirteen Anniversaries* reveals a more personal Bernstein, *An Anniversary for Lenny*, by **John Corigliano (b. 1938)**, offers a similarly intimate aspect of a composer whose best-

known works tend toward the titanic and fantastical. The son and namesake of the New York Philharmonic's concertmaster during Bernstein's tenure as music director, Corigliano literally grew up with the great maestro, and composed his affectionate remembrance for a Bernstein centennial celebration in 2016.

That the music of Copland, a Jewish Brooklynite, should be indelibly linked to western skies and rolling plains is among the marvelous paradoxes of art made in an age of commerce, recordings, and national broadcasts. Copland's signature sound can also conjure a wistful Americana of everywhere and everywhen, as in the music he composed for a 1940 film version of Thornton Wilder's 1938 play *Our Town*.

"For the film version, they were counting on the music to translate the transcendental aspects of the story," Copland recalled. "I tried for clean and clear sounds and in general used straight-forward harmonies and rhythms that would project the serenity and sense of security of the story." Those qualities adhere in a piano arrangement of the 10-minute orchestral suite he dedicated to Bernstein.

Two more composers help to round out Enger's vision of a comprehensive, inclusive American ethos, platforming and celebrating marginalized perspectives. "The Vastland" is one section of *Under the Blue Dome* (1984), a set of six vignettes in which **J.J. Hollingsworth (b. 1956)**, a San Francisco-based composer of Native American descent, conjures the Colorado plains of her childhood—a rare instance of musical impressions reflecting lived experience. And "Twilight" by **Margaret Ruthven Lang (1867–1972)** – historically distinguished as the first woman composer to have a work performed by a major American orchestra in 1893, but who ended her own artistic career in 1919 – reminds us that even individuals of privileged status were denied opportunities because of societal strictures imposed by gender roles.

What emerges in this collection of disparate yet interconnected lives and works is a patchwork quilt of individual voices, perspectives, and aspirations, woven together to form a more perfect union stronger than its parts. The music they made, informed by shared stories and songs, brings to life the sky, stone, sinew, steel, and sentiment that make up this nation—an American ethos, expressed in sound.

Steve Smith is a writer and editor based in New York City. He has written about music for The New York Times and The New Yorker, and served as an editor for NPR, The Boston Globe, and Time Out New York.

CAROLYN ENGER, PIANO

Internationally celebrated American pianist Carolyn Enger has gained critical acclaim for her exquisite lyrical playing and her deeply felt interpretations. In addition to an active performance schedule on two continents, Ms. Enger has enjoyed remarkable success as a recording artist: *The New York Times* selected her Naxos recording of intimate Ned Rorem miniatures, *Piano Album I & Six Friends*, as one of the newspaper's "Best In Classical Recordings", writing "Among the 90th birthday tributes this year to the essential American composer Ned Rorem, this recording especially stands out," while *Gramophone* declared, "Enger raises the miniatures to a higher level." Recently the recording was "Album of the Week" on Sirius XM's *Symphony Hall* and was featured on their program *Living American*. Her latest recording *Resonating Earth* was released in September 2024 to glowing praise: "a thoughtful programme...enthralling" (Nigel Simone, *International Piano*), "lovingly performed...a beautiful, meaningful recital" (Steve Smith, *Night After Night*), "sensitively performed and intelligently curated" (Frances Wilson, *Interlude*), and has been streamed over 500,000 times on Apple Music.

Ms. Enger's touring opportunities have included venues throughout the United States and beyond, with recent highlights including the Virginia Holocaust Museum, Holocaust Museum Houston, Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, Philadelphia Holocaust Remembrance Foundation, Stockton University, Baruch College, Kean University, Bruce Museum, Noontime Concerts in San Francisco, Boston Public Library, the National Gallery in Oslo, the White Stork Synagogue in Wrocław, Poland; the Bach-Festival in Arnstadt, Germany; the Portuguese Synagogue's Candlelight Concert series in Amsterdam; concerts in Erfurt, Potsdam, and Gotha, Germany; and recitals in the greater New York area. Past performance highlights include the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany, United States Military Academy West Point, the Sheen Center for Thought & Culture, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, The National Gallery of Art in D.C. and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in NYC. Deepening her commitment to multimedia collaborations, Ms. Enger was part of renowned illustrator and writer Maira Kalman's exhibit *Maira Kalman Selects* at the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum in New York, and her recording of Arvo Pärt's music was featured in conceptual artist Mischa Kuball's sound and light exhibit *res.o.nant* at the Jewish Museum Berlin.

Carolyn's article *The Mischlinge Exposé: Stories of Assimilation and Conversion* was recently published in the book, *Women Defying Hitler: Rescue and Resistance Under the Nazis*, published by Bloomsbury Academic. Ms. Enger is dedicated to bringing music to diverse audiences in accessible civic spaces. One of her performances at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center is featured in Frederick Wiseman's acclaimed documentary *Ex Libris*, which premiered on PBS. Carolyn enjoyed her residency, showcasing her immersive film/sound project *Resonating Earth*, with Musica Sierra and the public school children in the Sierra Valley, CA. One presenter shared that her performance left audiences "in complete awe of her passion, skill and genuine warmth."

Ms. Enger studied at the Manhattan School of Music and is a Steinway Performing and Recording Artist.



Carolyn Enger © J. Henry Fair



Carolyn Enger recording at Oktaven Audio 2025



Also available from Carolyn Enger on Métier

Resonating Earth

“Enger’s project could have been titled *Das Lied von der Erde* had Mahler not beat her to it 115 years ago. She’s received deserved acclaim for her playing and the sincerity with which her deeply felt interpretations are presented, and certainly the reputation she’s built as a performer and recording artist is significantly enhanced by *Resonating Earth*.” —Ron Schepper, *Textura*

MEX 77128

CD | Digital | Streaming

Tracks 2-14, 21, 26-29

Recorded at Myers Recording Studio, Manhattan School of Music, January 24 & March 11, 2022

Engineered by Daniel Rorke

Mastered at Overtone Audio, Cambridge MA

Additional mastering by Gene Gaudette, Urlicht AudioVisual

Tracks 1, 15-20, 22-25, 30-31

Recorded at Oktaven Audio, October 10, 2025

Engineered by Ryan Streber

Produced & Mastered by Gene Gaudette, Urlicht AudioVisual

Publishers:

Leonard Bernstein: Thirteen Anniversaries - Boosey & Hawkes

Craig Urquhart: Adieu, The Awakening - Craig Urquhart

William Grant Still: Seven Traceries - William Grant Still Music

JJ Hollingsworth: Under the Blue Dome - Forte House Publishing

Ned Rorem: Recalling, Soundpoints - Boosey & Hawkes

Daron Hagen: Five Nocturnes - Peermusic Classical

Aaron Copland: Our Town - Boosey & Hawkes

Margaret Ruthven Lang: Twilight - Public Domain

Florence Price: Adoration - G Schirmer Inc

Dedicated to my parents, Elaine and Horace Enger, in loving memory, with deepest gratitude for living the best lives that America can be, to my loving husband Marc Mishaan, and to Dr. Marc Silverman, for his inspired support and guidance.

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