



Ray's Birthday Suit

a premiere by

David Del Tredici

Wednesday, October 11, 2023; 7PM



Marc Peloquin
piano



Manhattan String Quartet
Curtis Macomber, violin; Anna Lim, violin
Marka Gustavsson, viola; Chris Finckel, cello



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Late in the Game (2016).....David Del Tredici (b. 1937)

Farewell, R.W.

Gloss

Bittersweet

Monk

Piano Quintet - *Ray's Birthday Suit* (2023).....Del Tredici

(World Premiere)

Radiant Child

Yale Fugue

Lawyer Etude

Domesticated/Seduced

Love Duet

A Grand Occasion

LATE IN THE GAME

Written between 2009 and 2012, then revised in 2015, these four disparate piano pieces make up *Late in the Game*, the title being a reference to the composer's great age. Curiously, once composed, the traditional silent spaces between pieces began to erode and fill with notes. Ultimately, *Farewell, R.W.* and *Gloss* (1 and 2) are connected--with an ironic, mood-changing quote from Beethoven's Ode to Joy. *Gloss* and *Bittersweet* (2 and 3) are also linked. *Monk*, the final piece, is the only one to stand alone. All these elisions fuse the four movements together, allowing the ear to hear a single arc.

A word about each:

Farewell, R.W. is my solo piano arrangement of the third movement of *Facts of Life*, a four-movement work for solo guitar commissioned and premiered by David Leisner in 2010. I quote from my program note written for the premiere: "Movement 3, *Farewell, R.W.* is the slow movement and 'soul' of the work. Tranquil, even ecstatic, it was inspired one afternoon by painful feelings surrounding a recent relationship break up."

Gloss. One weekend I invited my friend Drew Paralic to visit. He arrived with a piano piece he had just composed and promptly played it. It haunted me. The next morning, I awoke with a weird feeling: I wanted to "do something" to that piece. After Drew left, I began to rewrite the piece in my own image-- extending phrases, re-harmonizing chords, and dramatizing structure. I was terrified to show it to Drew, thinking he would be offended by all my tampering. But he was pleased, even flattered, and said it was like two views of the same source. *Gloss* moves at a moderate tempo and has a definite jazzy quality-- in line with Drew's musical specialty.

Bittersweet (In Memoriam John Dare) John Dare was my first love. We traveled for three days by train from California to New York City, living on 52 tuna fish sandwiches John had made. But it was love that sustained us-- at age 22, you can do that. Not bittersweet then but certainly now--50 years later-- the piece seesaws with a steady, almost Bach-like tread between chromatic progressions and spikily Baroque cadences. Only towards the end does an unalloyed Romanticism force its way forward, melting away all rhythmic rigidity. *Monk* (In Memoriam Suzanne Nahalka) I told Suzanne some months before she died (of pancreatic cancer in 2011) that I would write her a memorial piece containing the musical letters of her name. Thus *Monk*. Her name yields the letters/notes AEAAA, so my piece begins with these notes as a steady, ever-pulsating accompaniment figure. The name *Monk* refers not to the famous jazz pianist but to the lead character in a 10-year-old T.V. detective series that Suzanne and I watched (in reruns) almost daily via telephone; he became, in those last months, our bond. *Monk* (the piano piece) is not mournful but - by turns Romantic, passionate, and serene-- a reflection of Suzanne's lively personality.

RAY'S BIRTHDAY SUIT

was originally written in celebration of my (then) husband Ray Warman's 60th birthday. I took the six decades of his life and wrote a piece to characterize each. Ray did not like to say he was turning 60. Instead, he chose to say he was turning 50/10 - the number that whimsically comes right after 59. "It sounds younger," he'd say. Before each piece, I wrote a descriptive sentence in the score, which I will reproduce here.

10 Radiant Child

“Ray, a beautiful child, is taught to embrace the Catholic Church.”

A quietly contrapuntal texture introduces the Ray theme. Halfway through, woven into the texture, appears the hymn, “Tantum Ergo.”

10/10 Yale Fugue

“Ray, the Yale man, enters a new world that will forever change his life.”

The subject of this fugue is the opening phrase of “Bright College Years,” a Yale song. Two other Yale tunes appear in the fugue. At the end, “Bright College Years” is heard in complete form (albeit highly embellished).

20/10 Lawyer Etude

“Ray, the hot, hardworking young lawyer takes on Gotham City.”

Fast and furious, the etude epitomizes Ray’s struggle to make it as a lawyer in the “big time.”

30/10 Domesticated/Seduced

“Ray, married and domesticated hears a new and seductive call.....(WHACK!)”

After 20 years of marriage and two kids, Ray wanted to experiment with submission to female dominatrices. They subjected him to exotic torture. After two years of this, Ray felt “broken open” and realized that he was gay. The piece is in two parts. A gentle, gracious movement comes first, suggesting stability and conformity. “Salome’s Dance” suddenly appears to shake things up. At the end, there is the unmistakable crack of a whip.

40/10 Love Duet

“Ray Meets David, his first male lover.”

This duet combines David’s theme (from the composer’s work “Final Alice”) with Ray’s theme. The mood is ecstatic, though the piece does end ominously and tentatively.

50/10 A Grand Occasion

“The great birthday finally arrives. There is a joyful noise heard throughout the land.”

This piece is majestic and much longer and more developed than any preceding movement. It contains another fugue and much tumultuous movement. There is even a romantic rendering of Ray’s theme late in the piece. The music revs up once more for the actual ending – triumphantly combining David’s and Ray’s themes with the end of Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy.”

– **David Del Tredici**

About the composer:

With the appearance in 1976 of *Final Alice*, **David Del Tredici’s** hour-long setting of Lewis Carroll for high soprano and large orchestra, a new movement in music, Neo-Romanticism, was born. Not only did Del Tredici forge for himself a fresh compositional path, but at the same time, he gave hope to a generation of young composers seeking a new way of composing.

“Del Tredici,” said Aaron Copland, “is that rare find among composers—a creator with a truly original gift. I venture to say that his music is certain to make a lasting impression on the American musical scene. I know of no other composer of his generation who composes music of greater freshness and daring, or with more personality.” *Final Alice* is one of several *Alice in Wonderland* settings written over 25 years (1968–1995). *Final Alice* was followed by *In Memory of a Summer Day*, awarded the 1980 Pulitzer Prize in Music. Del Tredici’s early works, in a more dissonant idiom, also focused obsessively on a single author, James Joyce: *Six Songs on Texts of James Joyce*, *I Hear an Army*, *Night Conjure-Verse* and the tour de force for soprano and 16 instruments, *Syzygy*.

In Del Tredici’s Post-Alice world, he has taken a startlingly different tack—creating a body of music that celebrates his gay sexuality. Among these are *Gay Life* (poetry of Ginsberg, Monette, and Gunn; commissioned by Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony), *Love Addiction* (a baritone/piano song cycle to poetry of John Kelly commissioned in honor of the composer’s 70th birthday), and *Wondrous the Merge* (a melodrama for baritone and string quartet to the poetry of James Broughton). The recent *Bullycide* for piano and string sextet is a composition dealing with gay teen suicide due to bullying.

His recent works include two string quartets (commissioned by the Da Ponte and Orion string quartets), *Magyar Madness*, and *Grand Trio*. And for solo piano, reflecting Del Tredici’s musical beginnings as a piano prodigy, *Mandango*, *Gotham Glory*, *Three Gymnopedies*, and *S/M Ballade*. Boosey & Hawkes has published two volumes of his works for solo piano.

While Composer-In-Residence with the New York Philharmonic in the 1990s, Leonard Bernstein recorded his orchestral piece *Tattoo*, and Zubin Mehta recorded both *Haddocks’ Eyes* and *Steps*, a work written during his tenure at the Philharmonic.

Paul Revere's Ride for soprano, chorus, and orchestra was nominated for the 49th annual Grammy Awards as the Best New Classical Composition and issued on a Teldec CD. *Rip Van Winkle* is an adaptation of the iconic Longfellow story for narrator and orchestra and was premiered by Broadway superstar Brian Stokes Mitchell. David Del Tredici's works have been recorded on over a dozen labels. These include Volume 1 of the Complete Piano Works performed by Marc Peloquin (Naxos), *Facts of Life* Del Tredici's monster guitar work for David Leisner (Azica), *A Field Manual* and *Magyar Madness (E-1 and Naxos)*, and an all-Del Tredici CD on Deutsche Grammophon performed by Oliver Knussen and the Netherlands' ASKO Ensemble. Del Tredici has been on the faculties of Harvard and Boston Universities, and for more than 25 years, Distinguished Professor of Music at The City College of New York. He lives in Manhattan's West Village.

About the performers:

An adventurous and inquisitive musician, pianist **Marc Peloquin** excels at making connections with his audience as a performer and advocate of the music of our time. His performances have been described by The New York Times as "refreshing and alive," and Time Out New York declared Marc an "innovative" artist. Some of the most significant composers of our time have written works for Marc, including Samuel Adler, David Del Tredici, Tobias Picker, and Ned Rorem. He has recorded on the C.R.I., Naxos, Urtext, and Albany labels. Marc began his Keyed Up Music Project series in New York City in 2010 to foster his relationships with collaborators and composers. He brings vibrant living composers directly in touch with his listeners, creating programs that display his knack for making modern music accessible and entertaining. Marc Peloquin has had a longstanding piano partnership with Roberto Hidalgo as the Split Second Piano Duo, an ensemble that presents and

records programs that highlight the connection of music from Mexico and the United States. Hailed by The New York Times as "gifted musically curious pianists, the performances were first-rate," the duo has been heard in Mexico City at the Palacio des Bellas Artes as well as performing with the Xalapa Symphony in the Concerto for Two Pianos by Francis Poulenc.

Marc Peloquin also collaborates with the Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer/pianist David Del Tredici, performing, editing, and recording his piano music. A Gramophone review of the first disc, Gotham Glory, stated: "A longtime Del Tredici champion and associate, Peloquin imbues these performances with idiomatic aplomb and a powerful yet flexible technique." Marc completed the four-disc piano works released on the Albany Records label in June 2023. Marc is the editor of Del Tredici's Piano Album III and the piano quintet Ray's Birthday Suit, both for Boosey and Hawkes.

Hailed by the *Boston Globe* as "a national treasure," the **Manhattan String Quartet** is celebrating its 51st season. Well-known for their performances of 20th-century "classics," the Manhattan Quartet has established a significant international reputation with regular concert appearances throughout North America, Europe, Latin America, and Asia. After a series of concerts in Moscow and Leningrad in the fall of 1985, the Quartet became the first American classical ensemble to give a full tour of the Soviet Union under that era's new cultural agreement. An equally successful tour followed their first sold-out series of performances in 1986 and 1989. In 2005, the Quartet made its first tour of Asia and played to sold-out houses in Nagoya and Tokyo, Japan. Notable among its many recordings is the complete cycle of 15 Shostakovich string quartets that TIME Magazine called "One of the most important musical events of 1991."

Later this season at the Italian Academy:

West and East: Beethoven to Zhou Long with the Cassatt Quartet and pianist Magdalena Baczewska
Thursday, November 30, 2023 at 7 PM