



Lou Harrison (American Composers)

Leta E. Miller, Fredric Lieberman

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Music's inclusivity--its potential to unite cultures, disciplines, and individuals--defined the life and career of Lou Harrison (1917-2003). Beyond studying with leading composers of the avant-garde such as Henry Cowell and Arnold Schoenberg, conducting Charles Ives's Pulitzer Prize-winning Third Symphony, and staging high-profile percussion concerts with John Cage, Harrison has achieved fame for his distinctive blending of cultures--from the Chinese opera, Indonesian gamelan, and the music of Native Americans to modernist dissonant counterpoint. Miller and Lieberman also pull readers into Harrison's rich world of cross-fertilization through an exploration of his outspoken stance on pacifism, gay rights, ecology, and respect for minorities--all of which directly impacted his musical works. Though Harrison was sometimes accused by contemporaries of "cultural appropriation," Miller and Lieberman's brisk study makes it clear why he is now lauded as an imaginative pioneer for his integration of Asian and Western musics, as well as for his work in the development of the percussion ensemble, his use of found and invented instruments, and his explorations of alternative tuning systems. Harrison's compositions are examined in detail through reference to an accompanying CD of representative recordings.

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