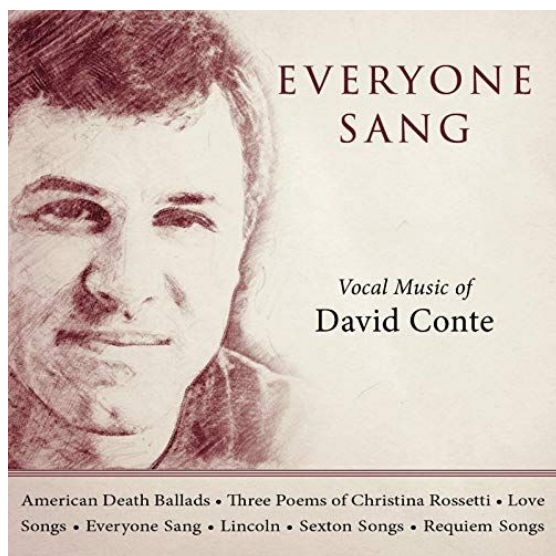


CD Review —  
*Everybody Sang:*  
Vocal Music of David Conte

by Mike Telin



While many in the Cleveland area may be familiar with the choral works of Lakewood native David Conte — his music is regularly performed by ensembles such as Good Company — his recent CD, *Everyone Sang*, offers another side of his vocal-writing talents. Released in August on the Arsis label, this two-disc set comprises engaging works for solo voice and piano, as well as voice and instrumental ensembles.

Conte, who chairs the composition department at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, opens the album with four American Death Ballads. Written for tenor Brian Thorsett, the songs are inspired by Copland's *Old American Songs*. Thorsett brings a warm tone, thoughtful phrasing, and perfect diction to *Wicked Polly*, *The Unquiet Grave*, *The Dying Californian*, and *Captain Kid*. Pianist John Churchill provides colorful support throughout.

Mezzo-soprano Kindra Scharich and pianist Kevin Korth deliver a pensive interpretation of *Three Poems by Christina Rossetti*. The third poem, "A Hope Carol," is especially beautiful. Thorsett and Churchill are joined by cellist Emil Miland for *Love Songs*, of which the third, "The Moment," is haunting. Disc one concludes with the title piece. Bass Matt Boehler, who is joined by Korth, sings with a richly hued voice during "Homecoming." Boehler is powerful in his delivery of the fourth song, "Everybody Sang," while Korth plays his technically challenging lines with ease.

Disc two is devoted to works for larger forces, beginning with *Lincoln* for baritone, English horn, trumpet, and string orchestra. Here Conte sets a text by John Stirling Walker, who uses quotes from Ralph Waldo Emerson's eulogy for Lincoln. The vocalist, A. J. Glueckert, brings a reflective quality to the words. His higher range is particularly impressive. The instrumental soloists and the San Francisco Conservatory String Orchestra, under the direction of Marika Kuzma, contribute well-shaped phrases and tight ensemble to this Coplandesque work.

Soprano Marnie Breckenridge shines during the theatrical *Sexton Songs*. Her voice is flexible and full-bodied as she moves between lyrical lines and semi-spoken words in "Rowing." She has a sassy swagger in "Her Kind." In the fifth song, "Us," she is at her most dramatic. Nicole Paiement and the SFCM New Music Ensemble deliver polished performances from beginning to end.

*Everyone Sang* concludes with the emotionally dramatic *Requiem Songs* for soprano, violin, harp, and string orchestra. Ann Moss's long, fluid lines are exquisite in "Exaudi." She easily negotiates the musical leaps and mood changes in "Dies Irae," and gives a sense of hope to "In Paradisum." Whether the music is lyrical or virtuosic, violinist Kay Stern is outstanding, along with harpist Douglas Rioth and the SFCM String Orchestra, conducted by Eric Dudley. *Requiem Songs* brings the album to a sublime conclusion.

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