

# Musical

## Bruce Hainley

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1. Dubbed “The Maverick Organist” by *The New York Times*, C. C. is known for his intensely personal, often flamboyant, performances. A child prodigy, he performed as a boy soprano in venues such as Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center and with pop star Joe Jackson on his 1994 album *Night Music*. His organ technique is widely regarded as unmatched, and his readings of Chopin’s *Études*, Op. 10, question the limits of organ technique, particularly when he plays Chopin’s relentless chromatic runs only by his feet.

His repertoire spans the organ and piano literatures, featuring original compositions, films scores (especially from Japanese animé), and improvisations influenced by folk songs, jazz, disco and pop. (Is there nothing his repertoire can’t accommodate?) From his use of color to the concert clothes and organ shoes he designs (prompting *Women’s Wear Daily* to nickname him the “organist/runway model”), his approach to the organ can only be described as iconoclastic.

2. Richard Rogers Jr., a Staten Island nurse, might never have been caught if not for the green plastic trash bags—some dumped years ago off Route 72 in South Jersey, containing the head of a man, another his torso and severed arms, his legs in a third; other bags surfacing near a dirt road an hour and a half east of Philadelphia filled with the body parts of another man, respectively, Thomas Mulcahy, fifty-seven, identified by prosecutors as a bisexual computer salesman, and Anthony Marrero, forty-four, identified as a male prostitute—and the faint fingerprints they held. His crimes were meticulous, unobserved affairs hatched in the boozy haze of New York’s upscale gay bars. Even now, after more than a decade of work, investigators say Mr. Rogers’s motives remain a mystery.

The Townhouse Bar, on East 58<sup>th</sup> Street, between Second and Third Avenues, was one of Mr. Rogers’s favorite haunts during the early 1990’s. Little at the bar has changed over the years, according to employees, and last Saturday night well-dressed regulars sipped cocktails among paisley-print armchairs and bouquets of fresh lilies.

Rick Unterburg, the house piano player since 1989, said that Mr. Rogers used to show up on slow nights like Sundays. He described the convicted killer as nearly forgettable, of medium height and medium build, with a preference for warm sweaters and cold Scotch.

“He was dull,” Mr. Unterburg, forty-seven, said in an interview on Saturday just before his first set. “Just bland. The only reason I remember him is because he hung out at the piano.”

## Cliffs Notes to “Musical”

1. What kind of organ is being played? Is it different from the one implied? How?
2. Is there a connection between flamboyance and child prodigiousness?
3. By prodigiousness, does the author mean to suggest prodigality?
4. Discuss the virgule in “organist/runway model.”
5. The faint fingerprints.
6. The unobserved affairs.
7. The boozy haze.
8. The concept of “favorite haunt.”
9. The implication of “upscale.”
10. The device needed to take the temperature of a “preference for warm sweaters and cold Scotch.”
11. Dullness. Blandness.
12. Footsie?