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# CONSTANT LAMBERT THE RIO GRANDE

HAMILTON HARTY, PIANO  
ST. MICHAEL'S SINGERS  
(A. W. WHITEHEAD, CONTRALTO SOLOIST)  
THE HALLÉ ORCHESTRA  
CONDUCTED BY CONSTANT LAMBERT

**1** LAMBERT - The Rio Grande (13:41)

PRISTINE  
AUDIO  
XLR

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# CONSTANT LAMBERT



**THE RIO GRANDE**  
HAMILTON HARTY, PIANO ST. MICHAEL'S SINGERS  
THE HALLÉ ORCHESTRA, CONSTANT LAMBERT, 1930

**Obert-Thorn**

PRISTINE  
AUDIO

Recorded January 11, 1930 in Central Hall, Westminster  
First issued on UK Columbia 78s L2373-4  
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Cover artwork based on a photograph of Constant Lambert  
**Producer and restoration engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn**  
Total duration: 13:41 ©2008 Pristine Audio.

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# CONSTANT LAMBERT

## THE RIO GRANDE

**Leonard Constant Lambert (August 23, 1905 – August 21, 1951)** was a British composer and conductor.

Lambert was the son of Russian-born Australian painter George Lambert. Educated at Christ's Hospital and the Royal College of Music, Lambert was a prodigy, writing orchestral works from the age of 13, and at 20 received a commission to write a ballet for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (*Romeo and Juliet*).

For a few years he enjoyed a meteoric celebrity, including participating in a recording of William Walton's *Façade* with Edith Sitwell. Lambert's most famous composition is *The Rio Grande* for piano solo, chorus and orchestra. A recording survives with Hamilton Harty as the soloist and the Hallé Orchestra conducted by the composer. Lambert had a great interest in American Negro music, and once said that he would have ideally liked *The Rio Grande* to feature a black choir.

During the 1930s, his career as a conductor took off with his appointment with the Vic-Wells ballet (later the Royal Ballet), but his career as a composer stagnated. His major choral work *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (after the play of the same name by Thomas Nashe), one of his most emotionally dark works, proved unfashionable in the mood following the death of the King (George V), but Alan Frank hailed it at the time as Lambert's "finest work". Lambert himself considered he had failed as a composer, and completed only two major works in the remaining sixteen years of his life. Instead he concentrated on conducting, and appeared at Covent Garden and in BBC broadcasts, and accompanied the ballet in European and American tours.

The war took its toll of his vitality and creativity, and his health declined with the development of diabetes which remained untreated for years owing to his fear of doctors, stemming from childhood.

Lambert was famous in his day as a raconteur and, unusually for an Englishman, as an expert on many different arts, and on modern European culture. He was also one of the first "serious" composers to understand fully the importance of jazz and popular culture in the music of his time. This is illustrated by his book *Music Ho!* (1934), subtitled "a study of music in decline", which remains one of the wittiest, if highly opinionated, volumes of music criticism in the English language. He was at the centre of a brilliant literary and intellectual circle including Michael Ayrton, Sacheverell Sitwell and Anthony Powell, and despite Powell's denial, he is often said to be the prototype of the character Hugh Moreland in Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time*.

As a conductor he had an instinctive appreciation of Liszt, Chabrier, Waldteufel and romantic Russian composers, and made fine recordings of some of their works. However, it was only when his health was declining that his career had a chance to flourish with the development of the BBC Third Programme and the Philharmonia Orchestra, having struggled for many years to extract vital performances from second-rate ensembles.

Lambert was married twice. His first marriage was to Florence Kaye, and they had a son, Kit Lambert (born in 1935). He later married Isabel Nichols, an artist, in 1947. After Constant Lambert's death, Isabel married Alan Rawsthorne.

Lambert died on 21 August 1951, two days short of his forty-sixth birthday, of pneumonia and undiagnosed diabetes complicated by acute alcoholism, and was buried in Brompton Cemetery, London.

NOTES FROM WIKIPEDIA - FULL NOTES ON THIS RECORDING CAN BE FOUND AT [WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM](http://WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM)