

# CD HotList

## New Releases for Libraries

Art Hirahara

**Central Line**

Posi-Tone

PR8161

*Rick's Pick*

On his third album as a leader for the Posi-Tone label, pianist and composer Art Hirahara explores his Japanese heritage in a way he hasn't before: setting a traditional melody from Fukuoka (near where his mother grew up), ruminating on earthquake legends, pondering his ancestral lines. He also pays homage to Billy Strayhorn and to the redwood forests of Northern California, arranges a traditional Ghanaian tune, and performs a Brazilian composition by Chico Buarque — so this isn't exactly a concept album. What unite all of the tracks are Hirahara's uncommon gift for melodic elaboration and his ability to lead his group adroitly through complex arrangements in such a way as to make them sound straightforward and even intuitively obvious. I understand that it's fallacious to talk about pianists having a personal "tone," but I could swear that Hirahara makes his piano sparkle in a way that others don't. Highly recommended to all collections.

