



JOHN CARBON
Short Stories for
PIANO

Performed by
STEVEN GRAFF

TRACKLIST

SHORT STORIES

Piano Music by John Carbon played by Steven Graff

Short Stories (2013–18)

1	Heather Bells	02.15	14	Convocation	01.57
2	Pirate's Hornpipe	02.23	15	George Sand's Dream	07.33
3	Mouse Clock	01.21	16	Czerny's Id	01.22
4	Hunt in the Hollow	01.39	17	The Serpentine	02.02
5	Guadeloupe Calypso	01.21	18	Chocolate Velvet	02.06
6	Thorny Reminiscence	03.13	19	Spider's Reflection	04.36
7	Paean	02.00	20	Tea with Claude and Maurice	03.02
8	Quantum Hobgoblin	02.00	21	Monks in the Catacombs	02.58
9	Arctic Love Story	02.30	22	Simon Says	01.53
10	The Woodpecker's Joke	01.22	23	Momentum	02.07
11	Fallen Heroes	02.25	24	Dawn	03.34
12	Joplin's Tic	01.06			
13	Rhapsodic Overture	01.39	25	Icarus (1988)	12.54
				Total duration	71.20

PROGRAMME NOTE

SHORT STORIES

The 24 pieces contained in my *Short Stories* for piano were composed between 2013 and 2018. I had originally grouped the pieces into a collection titled *The Well-Blended Primer* (subsequently withdrawn). I substantially revised, in some cases reconceived, the entire collection in 2017–18. Because my original intention was to include pieces that exhibited pitch centricity around each of the 24 possible major and minor keys, the earlier title, a bow to J. S. Bach's two-volume *Das wohltemperierte Klavier*, seemed to fit.

As in Bach's work, some of the pieces in my collection exhibited a pronounced contrapuntal attitude. During the development of the work, I had planned to alternate prelude and fugue-like pieces, but the end result was more of a hybrid collection that could be thought of as being influenced by Bach, but even more so by Chopin's group of 24 one-of-each-key Preludes, and systematically key-centered contra-

puntal collections by Hindemith and Shostakovich. I was also influenced by shorter character pieces by composers such as Schumann, Debussy and Prokofiev that exhibit a more lyrical, narrative nature, to name only a few composers.

In *Short Stories*, my plan to alternate preludes and fugues, or at least to systematically vary the degree of contrapuntal density, isn't readily perceived. There is certainly enforced variety in pitch centricity, but this feature isn't arranged symmetrically, and there is a range of tonal, modal, chromatic and atonal languages explored in the collection. Stylistically, there are many influences to be heard here. In fact, some of the titles of the individual pieces refer to other piano composers (for example "Tea with Claude and Maurice", "Czerny's Id", "George Sand's Dream" and "Joplin's Tic"). The name of the present work, *Short Stories*, describes these modest narratives better than the original title, and the revised collection is thus less abstract than the 2013 version.

PROGRAMME NOTE

From a pianist's standpoint, I would venture to say, these reconceived pieces are more concerned with color, register and voicings particular to the instrument. Some of the more extensive revisions I made to the original pieces were stylistic ones involving changes in the harmonic language and articulation. In other cases, I fleshed out sketch-like miniatures into more substantially developed portraits, or conversely, I deleted what I thought might be considered to be extraneous material that obscured the abbreviated sketch-like nature of the narration.

ICARUS

Icarus, for piano solo, was composed in the summer of 1988 at the request of pianist William Koseluk. The title refers to the Greek myth about Daedalus, an inventor and builder of the labyrinth, and his son, Icarus, who were punished by King Minos of Crete by being placed in the labyrinth. So difficult was the labyrinth that not even its inventor could discover the way out. Daedalus, however, made two pairs of wings as a means of escape.

Before the flight, Daedalus warned his son not to fly too close to the sun, as the wax that held the wings together might melt and he would be killed. Icarus, however, was so thrilled by the joy of flight that he disobeyed his father and soared higher and higher, only to fall into the sea when the wax melted. The mood of the piece reflects the youthful enthusiasm and heroism of the flight of Daedalus and his son and evokes the romantic spirit of the "wanderer." The work is cast as a one-movement rondo lasting thirteen minutes and is intended as a brilliant showcase for the pianist, who at times might seem to be struggling against impossible odds.

In addition to premiere performances of *Icarus* in 1988 by William Koseluk, the work was broadcast in 1990 on the BBC by pianist Rolf Hind, and it was featured in a piano dedication concert by Jon Hendrickson at the Shepherd School of Music in 1993. Pianist Edith Orloff presented *Icarus* at the Santa Barbara Chamber Music Festival in 2004.

By John Carbon

BIOGRAPHIES

JOHN CARBON

Born in Chicago in 1951, John Carbon studied composition at Rice University and at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where his teachers were Thea Musgrave, Paul Cooper, and Peter Racine Fricker. Carbon's music continues to gain prominence due to a number of high-profile performances and recordings, and his output includes three full-length operas, *Marie Laveau*, *Benjamin*, and *Disappearing Act*, along with over 70 choral, orchestral, vocal, and chamber works. Carbon has a special flair for the virtuosity and drama needed for concertos, and has completed works in this genre for clarinet, violin, viola, piano, and double bass. Carbon's work has been performed in New York at Merkin Concert Hall, Carnegie Hall, and Avery Fisher and Alice Tully Halls at Lincoln Center, Boston's Symphony Hall, and Prague's Smetana Hall. Premieres of Carbon's works have been presented by many major ensembles, including the New York Chamber Symphony, the Prague Radio Symphony, and the Alaria Chamber Ensemble of New York. Carbon's music has been widely recorded, including releases



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on the MMC, Delos, Convivium, CGS, Zimbel, and Emeritus labels. Performers and ensembles who have recorded his music include clarinetist Richard Stoltzman, violinists Peter Zazofsky and Claire Chan, pianists Steven Graff and William Koseluk, double bassist Richard Frederickson, the Warsaw National Philharmonic, the New York Chamber Symphony, the Slovak Radio Symphony, the Prague Radio Symphony, the Concordia Chamber Ensemble, and Franklin & Marshall Opera Theater. From 1984 to 2020, Carbon was a member of the faculty of Franklin & Marshall College, where he was the Richard S. and Ann B. Barshinger Professor of Music (and upon his retirement was named Richard S. and Ann B. Barshinger Professor of Music, Emeritus). For more information visit: johncarbon.com

STEVEN GRAFF

Since his concerto debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, with whom he has appeared nine times, the American pianist Steven Graff has been the recipient of numerous distinguished awards and glowing critical praise. Graff was born in Chicago,



where he began his musical training. A string of scholarships led to studies at The Juilliard School where he received bachelor's and master's degrees as a Petschek scholarship awardee, and a Doctorate of Musical Arts from The Graduate School of CUNY.

Steven Graff is at home on stage, over the airwaves and in the classroom. His appearances on the Nickelodeon channel and the QE2 enlightened audiences with his interpretive performances, and tours of China, Norway, Japan, and in cities across the U.S. have thrilled music lovers everywhere. A sought-after recitalist and chamber musician, Graff has performed at Weill, Zankel and Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall, Lang Recital Hall and the Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College, Merkin and Alice Tully Halls in New York City, and his performances have been broadcast in Oslo and Honolulu, on New York radio stations WQXR and WNCN, and Chicago's WFMT. He has performed at the New York Philharmonic Education-sponsored chamber music concerts. He is a member of the Artemisia Trio, which performs regularly at the Takaezu Studio Concert Series. A champion of new music, Graff has premiered and

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recorded contemporary works, most recently on the Centaur, Capstone, Convivium and Zimbel labels. Having studied with Adele Marcus, Beveridge Webster and Herbert Stessin, and performed in master classes for Leon Fleisher, Menahem Pressler and Misha Dichter, Graff often leads his own master classes at colleges and universities. A frequent competition adjudicator, Graff has judged for The Steinway Piano Competition, The International Keyboard Institute and Festival's annual piano competition, France's Fontainebleau Festival, the Gina Bachauer Jr. Competition, and the Music Teachers' National Association. He spoke on "sustaining future audiences for classical music" at the Macaulay Honors College's biannual Topics and Tapas series.

In addition to teaching at Hunter College, Steven Graff has served on the faculty of The Macaulay Honors College and The Graduate Center of CUNY, and Special Music School. In fall 2020, he joined the faculty of the Petrie School of Music at Converse College in Spartanburg, South Carolina as a full-time professor of piano. Steven Graff is a Steinway Artist.



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ARTISTS

Composer

John Carbon

Pianist

Steven Graff

PRODUCTION

Project Coordinator and Producer

Carson Cooman

Editing and Mastering

Overtone Audio

Engineering

John Weston (Futura Productions)

Design

Mike Cooter

Executive Producer:

Adrian Green

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