

JOANNE PEARCE MARTIN

Barefoot

 YARLUNG RECORDS
BOB ATTIYEH, PRODUCER



photo: Gavin Martin

JOANNE PEARCE MARTIN: *Barefoot*

1	CHOPIN	Ballade No. 1 in G Minor, Opus 23	09:36
2-4	MOZART	Sonata No. 12 in F Major, KV 332	15:47
		Allegro	05:19
		Adagio	04:51
		Allegro assai	05:37
5	ADAMS	<i>China Gates</i>	05:45
6	CARLSON	<i>For those Silenced</i> (Adagio espressivo)	02:04
7	HOFMANN	<i>Berceuse</i> Opus 20, No. 5	04:06
8	KUPFERMAN	<i>Distances</i>	03:21
9	MENDELSSOHN	<i>Lieder ohne Worte</i> No. 1, (Andante con moto) Op 19, No. 1	04:06
10	MENDELSSOHN	<i>Spinnerlied</i> Opus 67, No. 4	01:52
11	MUCZYNSKI	Prelude No. 2, Opus 6	01:33
12	WOLFGANG	<i>Night Shift</i>	09:26
13	CHOPIN	Nocturne in Eb, Opus 9, No. 2	04:48
14	CHOPIN	Nocturne in Db, Opus 27, No. 2	06:01

Notes BY ORRIN HOWARD

When one hears Joanne Pearce Martin play the piano, one understands why many later composers revered Chopin as the great father-figure of romantic music for the keyboard. Just as Tchaikovsky said of the father of Russian music, "We all come from Glinka," many composers of piano music well into the 20th century could rightly say, "We all come from Chopin."

In 1832, the remarkably perceptive Parisian critic, François-Joseph Fétis, making an observation about Chopin's F Minor Concerto, said in part, "Beethoven has composed music for the piano, but here I am speaking of music for pianists, and in this realm I find, in the inspirations of M. Chopin, indications of a change of form that may in the future exercise considerable influence on this branch of art." Fétis may understate his enthusiasm, and he may predict too cautiously, for Chopin's genius was destined to affect profoundly not only the course of 19th-century pianism, but the course of music itself. Pianistically, the Polish composer created a style in which the instrument sings nobly and beautifully, and embodies a new sound world. Chopin applied fanciful, exquisite melodic ornamentation to a seemingly unlimited array of melodies. Chopin's G Minor Ballade is a superb example of the elevated sonorous music the composer created for his instrument. According to Robert Schumann, Chopin's first two Ballades were inspired by the poetry of the Polish patriot Adam Mickiewicz, some of which narrate battles between the pagan Lithuanians and the Christian Knights of the Teutonic Order. If indeed some extra-musical elements guided Chopin in writing any or all four of the extended dramatic works he titled Ballades, we can be thankful that he took inspiration from their subconscious urgings, for these works are among the finest of his large form compositions.

Perhaps Schumann learned about the Ballades' poetic associations from Chopin himself, for the two composers discussed these pieces when they visited in Leipzig in September, 1836, when the composers were both 25 years old. Of that meeting, Schumann wrote to a friend: "We had a very happy day together....I have Chopin's new Ballade [the G Minor]. It seems to me to be the piece that shows most genius, and I told him that I liked it most of all his works. After thinking a long time he said with great feeling, 'I'm glad of that because it's the one I prefer too.'" This work indeed reveals Chopin at the peak of his youthful impetuosity, striking the kind of poetic fire that would have excited the similarly youthful, temperamental, and tragically unbalanced Schumann. The Ballade begins with one of the most compelling introductions possible: the hands, in single notes an octave apart, stride urgently from low bass to high treble for three measures, whisper provocatively for two bars, then, finally in chords, evoke the ultimate anticipation with a superbly placed dissonance that

melts into the austere lyric main theme. In contrast to this rather reserved melody, the second theme, in Major, is all nocturnal sweetness, although it eventually attains surprising muscularity and thrust. Glittering passagework and technical gnarls abound, always entwined with lyricism, until they climax in a *presto con fuoco* coda of demonic difficulty. The no-technical-holds-barred coda was to become the signature of all but one of Chopin's four Ballades.

Joanne's album takes us from the fiery brilliance of the coda of the G Minor Ballade to the pristine airiness of the opening of Mozart's Sonata, K 332. This magical transition feels like the pianist invites us into a warm haven after rescuing us from the thunder and lightning of a raging storm. Mozart offers a small storm of his own, however, in the course of the first part of the simple F Major main theme: he throws an unexpected D Minor thunderbolt. This departure from the preceding charm is slightly startling, but quite within the framework of the movement. Mozart never compromises his sense of artistic balance, and when he introduces his second subject, its folk-like simplicity wins all hearts.

Chopin must have loved Mozart's elegant expressiveness in the slow movement; its warmth abetted by the composer's ever artful ornamentation. And the unbuttoned final movement's vigorous athleticism is something that pianists love—Mozartean charm is fine, but Mozartean brilliance appeals to the inner firebrand, and Joanne revels in the movement's exuberant virtuosic demands.

Moving from 18th-century formal grace to 20th-century Minimalism could be a shock to the system, but John Adams' *China Gates* provides a refreshing transition. Adams describes *China Gates* as a little companion piece to the extended *Phrygian Gates*. He writes, "Together they comprise what could be my 'opus one' by virtue of the fact that they appeared in 1977–78 as the first coherent statements in a new language. I found the combination of tonality, pulsation, and large architectonic structures to be extremely promising." In the listening, *China Gates* provides five-and-a-half minutes of hypnotic relaxation.

In *For Those Silenced*, Mark Carlson ruminates in an improvisatory manner, with one foot in a kind of sophisticated jazz, the other in Impressionism. The piece is one of Seven Dances for Piano that Carlson composed in 2004, and the title is a subtle anti-war comment. Carlson is the founder and artistic director of the Los Angeles chamber music ensemble Pacific Serenades, with which Joanne Pearce Martin performs frequently.

Josef Hofmann's *Berceuse* takes Chopin as a guiding light. Hofmann, one of the great pianists of the late nineteenth(!) and twentieth centuries, was born in Poland in 1876, and died in Los Angeles in

1957. According to the redoubtable Nicolas Slonimsky, “Hofmann possessed the secret of a singing tone, which enabled him to interpret Chopin with extraordinary delicacy and intimacy.” Hofmann’s *Berceuse* is not an imitation of Chopin’s work of the same name, but it grows from the same vine, particularly in the way Hofmann enhances the left hand melody with lovely right hand figurations. Joanne’s extraordinary ability to capture the gentle essence of this lullaby might likely have won the praise of Hofmann himself.

I must share a bizarre detail of Hofmann’s life. When he was eleven, Hofmann was such a sensation in his New York debut that he then made a forty-two city concert tour of the United States. However, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children stopped the young Hofmann’s tour. Subsequently a wealthy patron provided \$50,000 for his continued education in Berlin. (It is fortunate that no such Society existed in Salzburg in the early 1760s or Mozart’s biography would be much shorter than it is.)

Meyer Kupferman’s *Distances* may be the most compositionally advanced work on this album. *Distances*, full of deliciously altered chords, alternates between moody and placid with but one tiny outburst. *Distances* leaves me wanting more. Joanne worked with Kupferman in New York; the composer died in 2003 after leading an active life as a clarinetist, teacher, and composer.

Mendelssohn’s symphonies and overtures live among the staples of today’s symphony orchestras, and every self-respecting violinist keeps the violin concerto in his or her fingertips and bowing arm. Pianists, however, may play the G Minor Concerto, but of the solo repertory one finds the *Variations Sérieuses* to be about the only piece of Mendelssohn on recital programs. Like all of Mendelssohn’s compositions for the keyboard, the *Songs Without Words* are wonderfully pianistic, lying so well under the fingers that one can feel the composer was indeed a pianist of great accomplishment. “His touch was exquisitely delicate, his fingers sang as they rippled over the keyboard. In forcible and impetuous passages there was a grasp and an élan which almost took one’s breath away,” wrote a pair of admiring contemporaries about Mendelssohn’s playing. Delicacy for the lavender and lace filigree, a singing touch for the endless melodies (so many of them deeply sentimental) and a formidable technical command for the many fleet and fiery passages—all are necessary to realize fully the Mendelssohn idiom. Even the crotchety anti-Victorian George Bernard Shaw gave full quarter to Mendelssohn. He said: “At one of Paderewski’s recitals he played four of Mendelssohn’s *Songs Without Words*, which have dropped out of the stock pianoforte repertory lately [the “lately” being the 1890s!], ostensibly because they are too easy for our young lions, but

really, I suspect, because they are too difficult. If you want to find out the weak places in a player's technique, just wait until he (or she) has dazzled you with a Chopin polonaise, or a Liszt rhapsody, or Schumann's symphonic studies; and then ask him to play you ten bars of Mozart or Mendelssohn." Many of the *Songs* emerge as engaging examples of 19th-century piano literature when performed by an artist like Joanne.

The two contrasting *Songs* on this CD complement each other. The first, with the greeting card title "Sweet Remembrance," has a hymn-like melody cushioned by a constantly flowing accompaniment. This melody, supplied with devotional words, has indeed aroused the faithful to prayerful song in some churches. The pianist must create a singing tone for this work, such a tone as was ascribed to Josef Hofmann. Joanne moves next to the whirlwind *Spinning Song*, which is in fact a scherzo.

Robert Muczynski's brief dramatic Prelude marks Robert Muczynski as a cogent miniaturist. His Op. 6, No.2 contains a persuasive musical kernel that begins with a simple persistent bass that supports a figure in high treble that unfolds repeatedly with only slight variation. The piece's brevity is somewhat disarming; remember that Chopin called his preludes "little bits," proving that size is not important. Muczynski studied in Chicago with Alexander Tcherepnin. Like Hofmann did, Muczynski concertizes actively as a pianist, playing the standard repertory as well as his own works.

Night Shift by Gernot Wolfgang is a small poignant tone poem for your imagination and for the piano. The Austrian-born composer is a jazz guitarist whose quest "is to write music which is a natural synthesis between the rhythmic energy of jazz and the developmental and formal complexities of 20th-century concert music." *Night Shift* contains subtle rhythmic energy more common in jazz bars in the wee small hours, and it also hints at Wolfgang's background as a composer of serious concert music. It begins with an improvisational motif that reappears somewhat disguised midway through the work, and then returns at the end. The many pauses during the course of this music pique the imagination and give added soul to a soulful piece.

The *Nocturnes* occupy a special place in the Chopin canon, for sighing lyricism and ephemeral expressiveness may represent the composer at his most intimate. His piano style fully exploited the singing quality of the instrument and embodied a whole world of sonorities, amplified by his use of the sustaining pedal; and the alternate slowing down and acceleration of tempo (*rubato*) contributed enormously to Chopin's unique poetic ambiance. Chopin's *Nocturnes* vary in length and in emotional tenor, some dreamy, some teary heart-on-sleeve, some chin-up stoic. A few reveal despair and anger, and one, the C Minor Op. 48 chills us with its austerity and thundering grandeur.

The two *Nocturnes* on Joanne's program occupy a special place in pianists' hearts. The E-Flat, Op. 9, No.2 may be the most familiar to us, but that doesn't detract from its simple attractiveness. The less familiar D-Flat Nocturne, Op. 27, No. 2 captures titular moonlight, and gripping tension which Chopin creates through harmonic means and the beauty of his gorgeous ornamentation. This one is a true gem. —*Orrin Howard*



Artist's Notes

The "Barefoot" title came to me one night while relaxing in our Hollywood Hills home. Much to my mother's consternation, my husband Gavin & I have one of our favorite pictures proudly hanging in the guest room—a photograph Gavin took of my sandy bare feet resting on a picnic basket. It captures one of many nice memories of our 1990 honeymoon in British Columbia.

As this recording collaboration with Bob Attiyeh progressed, we wound up with a set of contrasting pieces which represent my diverse musical life. Some pieces I have played for many years, (family favorites!) and others are fresh and new. And to keep the pedals quiet for our recording, I played barefoot.

I grew up in Pennsylvania and practiced the piano alone every day for many hours. I never dreamed that later in life I would not only continue to perform solo piano standards like Chopin & Mendelssohn, but that I'd also have the fortune to play in a great symphony orchestra, work closely with living composers, and perform their works as well! I feel blessed.

To me, music is as essential in life as the air we breathe. A life without music is unimaginable for me. Whether I'm dressed in evening clothes performing in a concert hall, or barefoot at home playing the piano for our dog, music is always the fabric of my life, weaving it all together.

Producer's Notes

Pianist Joanne Pearce Martin serves as principal keyboardist for the Los Angeles Philharmonic and regularly performs with the orchestra on multiple keyboard instruments including the Walt Disney Concert Hall organ, celesta, various synthesizers, and occasionally a Macintosh computer. I heard Joanne play the Saint Saens Symphony No. 3 (the "Organ Symphony") with Maestro Charles Dutoit as we readied this album for press. Joanne graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music in

Philadelphia, and has since performed as guest soloist with many orchestras in the United States and Europe.

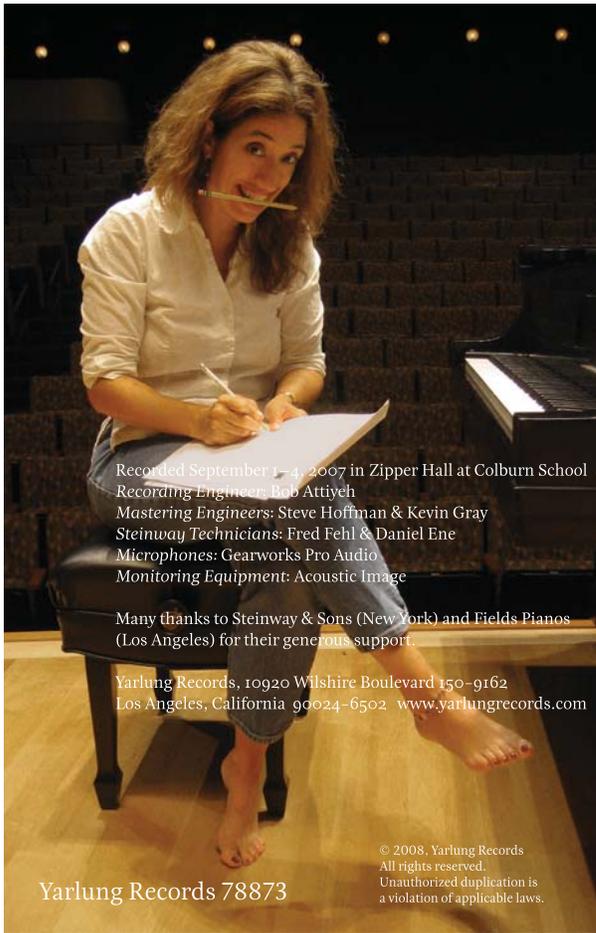
In addition to her recital and concerto engagements, Joanne performs regularly as a collaborative artist. Past such concerts include collaborations with Joshua Bell, Lynn Harrell, Iona Brown, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Julius Baker, Aaron Rosand, and Joseph Silverstein. Joanne performs in summer music festivals and concert series spanning four continents, including Aspen, Sarasota, Park City, Utah, New York's 92nd St. Y, Carnegie Recital Hall, Lincoln Center Library, Kennedy Center, and festivals in Costa Rica, Sydney, Taipei, Edinburgh, Cologne, and Nice. Southern California audiences regularly enjoy Joanne's New Music concerts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Green Umbrella and Chamber Music Series, Camerata Pacifica, Pacific Serenades, Dilijan, South Bay Chamber Music Society, Strawberry Creek, Ojai, Mainly Mozart, and San Luis Obispo Mozart Festivals. Joanne performed John Adams' *China Gates* in a Green Umbrella concert celebrating the composer's 60th birthday. It was this performance, and her collaboration with Jeffrey Kahane and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra in Mozart's Concerto for 2 Pianos in E-Flat Major that gave me the idea for this album.

Joanne and her husband Gavin Martin also concertize together as a 2-piano team. She has performed 4-hands and 2-piano works with Emanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman, Hélène Grimaud, and Peter Schickele. Joanne has recorded with Centaur, Summit, and Albany records. As part of her interest in unusual instruments, Joanne recently began to play the Theremin, and she is now the proud owner of a Moog "Etherwave Pro." When she's not in concert, you might find Joanne up in the air. She is an instrument-rated pilot and master-rated skydiver. This is Joanne's first album for Yarlung Records.

Joanne Pearce Martin chose Steinway Concert & Artists piano 599 for this recording, made available to us by Steinway & Sons (New York) and our friend David Ida at Fields Pianos in Los Angeles. We rented Zipper Hall at Colburn School in Los Angeles, to take advantage of its excellent natural acoustics. All the ambiance in this recording comes from the concert hall itself—from the air in the hall, the wood on the walls, and so forth. We added nothing in mastering. We chose two matched Neumann U-47 microphones with their original VF14M tubes, which are metal-clad pentode tubes configured as triodes. There are no adjustments to the EQ of this album. We made all "EQ adjustments" with microphone placement at the start. It is always our goal to record this way, and we succeeded similarly with David Fung's *Evening Conversations*, *Ryan MacEvoy McCullough in Concert*, *Inner World: Music by David Lefkowitz*, *David Howard*, *Dialoghi* and *Orion*.

For this recording we used short (five feet) stranded silver interconnects designed by Yarlung Records, customized vacuum tube microphone preamplifiers, no mixer, and recorded directly to two tracks sampled at 176,400 samples per second at 24 bit depth.

Steve Hoffman, Kevin Gray and I converted these high resolution tracks to CD Audio at AcousTech Mastering in Camarillo. It is a privilege to work with Steve and Kevin, who share the view (and teach me so much about the mastering process as we work) that in audiophile recordings “less is more.” We hope this album lives up to this principle and delights your ears as a result. We recorded *Orion* and *Joanne Pearce Martin: Barefoot* with the same piano, same hall, and same equipment setup. Orion and Joanne, both virtuosic titans of the keyboard, sound very different in these recordings. Recording them as we did should enable you to enjoy them as distinct individuals with unique messages, colors and musical voices. —*Bob Attiyeh, producer*



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Ballade No. 1 in G Minor, Opus 23
- 2–4 MOZART
Sonata No. 12 in F Major, KV 332
- 5 ADAMS *China Gates*
- 6 CARLSON
For those Silenced (Adagio espressivo)
- 7 HOFMANN *Berceuse* Opus 20, No. 5
- 8 KUPFERMAN *Distances*
- 9 MENDELSSOHN *Lieder ohne Worte*
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- 10 MENDELSSOHN
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- 11 MUCZYNSKI *Prelude* No. 2, Opus 6
- 12 WOLFGANG *Night Shift*
- 13 CHOPIN
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Nocturne in Db, Opus 27, No. 2