



RYAN MACEVOY • McCULLOUGH
in Concert

Debussy • Magin • Haydn
J. S. Bach • Beethoven • Schubert

YARLUNG RECORDS
BOB ATTVEH, PRODUCER



RYAN MACÉVOY MCCULLOUGH IN CONCERT

Notes by Alan Chapman

Ryan MacEvoy McCullough and I first met when we collaborated on a Los Angeles Philharmonic youth concert in 2006. Ryan used his talent, dedication and great sense of humor to bring the magic of classical music to our young audience. I teach at Colburn School where Ryan studies, and I feel pleased and honored to introduce the works he performs on this debut recital.

Debussy's suite *Estampes* ("prints" or "engravings") was first performed in Paris in 1904. In *Jardins sous la Pluie*, Debussy depicts a garden rainstorm and the reappearance of the sun afterward. *Pagodes* reflects the influence of the Indonesian percussion orchestra, the gamelan, which Debussy heard at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris. This sound is also evoked in "Empress of the Pagodas" from Ravel's *Mother Goose* and in the string quartets of both composers.

The Polish pianist and composer Milosz Magin was active internationally as a soloist when injuries from a 1963 automobile

accident interrupted his concert career. But within five years he was able to regain his technique and make a landmark recording of the complete works of Chopin. During his recovery Magin returned to composition, an activity he had first cultivated in his teens and which now became a priority for the rest of his life. Magin published his *Five Preludes* in 1963.

Haydn was among the composers who, in the late 1760s and early 1770s, absorbed a spirit of romanticism that originated in literature: *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress). This influence brought forth from Haydn an unusual concentration of symphonies in minor keys and, in 1771, his only piano sonata in C Minor. It has been said that the piece shows Haydn in the midst of his “romantic crisis,” transforming his style in the direction of greater dramatic depth.

The “well-tempered” in Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier* refers to a way of tuning keyboard instruments so they can be played in all keys (or, more accurately, equally out-of-tune in all keys). Bach explored the possibilities by writing two sets of preludes and fugues in all the major and minor keys. But *WTC* is far more than the validation of a tuning system; it is a tour de force of counterpoint and one of the foundations of keyboard technique.

Just as Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier* stands as a monument of the keyboard repertoire, so do the thirty-two piano sonatas of Beethoven, which range from the light and lyrical to the bold and revolutionary. The Sonata in A, Op. 101, has been compared to the music of Schumann and his generation (music which was two decades in the future). Beethoven himself described it as “a series of impressions and reveries.” This was the first of his sonatas to carry the indication “*für das Hammerklavier*” (using the German word for the instrument rather than the Italian). Nevertheless it

would be his next sonata, the marvelously complex Op. 106, which would become known as “the Hammerklavier.”

Schubert’s two sets of Impromptus are among his last piano works. (The term “impromptu” suggests an improvisatory piece.) The F Minor Impromptu on this recording has been cited as the most difficult of all eight, but we would never know that from the ease and fluidity of Ryan’s performance.

—Alan Chapman

Alan Chapman is a producer and host on KUSC-FM, Los Angeles, a member of the music theory faculty at Colburn School, a composer/lyricist, and pianist.





PRODUCER'S NOTES

Ryan MacEvoy McCullough in Concert

2008 has been busy for Ryan. In the aftermath of Ryan's successful Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4 in Ambassador Hall, and right before beginning orchestra rehearsals for the Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 2, he gave an intimate recital for a few friends at Colburn School in Los Angeles. Yarlung Records was privileged to record this repertoire and preserve it for posterity. Ryan's opening track, Debussy's rain-scented *Jardins sous la Pluie*, set the tone for the concert. This was a recital conceived by a conductor, not just a pianist. Yes, one can feel the refreshing as well as violent aspects of nature in this piece, but one can also hear the forces of an orchestra coming through Ryan's approach to his instrument. Ryan focuses on the over-arching musical architecture of the works on this program and deemphasizes ornaments that show off virtuosity.

I spoke with pianist and conductor Jeffrey Kahane shortly before Ryan's performance of the Beethoven Fourth. Ryan had asked Jeff to listen to his approach before the concert. Jeff told me he was deeply moved, and wrote later "I was enormously impressed and genuinely touched by the depth of Ryan McCullough's musicianship, the authenticity and sincerity of his musical voice and his burgeoning mastery of his chosen instrument."

Whether Ryan remains a concert pianist or also becomes a conductor, I suspect this approach to his music will remain with him always. Ryan's concert takes us on a journey from outer landscapes (literally with the Debussy) to inner landscapes and the most private parts of the soul, in Beethoven sonata Opus 101 and Schubert's F Minor Impromptu. Working with Ryan to record this recital was a great pleasure. And I wish specifically

to thank Deborah Berman, Dean of Colburn School, and Miguel Angel Corzo, President of Colburn School, for making this recording possible.

Ryan chose an interesting piano. Steinway Concert & Artists piano 430 is a hybrid of sorts. It was built in New York, and has that characteristic linearity of tone, control, and size. But it has the Hamburg Steinway lacquer finish, which may contribute to that extra sparkle in the tone, especially in the treble. Additionally, this piano has a lighter action than traditional New York Steinways, also more like the German pianos. It was Ryan's teacher, John Perry, who persuaded friends at Steinway & Sons to allow Colburn School to buy this particular instrument. Thank you John, and thank you Steinway!

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.

Thanks to our friend and supporter Jon Fisher, *Gearworks Pro Audio* gave us the use of two matched Neumann U-47 microphones with their original VF14M tubes, which are metal-clad pentode tubes configured as triodes. These may be the most famous microphones in the world, and Neumann made many of them, but it is not easy to find a pair with the original tubes in good condition, so we are doubly grateful to Gearworks for their support.

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* released in 2006, and *David Howard, Orion*,



Joanne Pearce Martin: Barefoot, and *Dialoghi* among others to be released in 2008 as well.

For this recording we used short (five feet) stranded silver interconnects designed by Yarlung Records, customized vacuum tube preamplifiers, no mixer, and recorded directly to two tracks sampled at 176,400 samples per second at 24 bit depth. Engineers Steve Hoffman, Kevin Gray and I worked at AcousTech Mastering at RTI in Camarillo to convert these high resolution tracks to CD Audio.

—*Bob Attiyeh, producer*

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Album Photography: Yarlung Records

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RYAN MACEVOY McCULLOUGH *in Concert*

1-2	DEBUSSY		08:29
		<i>Jardins sous la Pluie</i>	03:52
		<i>Pagodes</i>	04:37
3-7	MAGIN	<i>Five Preludes for piano</i>	08:30
		Allegro	01:15
		Allegretto tranquillo	02:27
		Allegro agitato	00:52
		Andante (for the left hand)	02:40
		Prestissimo	01:16
8-10	HAYDN	Sonata No. 33, Hob. XVI: 20 in C Minor	17:34
		Moderato	07:38
		Andante con moto	05:21
		Finale: Allegro	04:35
11-12	J. S. BACH	Prelude and Fugue in C Major BWV 870	04:06
		Prelude	02:27
		Fugue	01:39
13-16	BEETHOVEN	Sonata No. 28 in A Major, Opus 101	21:05
		Etwas lebhaft und mit der innigsten Empfindung	04:07
		Lebhaft. Marschmäßig	06:11
		Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll	03:02
		Geschwinde, doch nicht zu sehr, und mit Entschlossenheit	07:45
17	SCHUBERT	Impromptu in F Minor, Opus 142, No. 1	12:50