

THE POWER OF THE KEYBOARD

Yarlung board member **Jim Mulally** loves and supports mostly classical music. But when he hears something extraordinary in any genre his eyes light up and he grins from ear to ear. When **The Power of the Keyboard** first came out on CD and Jim heard Nathan at the piano and then Astral Mixtape in their otherworldly magnificence, Jim told me that audiophiles needed to hear this music. Jim generously underwrote this vinyl pressing and serves as our album's executive producer.

Nathan Ben-Yehuda, a piano virtuoso in his twenties, grew up in Southern California but attended the Royal Academy of Music in London before earning his Master's at Juilliard. Nathan's performance in Belgium's Queen Elizabeth Competition in 2021 impressed me.

Nathan pursues a fulltime solo concert career but also plays with **Astral Mixtape**, his innovative crossover quartet writing and performing new works, reimagining classics from Monteverdi to Rimsky-Korsakov, and playing with ideas and thematic material inspired by Sigur Rós, Radiohead, Four Tet and more. Nathan plays piano and synthesizer, **Misha Vayman** performs on violin and computers, **Michael Siess** plays violin, and **Juan-Salvador Carrasco** performs on cello.

One side of our LP includes **Joseph Haydn's Sonata in G Major**, Hob XVI:40 and **Peter Sculthorpe's** magical **Nocturnal** for solo piano. Nathan describes how Haydn's "simple, elongated melodies provide rich material for variation and ornamentation. ...There is an encroaching darkness in Haydn's sonata... short, interruptive motifs in the parallel minor key which appear between variations, looming clouds which threaten to ruin a lovely afternoon. Fortunately the charm of the movement is not ultimately disturbed; Haydn's *Allegretto innocente* movement ends with brash and good-natured humor.

"**Peter Sculthorpe** offers a particularly unusual and magical take on darkness, as his **Nocturnal** captures spaciousness and darkness while conjuring a fervent growing energy, building ever stronger as the piece progresses, like a primordial or mythical animal awakening under the bright stars of the southern hemisphere. I love the persistent bass drum in *Nocturnal*, a sound emerging from deep inside the earth as the vast Australian outback awakens to the night."

Nathan Ben-Yehuda Astral Mixtape

Sonata in G Major, Hob. XVI:40
Nocturnal

Joseph Haydn
Peter Sculthorpe

Goddess Gardens
Seven Hellos

Astral Mixtape
Astral Mixtape



The other side of our LP includes two tracks by Astral Mixtape: **Goddess Gardens** comes first. It includes intoxicating "mixtape" snippets from *Scheherazade* and Vaughan Williams' *Lark Ascending*, as well as more recent fare. **Seven Hellos**, an original composition by the four members of the quartet, closes the side.

Astral Mixtape is close to Nathan's heart: "I am part of this wonderful band of fellow classical musicians who are seeking to reimagine the conventional roles of our instruments, and applying non-classical approaches to arrangement and composition in our works. Astral Mixtape is the collaborative project most personal to me, and I'm so glad to be able to share our music as part of this record."

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180 Gram Vinyl
Stereo 45 RPM

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Made in Germany

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Fellow recording engineer and equipment designer **Arian Jansen** and I used SonoruS Holographic Imaging technology in the analog domain to refine the stereo image, Yarlung's SonoruS ATR12 to record analog tape, the Merging Technologies HAPI to record 256fs DSD in stereo and surround sound and the SonoruS ADC to record PCM. We used our friend **Ted Ancona's** AKG C24 microphone previously owned by Frank Sinatra, and Yarlung Audio microphone preamplification designed by Yarlung executive producer and engineer **Elliot Midwood**. Recording sessions took place August 2-5, 2022 in Samuelli Theater at Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, California.

Nathan, Jim Mulally and I dedicate this album to my friend **Jim Hannon**, senior writer at **The Absolute Sound**. Jim published this critically important audio magazine for many years. Jim has been a stalwart supporter of Yarlung's, particularly our projects celebrating solo classical piano, new music and jazz. Jim played the piano himself in his earlier life, including annual concerts at Carnegie Hall while a student in New York City. Hannon received the Lincoln Center Student award for piano when he was 17 years old. We thank Jim for his dedication to Yarlung and to the wider music world for all of these years.

This album also pays homage to **Allen Taylor**, president of the Los Angeles and Orange County Audio Society (LAOCAS) in the organization's 30th year. Many of Yarlung's most fervent fans belong to our society, support our musicians and attend Yarlung's live concert recording sessions. As society president, Allen follows in the great footsteps of **Mike Wechsberg** and **Bob Levi**. These three remain an audio triumvirate in Southern California. Many thanks to Nathan and Astral Mixtape for giving us such a great excuse to celebrate LAOCAS.

—Bob Attiyeh, producer

Executive Producer: Jim Mulally

Recording Engineers: Bob Attiyeh and Arian Jansen
Mastering Engineers: Steve Hoffman, Arian Jansen and Bob Attiyeh. Vinyl Mastering: Bernie Grundman
Microphone Preamplification: Elliot Midwood
AKG C24 Microphone: Ancona Audio
Steinway Technician: Kathy Smith
Rear Jacket Photo: Pierre Lidar
Graphic Layout: MikeDesign

