

WOMEN and WAR and PEACE

KATELYN BOUSKA piano

Caroline Shaw's *Gustave Le Gray* takes inspiration from a photograph emerging slowly in its bath of developer in a darkroom. The music sounds like Caroline Shaw at the beginning and end, but slowly evolves in the middle section into Chopin's famous *Mazurka* in A Minor before concluding with more keyboard writing that is completely Caroline's. Kate describes how "hypnotic, repeating gestures of the opening push time to a standstill as simple shapes arise around the acoustic space, and then begin to inch forward. Raw and primitive gestures stand in stark relief to the gilded beauty of Chopin's phrases. In the opening, Caroline writes to the performer in the score: 'like a photograph slowly developing on wax paper.' A few lines later, a new gesture like 'an expensive Hermès silk cravat' gradually 'becomes a bit maniacal, freely-spinning off into their own time and world.'

"Chopin's mazurka develops and decays in the center of the work, a simple melody emerging deeply in the bass register of the piano. Caroline's introduction proceeds slowly and firmly anchored, with rich openly-spaced harmony, 'solid and simple like the Appalachian foothills.' This solemn stability marks the end's beginning as well. Soon follow more musical fragments including a simple chorale, 'a linen hymn.' The opening hypnotic theme returns, 'like the fragmented hem of a song from a long time ago.' *Gustave Le Gray* ends with a handful of final repeated chords, 'dry, as if spoken,' and Caroline's piece, all fourteen minutes, departs as simply as it began. Bob and I selected this work to open our exploration of *Women and War and Peace*; Caroline is the only composer in our recording not directly displaced or killed in war but we couldn't resist including her for you on this LP."

Kate feels special affection for **Maria Szymanowska** (1789-1831), Europe's first professional female piano virtuoso. "Szymanowska was a pianist who rose to the highest level of virtuosity, fame and influence. Critics praised the strength of sound, her singing tone, and her delicate balance between lyricism and virtuosity. As a child of eight, her parents engaged a few private tutors for her. But regular music instruction, such as any man with her talent would have received, was refused her. Szymanowska combined extraordinary natural talent, determination and an astute understanding of audiences to make a living as a traveling virtuoso performer, decades before Franz Liszt and Clara Schumann would popularize the phenomenon.

"In addition to her concertizing and composing, Maria served as an important link in the development of 19th-century Polish music at a time when her country had all but disappeared. Her entire life was overshadowed by the partitioning of her country by neighboring Russia, Prussia and Austria. The third and final partition, in which Poland disappeared from the map, occurred in 1795. Szymanowska was six.

Caroline Shaw
Gustave Le Gray

Maria Szymanowska
Mazurkas
Fantaisie in F Major

Patrick Trostle: Executive Producer

RECORDING ENGINEERS: ARIAN JANSEN, BOB ATTIEYEH
MASTERING ENGINEERS: STEVE HOFFMAN, ARIAN JANSEN, BOB ATTIEYEH
VINYL MASTERING: BERNIE GRUNDMAN

YARLUNG MICROPHONE PREAMPLIFICATION: ELLIOT MIDWOOD
AKG C24 MICROPHONE: ANCONA AUDIO
STEINWAY TECHNICIAN: KATHY SMITH

COOPER BATES PHOTOGRAPHY
GRAPHIC LAYOUT: MIKEDSIGN

"Szymanowska and others would keep the country's rhythms alive in their music, in the vibrant rhythms of her mazurkas and the lyrical sensitivity of fantasy with its dramatic burst of fire and polonaise rhythms. After returning to Poland from a series of concerts in London, Maria expanded upon the iconic genre of nocturnes later made ubiquitous by Chopin, and imported a Broadwood piano (a name later dear to the hearts of Beethoven lovers as well), which offered an increased palette of color and resonance. She set the stage for many of Chopin's innovations a few decades later. I play my arrangement of Szymanowska's mazurkas numbers 3, 12, 8 and 17 for you. The final months of Maria's life were overshadowed by the November Uprising in Warsaw, crushed by the Russian invasion which enabled the sweeping cholera outbreak that killed her in 1831."

—Katelyn Bouska

Patrick Trostle heard Katelyn perform in Bohemian National Concert Hall at the Czech Center in New York City in 2021. Patrick called me a few days later, saying he had just heard this magnificent concert pianist performing works by women composers displaced or destroyed by 200 years of European wars.

"You need to meet Kate," Patrick said, "and I think you should record her. Kate not only performs in concert halls around the world, but she's a lightning-smart academic at Curtis Institute researching and lecturing regularly on Central and Eastern European composers close to her heart."

Kate is both American and Czech. She was born in the United States, but spends many months a year performing and lecturing in Prague. This project took shape during her darkest days of isolation during the coronavirus pandemic. Kate revisited composers she wanted to explore and realized many of them shared a common theme. They were refugees, or they barely survived, or didn't survive, and the fact that they were women at the cutting edge of the contemporary music scenes in their various environments made their situations even more difficult.

Our earliest composer, Maria Szymanowska, died in the cholera outbreak instigated by Russia's invasion of Poland under Tsar Nicholas I. One of our younger composers in our full album lineup, **Ludmila Yurina**, fled her home in Ukraine and found refuge first in the United Kingdom and then Germany after Russia's invasion in February of 2022 by Vladimir Putin. For all six composers in Kate's recording, please enjoy the digital versions of *Women and War and Peace*.

Kate flew to Southern California to record with us on August 8th and 9th, 2022 in Samueli Theater at Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa. Arian Jansen and I used the Sonorus ATR12 to record Agfa formula 468 analog tape and our friend Ted Ancona's AKG C24 microphone previously owed by Frank Sinatra with vacuum tube microphone amplification by Yarlung executive producer and designer Elliot Midwood.

Los Angeles and Orange County Audio Society president Allen Taylor asked us to help celebrate the Society's 30th Anniversary with this release. What an honor for Kate and for Yarlung!

—Bob Attiyeh, producer

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