

## **SONGS OF LOVE**

1	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) Aria from the 'Goldberg Variations', BWV 988			6:40
2	Charles Ives (1874-1954) 'The Alcotts' from Piano Sonata No. 2 "Concord"			8:40
	Robert Schumann (1810-1856) Kreisleriana, op. 16			35:48
3	l.	Äusserst bewegt	3:06	
4	ΙΙ.	Sehr innig und nicht zu rach	10:01	
5	III.	Sehr aufgeregt	4:49	
6	IV.	Sehr langsam	3:21	
7	٧.	Sehr lebhaft	3:33	
8	VI.	Sehr langsam	4:00	
9	VII.	Sehr rasch	2:51	
10	VIII.	Schnell und spielend	4:04	
Total playing time				51:09

# **JENNY Q CHAI**

### THE MUSIC

Known for performing and recording new music, Jenny Q. Chai also proves herself a superior interpreter of classic works for piano in this album, her first featuring compositions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

The album was conceived as a tribute to her teacher, Seymour Lipkin, the pianist, conductor, educator and great Beethoven interpreter. "He was known as a very tough teacher, but he was always sweet to me," Chai said. "I wanted to evoke Mr. Lipkin and Beethoven — without actually recording Beethoven."

And Beethoven is evoked by Charles Ives, who quotes the famous beginning of Beethoven's 5th Symphony in "The Alcotts" from the "Concord" Sonata, the second selection on this album. Published in 1921, the work is an enduring invention of this original and idiosyncratic composer.

"Everything comes from Bach," according to Jenny Q. Chai, so it is fitting that the Aria to his "Goldberg Variations" should begin this album. Robert Schumann found Bach to be "an inexhaustible source of ideas," and even after thirty variations, the aria doesn't seem at all exhausted and, as it is reprised at the end of the piece, it is as fresh as it was at the beginning.

The musician and conductor Johannes Kreisler was the creation of the extraordinary imagination of the author, composer, conductor and music critic E. T. A. Hoffmann, one of the initiators of the Romantic movement in German literature and music. (Hoffmann's best-known tale is about a Christmas toy that comes to life — *The Nutcracker.*)

Hoffmann's novel, in which Kreisler appears, purportedly has two authors — one is a cat, who pours out his life story, while the other is the narrator who recounts the remarkable tale of Kreisler.

Kreisler captivated the imagination of Robert Schumann and was the inspiration for his eight-movement fantasy cycle, *Kreisleriana*. Perhaps the novel with two authors appealed to Schumann, who sometimes attributed his writings to "Florestan the wild," and at other times to "Eusebius the mild."

Written in just a few days in April 1838, *Kreisleriana* is one of the great pieces of the Romantic era. Schumann's contemplative lyricism and passionate spontaneity combine to express both the intriguing personality of Kreisler and of Schumann himself.

David M. Brin



#### **DEDICATION** TO SEYMOUR LIPKIN

When I was 12 years old, as a kid who grew up entirely in China, I came to the Curtis Institute of Music and was accepted for study under the eminent pianist, conductor and educator Seymour Lipkin. Mr. Lipkin was one of the great Beethoven interpreters — he played everything Beethoven wrote for piano and also served as Leonard Bernstein's assistant conductor. Mr. Lipkin saw something so special in me that he insisted on taking me as his student, even though he had no openings that year.

Studying with Mr. Lipkin for seven years was the best of what happened to me at Curtis. He helped me form a solid and wide understanding of music. He asked me to listen to countless recordings — but not the works I was working on. He urged me to read many fun and historical books about music, including writings by Schumann and collections of historical music reviews that seem hilarious nowadays.

The great German composers, including Bach, Beethoven and Schumann, were Mr. Lipkin's core repertoire, and he taught me enthusiastically. I learned Schumann's Kreisleriana with him when I was 18 years old, and performed it at my graduation recital. I have loved the piece ever since, and have now lived with it for another 19 years. Like "Goldberg" and Kreisleriana, some classics just never get old. They live inside of you like living organisms, breathing and sleeping with you, growing old together with you.

Contemporary music was another area Mr. Lipkin always encouraged me to explore. He gave me his friends' works to learn, such as George Perle, Leon Kirshner and Elliot Carter. When I discovered Henry Cowell's Banshee myself and wanted to perform it at my graduation recital, even

though Mr. Lipkin did not know how to teach me the techniques of playing on the strings inside the piano, he let me do it anyway. I remember coming into a lesson one day, showing him all the skin on my finger tips that got ripped off while practicing *Banshee*. He gasped, "Jenny, you are a mess!" Then we laughed together. My fingers certainly were a mess at that time, but I was happy I had a mentor standing by me and rooting me on. Charles Ives' *Alcotts* in this album has a lot of connections with Mr. Lipkin. The piece opens with the motif of Beethoven's 5th Symphony. It reminds me of Mr. Lipkin because of his love of Beethoven and 20th-century music.

Mr. Lipkin was basically my music grandpa. We got to know each other so well. In the later years of our lessons, we had such tacit understanding that I would almost always finish the second half of a phrase he started commenting on my playing. And he would happily let me.

After my graduation, Mr. Lipkin continued to root me on when I started to specialize in contemporary music. In his 80s, he came in a heavy New York snow storm all the way downtown to Le Poisson Rouge to attend my concert of music by György Kurtag. He put me together with other musicians who also love Kurtág. He told me of his encounters with Pierre Boulez and John Cage at Cage's home where they all played for each other. He laughed that he got angry one time because Cage kept provoking him on purpose.

After spending almost two decades with such a music giant, I don't remember the specific words he taught me in each piece. What I remember and miss dearly is his sweet and funny presence, his loving support, his purity and enthusiasm for music. He always offered me the best coffee and most delicious cookies when I visited him and his wife Ellen at their West End Avenue apartment, where I went every week for my lessons throughout my teenager years.

This album, "Songs of Love," is my tribute to my beloved teacher, my music grandpa, Seymour Lipkin. You'll always live on in our music.

Jenny



With all my teachers after my doctoral degree lecture-recital at Manhattan School of Music. December 3, 2012

## THE PIANIST

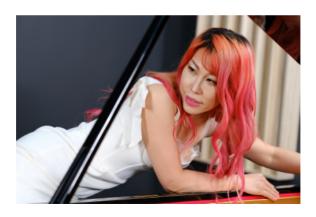
An artist of singular vision, pianist Jenny Q Chai is widely renowned for her ability to illuminate musical connections throughout the centuries. With radical joie de vivre and razor-sharp intention, Chai creates layered multimedia programs which explore and unite elements of science, nature, fashion, and art. The New Yorker describes Chai as "a pianist whose dazzling facility is matched by her deep musicality."

Based in both Shanghai and San Francisco, Chai's instinctive understanding of new music is complemented by a deep grounding in core repertoire, with special affinity for Schumann, Scarlatti, Beethoven, Bach, Debussy, and Ravel. She is a noted interpreter of 20th-century masters Cage, Messiaen, and Ligeti, and her career is threaded through with strong relationships and close collaborations with a range of notable contemporary composers, including Tan Dun, Jarosław Kapuściński, Cindy Cox, Andy Akiho, Annie Gosfield and György Kurtág. With a deft poetic touch, Chai weaves this wide-ranging repertoire into a gorgeous and lucid musical tapestry.

Chai is also a vital champion and early tester of the groundbreaking synchronous score following the software program Antescofo. Developed at IRCAM, the French institute for musical and acoustic research by scientist Arshia Cont, the software offers a real-time computer and animation response to live performance elements, enabling performers to create multimedia presentations of sophisticated and expressive fluency. Chai explored and helped hone Antescofo while in residence at IRCAM alongside Jarosław Kapuściński, a frequent collaborator. She has since toured internationally with the software offering multimedia performances in Shanghai, New York, Havana, and

elsewhere. In September 2019, Chai gave a TEDx Talk in Shanghai titled "When Classical Music Meets Technology."

Other notable highlights include her 2012 Carnegie Hall recital debut; many performances at (le) Poisson Rouge, including a 2016 Antescofosupported program, Where's Chopin?; her 2018 Wigmore Hall debut with a program exploring the relation between color and sound; lectures and recitals at Shanghai Symphony Hall, Shanghai Concert Hall, and Shanghai Mercedes Benz Arena; a featured performance at the Leo Brouwer Festival in Havana, Cuba; Philippe Manoury's double-piano concerto, Zones de turbulences, at the Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music with duo partner Adam Kośmieja and the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra; 2021 Music and Medicine Festival directed by Tan Dun, and many more concerts and lectures.



Chai's immersive approach to music is also channeled into her work with FaceArt Institute of Music, the Shanghai-based organization she founded and runs, offering music education and an international exchange of music and musicians in China and beyond. During the summer 2019, Chai oversaw FaceArt's first ever month-long Co-Creation Summer Festival, which invites International piano and composition faculty. Additionally, Chai served on the Board of Directors of the New York Citybased contemporary music organization Ear to Mind, and has published a doctoral dissertation on Marco Stroppa's Miniature Estrose.

Jenny Q Chai is a piano faculty member of the University of California, Berkeley, an alumni mentor at the Curtis Institute of Music, an official career mentor at the Manhattan School of Music and president and founder of FaceArt Institute of Music.

Chai has recorded for labels such as Deutschlandfunk, Naxos, ArpaViva and MSR. In 2010, she released her debut recording, "New York Love Songs", featuring interpretations of works by Cage and Ives among others, and her most recent recording, "(S)yn(e)sth(e)te", was released by MSR Records in 2017. She can also be heard on Michael Vincent Waller's "Five Easy Pieces" and Cindy Cox's "Hierosgamos".

Chai was awarded the Yvar Mikhashoff Trust's 2011 Pianist/Composer Commissioning Project, the DAAD Arts and Performance award in 2010, Chamber Music America commissioning award and first prize winner of the Keys to the Future Contemporary Solo Piano Festival. Jenny Q Chai studied at the Shanghai Music Conservatory, the Curtis Institute of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, and in Cologne University of Music and Dance. Her teachers include Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Seymour Lipkin, Solomon Mikowsky, Marilyn Nonken, Anthony de Mare, Zijie Wu, Zhijue Chao and Jianzhong Wang. In 2021 Jenny Chai was awarded the distinction of being an offical Fazioli artist.



"Songs of Love" was recorded at ProPiano, San Francisco on 18 December 2020

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Program notes by David Brin

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