



Influences

Charles Ives (1874-1954)

Piano Sonata Nr. 1 (1901-1910)

1	I. Adagio con moto	9. 33
2	II. Allegro moderato	1. 40
3	II.b “In the Inn” – Allegro	4. 19
4	III. Largo-Allegro-Largo, come prima	7. 27
5	IV.a	1. 26
6	IV.b Allegro-presto	3. 45
7	V. Andante maestoso	13. 21

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs, Op. 20 (1920)

8	Molto moderato	1. 04
9	Molto capriccioso	0. 53
10	Lento, rubato	2. 09
11	Allegretto scherzando	0. 48
12	Allegro molto	0. 56
13	Allegro moderato, molto capriccioso	1. 32
14	Sostenuto, rubato	2. 00
15	Allegro	1. 58

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

16	Cantéyodjayâ (1949)	12. 02
----	---------------------	--------

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Aria variata alla maniera italiana in A Minor, BWV 989 (1709)

17	Aria	2. 42
18	Variation I. Largo	1. 16
19	Variation II	1. 07
20	Variation III	0. 56
21	Variation IV. Allegro	1. 00
22	Variation V. Un poco allegro	1. 00
23	Variation VI. Andante	1. 38
24	Variation VII. Un poco allegro	0. 53
25	Variation VIII. Allegro	0. 48
26	Variation IX	0. 39
27	Variation X	2. 32

Total playing time: 79. 39

Tamara Stefanovich, piano



In the early 90's, a piano student with a bachelor's degree — barely 18 — embarked on a not-yet-ended, semi-voluntary emigration adventure. First stop was Philadelphia, and then the journey went to Cologne, Paris and Berlin. Although the main activities along the road were studying, teaching and performing, it was, and actually remains, my own story of emigration and integration, a story of assimilation by necessity, or at least out of a profound need to be enhanced, to be influenced.

Is my sense of home and my roots so flexible, I often asked myself, that they make me so permeable, so much hungry for the other, for the perfumes of life across the border, for foreign languages both spoken and musical? Is my essence so free of traces that every time I dive into a new culture, it swallows and infiltrates the one I had

explored before? Is the lack of pride in my roots so clouded because of a specific political ambiguity, especially as my ancestors are Serbian, Croatian, Dalmatian, Italian, Hungarian and who knows what else?

And what does all this have to do with the present album? Well, actually everything. I never thought one should “just play” or “merely record”. Alongside my musical education, I studied sociology and psychology in my early student years and that left behind a strong need for purpose and wider looking glasses which act as prisms on what we do, and focus my actual artistic stamp on things. It is my wish to trace back to the the starting point, the essence of that scent which makes a Bartók, a Bach, an Ives or a Messiaen, and to see how these extraordinarily original and idiosyncratic composers each searched for influences, letting themselves be inspired by the exterior world. I hope to demonstrate that authenticity comes from looking outside as well as inside, and this in equal measure.

Bach — hardly an itinerant — composed in an Italian manner; Bartók, held in utmost respect the folk elements he integrated into his music; as for Ives, with his collage of marching bands, sounds of trains and machinery, church hymns, ragtime and blues, he allowed all these elements to coexist; then there is Messiaen, with his hyper-curiosity towards exotic cultures, and methodical research of Hindu rhythms: All these composers created their own, deeply original and personal sonic galaxies.

Here, then are the countries that most influenced, enhanced and “made” me who I am: Hungary, an empire of which my country formed for centuries just a small part (Hungarian the language my grandmother spoke fluently); Germany, as it is my adopted home where my son was born and where emanates my favourite literature; France, the birthplace of my first piano teacher and my chosen life companion; finally, the US, the country where I studied, which my parents in post-war Yugoslavia considered as their sanctuary, and that my brother calls home. What would we be without all these influences? And is it not wonderful that this question has no clear-cut or exclusive answer to that, but only an inclusive, multi-layered responses, one richly interwoven and complex by its very nature?

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tanara Stefanovich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial 'T'.



Influences

All four works on this album are inspired in some way or another by music from abroad, or from indigenous traditional culture which is used to enrich each composer's musical language. Part of the genius of **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685–1750) was to draw upon ideas from well beyond German-speaking lands. Bach's interest in the music of Italy (particularly Corelli and Vivaldi) and France (particularly Couperin) suggest a musical magpie: not only was he always happy to borrow from himself but also

from the works of others whose music offered him exciting possibilities. This was particularly true of Italian music and its most famous manifestation was the *Italian Concerto* (composed in 1735). It can also be heard in the much earlier *Aria variata alla maniera italiana* in A minor, BWV 989, written in about 1709. Bach was working in Weimar at the time and copied out many Italian works, as well as making arrangements of Vivaldi concertos. Among the pieces he copied for his own use were Frescobaldi's *Fiori musicali* and a toccata and passacaglia by Bernardo Pasquini (1637–1710). Pasquini's brilliant keyboard style is reflected in the most brilliant of Bach's ten variations (above all in variation IX). Elsewhere in the set, Bach uses ideas based on dance forms (a Gigue in variation VII), explores a syncopated version of the melody (variation IV) and breaks it into rapid broken chords (variation VIII). After the keyboard fireworks of variation IX, the final variation returns to the mood of the opening in a modestly decorated version

of the original Air, a procedure that seems to foreshadow the start and finish of the *Goldberg Variations*.

Béla Bartók (1881–1945) composed the *Eight Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs* in 1920, while working on another much larger project, his lurid ballet, *The Miraculous Mandarin* (banned for immorality after its premiere in 1926). The *Improvisations* show a more reflective side to Bartók's musical personality, but in their seemingly modest way they mark an important step forward in his development, and in particular in his use of Hungarian folk music. Bartók had been studying and collecting folksongs since 1904 but the composer himself said that 'in my *Eight Improvisations* I reached, I believe, the extreme limit in adding the most daring accompaniments to simple folk tunes.' The *Improvisations* have a sense of freedom and of the traditional tunes being subsumed into Bartók's own creative musical vocabulary. With their

imaginative treatment of the melodies and with strikingly adventurous harmonies, these pieces represent a turning point in Bartók's evolution: from this work onwards, the gestures and contours of folksong became fully assimilated into his own style. The first two songs are a contrasting pair: a gentle melody (its words are about an uncle kissing his niece in a garden) is wreathed in sustained chords, while the second, marked 'molto capriccioso' presents the tune in four different transpositions (each a major third above the last — C, E, A-flat and then C) with the briefest of interludes between each repetition. The third, fourth and fifth improvisations are another group, starting with a melancholy song (the words speak of a raven seen in a black cloud) which is made all the darker through Bartók's use of atmospheric harmonies. The fourth is fast but chilly (the song is about a cold wind blowing from the Danube) and this leads to the fifth, underpinned by exciting syncopations. In the sixth improvisation, the melody is played on

the black notes of the piano while the accompaniment (both above and below the tune) is almost entirely on white notes. The seventh improvisation was originally written as a memorial to Claude Debussy, a composer whose influence Bartók freely acknowledged. Based on a lullaby, Bartók transforms it into a solemn and deeply felt *Tombeau*. The set ends with a high-spirited dance-song (according to the words of the original song, ‘It’s no good ploughing in the winter’, but ‘far better to stay in bed, playing with the wife’).

Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992) composed *Cantéyodjayâ* while teaching at Koussevitzky’s Berkshire Music Center in Tanglewood, Massachusetts, in July–August 1949 (not 1948 as Messiaen sometimes claimed). He recalled that *Cantéyodjayâ* was written ‘during the all too few hours of leisure left me by the classes of rhythmic analysis and composition. ... I could only get to be on my own early in the morning ... in the company of an excellent Steinway:

it was there that I started and finished this piece.’ The result is a piece that is unusual in Messiaen’s output for its wit, and its sense of being composed for the sheer fun of it. Overflowing with invention, it also brings together the old and new Messiaen: quoting freely from earlier works while also including some of the metrical and rhythmic experiments that he developed in depth in the more cerebral *Quatre études de rythme* (also composed in 1949, but at Darmstadt rather than Tanglewood). It’s surprising to discover that Messiaen himself was ambivalent about this brilliant *jeu d’esprit*. Yvonne Loriod described it as ‘an unpretentious virtuoso piece, and Messiaen didn’t like it much. However, it’s certainly fun to play!’ Having brought the work back from the USA, Messiaen waited until 1952 before making a fair copy, and it was published the following year by Universal Edition in Vienna. Loriod gave the rather belated premiere on 23 February 1954 at the second ever concert of the Domaine musical in the Petit Théâtre

Marigny. In *Cantéyodjayâ* Messiaen quotes extensively from his own music, to such an extent that it can be regarded as a kind of playful improvisation on themes from the three works of his ‘Tristan’ Trilogy (the *Turangalîla-Symphonie*, the *Cinq Rechants* for unaccompanied voices, and the song cycle *Harawi*). At the same time, the music is constantly animated by the Hindu rhythms that had fascinated him since student days. Aptly enough for such an exuberant piece, one of the Hindu rhythms he uses in *Cantéyodjayâ* is ‘Laksmiṇa’, a word that translates from Sanskrit as denoting a sign of good fortune, prosperity and happiness.

Charles Ives (1874–1954) was not only one of the leading lights of the New York insurance world (his firm of Ives & Myrick was highly regarded, and in 1918 he published a booklet on *Life Insurance with Relation to Inheritance Tax*), but music was his abiding passion from childhood. His father George Ives was a bandmaster

and by the age of 14 Ives was already working as an organist — evidently a gifted one: he likened playing his own very difficult *Variations on America* to being ‘as much fun as playing baseball’. At Yale he studied composition with Horatio Parker (best remembered for his oratorio *Hora novissima*) and also played for the university (American) football team. A thoroughly serious composer, Ives never lost his sense of adventure. In 1967, Leonard Bernstein devoted one of his *Young People’s Concerts* to ‘Charles Ives: American Pioneer’ and had this to say to his youthful audience: ‘Ives was born and raised in Danbury, Connecticut, and although his business life eventually took him to New York City, he always returned to Connecticut ... and the musical memories of his childhood — the local marching bands, the fiddling and fifing at barn-dances, the hymns, the patriotic songs, the sentimental tunes and folk ditties — all these haunted his music as long as he lived. So no matter how pioneering his music gets

— how daring, adventurous, complicated, modernistic — there are always musical reminders of the old days, the music he heard as a boy.’

Such was the boldness and daring of Ives’s music that for most of his life it went unperformed. The *Concord Sonata* (his second piano sonata) which Ives had completed in 1915 and published privately in 1920, was eventually given its premiere in 1938, but the slightly earlier First Piano Sonata had to wait until a decade later, by which time a younger generation of American musicians had fallen under Ives’s spell. The Australian composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks reviewed the premiere of the First Piano Sonata for the *New York Herald Tribune*. It was given by William Masselos in the hall of the Young Men’s Hebrew Association (now better known as the 92nd Street Y), New York, on 17 February 1949:

There was cheering at the YMHA Hall last night [at] the end of the first complete performance of Charles Ives’s Piano Sonata No. 1, written 1902–1910. The long, massive work is full of the fabulous Ives talent, and is as turbulent as a storm at sea and as prodigal of ideas as a forest of trees. There’s Dada too, at times, with respect to the blunt or witty juxtaposition of daily scene musical references within Ives’s own tonally anchored chromatic massivity. The music gets close to atonality, but it is more a dissonant block polyphony method, achieved seemingly from instinct and sheer momentum rather than by deliberate design or theory. Moments of meditative beauty it has too.

Ives’s friend Lou Harrison, had prepared the score for Masselos and in his preface to the published edition he emphasized how the sonata formed part of a pianistic tradition,

with parallels including Beethoven’s *Hammerklavier* and Liszt’s B minor Sonata. For Harrison, Ives’s First Sonata was ‘probably the penultimate romantic sonata, the same composer’s Concord probably the last. ... The flowing, sumptuous character of the sonata, its range of contemplative and heroic, as well as fantastic, expressions, indicate the grand manner.’ In spite of this, the First Sonata had rather chaotic origins. It was assembled by Ives probably as late as 1919 (a few years after he had completed the *Concord Sonata*). The music was drawn from five earlier works written between about 1901 and 1910. The first movement — including references to the hymn tune ‘Lebanon’ — was based on a *Recital piece for organ*; the second, third and fourth movements were taken from Ives’s *Four Ragtime Dances*; and the fifth movement was mostly derived from a *Set of Five Take-Offs*. It was only when Ives looked again at this material, years after writing it, that he saw the possibility of bringing all these pieces together to form a single

work. Lou Harrison asked about the work and on 9 August 1946, Ives’s wife Harmony wrote that: ‘Mr Ives was glad to hear of your interest in the First Piano Sonata as he always liked to play it — even now he does sometimes and he says it has “a kind of tendency often to cheer him up with a shadow thought of the old days.”’

Nigel Simeone



Acknowledgments

PRODUCTION TEAM

Executive producer **Renaud Loranger**

Recording producer **Tobias Lehmann**

Liner notes **Nigel Simeone**

Cover and booklet photography **Olja Radmanovich**

Design **Zigmunds Lapsa**

Product management **Kasper van Kooten**

This album was recorded at the Teldex Studio, Berlin on 21-24 June 2018.

“Of everything that man erects and builds in his urge for living nothing is in my eyes better and more valuable than bridges. They are more important than houses, more sacred than shrines. Belonging to everyone and being equal to everyone, useful, always built with a sense, on the spot where most human needs are crossing, they are more durable than other buildings and they do not serve for anything secret or bad.”
(Ivo Andrić)

Thank you, Vincent Meyer, for influencing, inspiring and helping me build a musical bridge.

PENTATONE TEAM

Vice President A&R **Renaud Loranger** | Director **Simon M. Eder**

A&R Manager **Kate Rockett** Head of Marketing, PR & Sales **Silvia Pietrosanti**



PENTATONE

What we stand for:

The Power of Classical Music

PENTATONE believes in the power of classical music and is invested in the philosophy behind it: we are convinced that refined music is one of the most important wellsprings of culture and essential to human development.

True Artistic Expression

We hold the acoustic tastes and musical preferences of our artists in high regard, and these play a central role from the start to the end of every recording project. This ranges from repertoire selection and recording technology to choosing cover art and other visual assets for the booklet.

Sound Excellence

PENTATONE stands for premium quality. The musical interpretations delivered by our artists reach new standards in our recordings. Recorded with the most powerful and nuanced audio technologies, they are presented to you in the most luxurious, elegant products.



Sit back and enjoy