

FOUR HANDS. TWO HEARTS.

ANASTASIIA LARCHIKOVA & MYKHAILO DIORDIIEV


ONE HOPE

UKRAINIAN AND
AMERICAN MUSIC
FOR PIANO DUO



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REFERENCE
RECORDINGS

MUSIC OF: ALMASHI, CORIGLIANO, SKORYK, LIEBERMANN, SEHIN, GORDON



**"The glory and will of Ukraine has not yet perished...
-- National Anthem of Ukraine**

As Artistic Director of "Thornwillow Concerts at Calvary," American composer Lowell Liebermann presented on February 22nd, 2025, Ukrainian duo pianists Anastasiia Larchikova and Mykhailo Diordiiev. Their American debut performance at the recently renovated Calvary Presbyterian Church in Newburgh, New York, featured Ukrainian and American works for piano four-hands. The recording that followed was produced at Blue Griffin's Studio *The Ballroom* in Michigan on February 24th-26th, 2025. Their program of three American and three Ukrainian works is presented here. Proceeds from this album will be donated to Ukraine humanitarian aid organizations.

BIOGRAPHIES

Anastasiia Larchikova is a pianist from Ukraine. In 2021 she completed her Bachelor's degree, and in 2023 she obtained her Master's degree from the National Music Academy of Ukraine in Kyiv. She is currently a student at the Kunstuniversität Graz in Austria, studying with Professor Peter Jozsa. She received a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture of Austria (2024) to study there. She has participated in many international festivals, and is a prizewinner at many international and all-Ukrainian competitions, recently including:

- 2nd prize at the All-Ukrainian Competition "Interpretation of Contemporary Music" in the "Chamber Ensemble" category (Ukraine, 2021);
- 2nd prize at the International Music Competition organized by the Association Les Musicales du Centre (France, 2022);
- Semi-finalist at the Alicante International Piano Competition (Spain, 2024).

Mykhailo Diordiiev is also a Ukrainian pianist. He is a student at the National Music Academy in Kyiv (Prof. Natalia Gridneva), but is currently studying at Kunstuniversität Graz in Austria, with Professor Peter Jozsa. He has twice received a scholarship from the President of Ukraine (2020-21, 2021-22). He also received a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture of Austria (2023). Mr. Diordiiev has played concerts in Ukraine, Hungary, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Belgium and Estonia. He is a Winner of many international piano competitions, such as:

- Grand Prix at the International Virtual Competition organized by ConcertFestival.org (USA);
- 3rd prize at the International Music Competition organized by Association Les Musicales du Centre (France);
- 2nd prize at the Samson Francois international piano competition (France).

LINER NOTES



WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

[1] Zoltan Almashi: *Carpathian Song* (2022)

Ukrainian cellist and composer **Zoltan Almashi** (Золтан А́лмаші) was born in Lviv on January 22nd, 1975. He studied at the Lviv National Music Academy graduating in 1999 with degrees in cello and composition. He continued his postgraduate studies in 2002 with Yevhen Stankovych. Stankovych (b. 1942) was a student of Borys Lyatoshynsky (1895-1968) and Myroslav Skoryk (1938-2020).

Almashi has played with the ensemble Kyiv Camerata and participated in numerous festivals both as composer and cello soloist. His powerful composition *Maria's City*, a work named for the city of Mariupol, was a featured work when the Youth Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine toured in 2024. Mariupol, during the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces in 2022, suffered an astonishing apocalyptic destruction of 90% of residential buildings being destroyed and over 200,000 people fleeing the city. A documentary about the siege, "20 Days in Mariupol", won the 2024 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature Film. Almashi's extraordinary musical portrait of a city under siege received international accolades from the press. Almashi is a member of the National Union of Composers of Ukraine and recipient of the Levko Revutsky Award (2003).

Zoltan Almashi provides the following note about his *Carpathian Song* (2022):
"*Carpathian Song* came to life from the depths of my subconsciousness.

I was born in the city of Lviv, not far from the Carpathian Mountains. My father is from the city of Berehove in Transcarpathia, a flat area close to the mountains. One of the deepest memories of my childhood is traveling by train from Lviv to Berehove and back, through the Carpathians Mountains. The images from the train window are some of the most vivid impressions of my childhood, which significantly contributed to the development of my creative imagination. Of course, I have been to the mountains themselves many times, but for some reason this childhood train journey left the most significant imprint in my consciousness. I think that *Carpathian Song* is precisely about this - about travel, about imagination, about the mountains – or simply “the image of the Carpathians.” The Ukrainian piano duo of Natalia Zubko and Petro Dovhan premiered the work in Lviv on July 9th, 2022. Although the version of this work for string quartet has previously been recorded, this is the first commercial recording of the work in the edition for piano four hands.



[2]-[5] John Corigliano: *Gazebo Dances* (1972)

American composer John Corigliano was born in New York on February 16th, 1938. He comes from a prominent musical family. His father was a violinist and concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic for 23 years. And his mother, Rose Buzen, was an accomplished pianist and educator. He attended Columbia University (B.A. 1959) and the Manhattan School of Music. Corigliano worked as a music programmer for the New York Times radio station WQXR, and as music director for WBAI in NYC. He also produced recordings for Columbia Masterworks (1972-1973) and worked with Leonard Bernstein on the Young People’s Concerts series for CBS (1961-1972). He taught at the Manhattan School, and at the Julliard School. In 1984 he was

named Distinguished Professor of Music at Lehman College, City University of New York, and established a scholarship in his name. 1987-1990 he served as the first Composer-in-Residence of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. His scores, numbering over one hundred, have won him many accolades and awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship 1968, the Grawemeyer Award 1991, two GRAMMY Awards® for Best Contemporary Composition 1991 and 1996, the Composition of the Year award from the International Music Awards 1992 for his opera *The Ghosts of Versailles*, and the 2001 Pulitzer Prize in Music for *Symphony No.2 for String Orchestra*. He was elected to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1991.

Corigliano provides the following note about his set of dances:

“Gazebo Dances was originally composed in 1985 as a set of four-hand pieces dedicated to certain of my pianist friends. I later arranged the suite for orchestra and for concert band, and it is from the latter version that the title is drawn. The title *Gazebo Dances* was suggested by the pavilions often seen on village greens in towns throughout the countryside, where public band concerts were given on summer evenings. The delights of that sort of entertainment are portrayed in this set of dances, which begins with a Rossini-like Overture, followed by a rather peg-legged Waltz, a long-lined Adagio and a bouncy Tarantella. In its original version, *Gazebo Dances* were premiered by pianists Frances Veri and Michael Jamanis, at Alice Tully Hall, in New York, on February 24th, 1985.”

Each movement was given a dedication, as follows:

I — for Rose Corigliano and Etta Feinberg

II — for John Ardoin

III — for Heida Hermanns

IV — for Jack Romann and Christian Steiner



[6]-[8] Myroslav Skoryk: *Three Extravagant Dances* (1995)

Ukrainian composer Myroslav Mykhailovych Skoryk (Мирослав Михайлович Скорик) was born in Lviv on July 13th, 1938. His father was a historian and ethnographer and his mother was a chemist. Both parents were educated in Austria and graduated from the University of Vienna. Young Myroslav was exposed to music from an early age. His great aunt was the celebrated Ukrainian soprano Solomiya Krushelnytska (1872-1952).

In 1945 his great aunt recognized his innate musical gifts and enrolled Skoryk at the Lviv Music School; however, he only spent two years studying there before his family was deported to Siberia in 1947. Skoryk was able to return to Ukraine in 1955, after the death of Stalin, and entered the Lviv Conservatory where he studied composition with Stanyslav Lyudkevych, Roman Simovych, and Adam Soltys. After graduating in 1960, he continued his postgraduate studies for four years at the Moscow Conservatory as a student of Dmitry Kabalevsky.

After graduating from the Moscow Conservatory in 1964, Skoryk, then twenty-five years old, began his first teaching position, becoming Ukraine's youngest composition lecturer at the Lviv Conservatory. In 1966 he accepted a position at the Kyiv Conservatory, teaching there until 1988. In 1996 Skoryk and his family moved to Australia, where he obtained an Australian citizenship, returning to Ukraine in 1999 to teach and compose. In April 2011 Skoryk became artistic director of the Kyiv Opera, a position he held until 2016. He died on June 1st, 2020. Skoryk was awarded the titles of *People's Artist*

of Ukraine and *Hero of Ukraine*. He composed over sixty concert works and 15 scores for films, including the score to *High Mountain Pass* (1981), from which his celebrated *Melody in A minor* (1990) was extracted. His *Melody* is one of the most performed pieces by a Ukrainian composer. A breathtaking short work, it exists in various arrangements from solo piano to full symphonic orchestra and embodies Skoryk's propensity for expansive melodic gestures. Its beauty holds a special place in the hearts of Ukrainian people and recently was heard as the soundtrack to a video shown during President Zelenskyy's address to the United States Congress on March 16, 2022.

Skoryk's *Three Extravagant Dances* were composed in 1995. During this time Skoryk also composed his extraordinary Symphonic Poem 1933, commemorating the Holodomor of 1932-1933. This Ukrainian famine killed millions of Ukrainians. Since 2006, the Holodomor has been recognized as a genocide by Ukraine and 33 other UN member states, the European Parliament and 35 of the 50 states of the United States as a genocide against the Ukrainian people carried out by the Soviet government. Skoryk also composed a Fantasy on themes of The Beatles songs for string orchestra, and the symphonic poem, *Reminiscence of the Motherland*, dedicated to the centenary (1994) of Ukrainian emigration to the United States. In *Three Extravagant Dances*, Skoryk masterly mixes classical traditions with jazz rhythms and harmony. His publisher calls this work, "a brilliantly conceived showpiece in three parts for piano four-hands, propelled by rapturous dance rhythms and imbued in a coloristic and evocative harmonic palette."



WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

[9]-[10] Lowell Liebermann: *Romance, Etude and Chorale, Op.134* (2019)

One of the most frequently performed and recorded composers of America, Lowell Liebermann has written more than one hundred fifty works in all genres, several of which have gone on to become standard repertoire for their instruments. His *Sonata for Flute and Piano* and his *Gargoyles* for piano are among the most popular contemporary works for their instruments, regularly included in recital and competition programs. Each of them has been recorded on compact disc more than twenty-five times to date. His full-length ballet *Frankenstein* was co-commissioned by London's Royal Ballet and the San Francisco Ballet and has been released on Blu-Ray and DVD. The San Francisco Ballet Orchestra under the baton of Martin West has also released the complete score on Reference Recordings.

Lowell Liebermann was born in New York City on February 22nd, 1961. He studied at the Juilliard School of Music with David Diamond and Vincent Persichetti, earning a bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees.

Lowell Liebermann is the recipient of many awards and distinctions, among them the CAG Virtuoso Award given by Concert Artists Guild for lifetime achievement, and Grand Prize from the inaugural American Composers Invitational awarded by the Van Cliburn Competition. In 2016 he was awarded the Barto Prize for his Eighth Nocturne for solo piano. He has been honored multiple times by the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Liebermann writes: *Romance, Etude and Chorale*, Op.134 for piano duet was commissioned by the Steinway & Sons piano firm to celebrate the wedding of pianists Lang Lang and Gina Alice Redlinger. Its first public performance took place on July 14th, 2023 at the Anchorage Chamber Music Festival in Alaska by pianists David Fung and Henry Kramer. This is the first recording of the work.

The piece is divided into two movements: the first consisting of the Romance with the Etude functioning as its middle section, and the second consisting of the Chorale. The opening theme of the Romance is built on a musical motive containing the espoused couple's initials: G – A – Re and La – La.



WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

[11] Bohdan Sehin: *Ru-um-bambar* (1998-2023)

Ukrainian composer Bohdan Dariiovych Sehin (Бордан Даріювич Сєрін) was born on July 30th, 1976, in Borshchiv, Ternopil Oblast, Western Ukraine. From 1991 to 1994, he studied piano and music theory at the Solomiia Krushelnyska Ternopil State Music School, as well as composition with Bohdan Klymchuk. He studied with Myroslav Skoryk at the Lviv Conservatory, graduating in 1999. Additionally he consulted with and took master classes from Arvo Pärt, Beat Furrer,

Alexander Shchetynsky, and Yuval Shaked. He has been a two-time participant (2003, 2006) in the Gaude Polonia scholarship program sponsored by the Polish Ministry of Culture and has studied composition with Zbigniew Bujarski in Krakow and Zygmunt Krauze in Warsaw.

Featuring symphonic, choral, and chamber works, as well as music for theatrical productions, Sehin's work has been performed for audiences in Belarus, Armenia, Lithuania, Russia, Poland, France, Switzerland, Germany, China and, of course, in Ukraine.

Sehin is a member of the Ukrainian National Composers Union with broad experience in arts-festival management, including the Contrasts International Contemporary Music Festival (Lviv, 1998-2006), Velvet Curtain (Lviv, 2006), Kyiv Music Fest (Kyiv, 2009), and the International Music of Youth Forum (Kiev, 2009, 2011, 2013). He is the founder and artistic director of the first in Ukraine International Master Classes of New Music COURSE (taking place every year since 2012); and Ukrainian Biennale for New Music. Since 2012 he has been the commercial director for the new music development of Lviv Philharmonic Society and executive director of the Contrasts International Contemporary Music Festival.

Sehin provides the following note about his ***Ru-um-bambar***:

"The piece is written with a repetitive technique. Continuous pulsation with sixteen note rhythms in a quick tempo and a dominant erratic rhythm (4+3+4), the passing of this rhythmic pulsation from one performer to another, smooth and impulsive dynamic shifts, prevailing diatonic in harmony, constant thickening and thinning of the music texture create the effect of an ongoing sound flow without beginning and end, which can only be intentionally and suddenly stopped. The title of the work uses a combination of two words. The first word is the name of perennial herbaceous plant from the buckwheat family, which are also called "rhubarb" (the word for it in Ukrainian I used as the main one). The second is the name of the Cuban partner dance of African origin, "rumba". These completely distant definitions suddenly linked in my imagination. I used Latin transliteration, put hyphens, and therefore the main rhythmic pattern of the work appeared.

“Ru-um-bambar” should be read in a rhythm of 4+3+4 in a way that forms a dance score in “rumba”: “quick”, “quick”, “slow”. The symbolic sphere of the work can be described in one sentence: Perpetuum mobile of the passionate dance of a man and a woman (“rumba”) with a constant sour taste (given by “rhubarb”). This is the first commercial recording of the work.



[12] Ricky Ian Gordon: *Ring-A-Ding-Ding* (1998)

Ricky Ian Gordon was born on May 15th, 1956, in Oceanside, New York and raised on Long Island. After studying piano, composition, and acting at Carnegie Mellon University, he settled in New York City, where he quickly emerged as a leading writer of vocal music that spans art song, opera, and musical theater. His art song works include a cycle of songs set to the poetry of Langston Hughes and *Too Few the Mornings Be*, a cycle of eleven settings of Emily Dickinson poems, written for Renée Fleming.

The death of his lover from AIDS inspired *Dream True* (1998), *Orpheus and Euridice* (2005) and the song cycle *Green Sneakers for Baritone, String Quartet, Empty Chair and Piano* (2007). For the stage, he has composed the musical *My Life With Albertine* as well as the operas *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Twenty-Seven*, and *A Coffin in Egypt*. Mr. Gordon's songs have been performed and or recorded by such internationally renowned singers as Renee Fleming, Dawn Upshaw, Nathan Gunn, Judy Collins, Kelli O'Hara, Audra MacDonald, Kristin Chenoweth, Nicole Cabell, the late Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Frederica Von Stade, Nadine Sierra, Andrea Marcovicci, Harolyn Blackwell, and Betty Buckley, among many others.

Stephen Holden, writing in the *New York Times* wrote of the work, “If the music of Ricky Ian Gordon had to be defined by a single quality, it would be the bursting effervescence in fusing songs that blithely blur the lines between art song and the high-end Broadway music of Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim...It’s caviar for a world gorging on pizza.”

As a teacher Mr. Gordon has taught both Master Classes and Composition Classes in Colleges and Universities throughout the country including Yale, NYU, Northwestern, Juilliard, Manhattan School of Music, Bennington, Vassar, Carnegie-Mellon, Elon, Michigan State, University of Michigan, Point Park (McGinnis Distinguished Lecturer) Texas Lutheran University, Eastman School of Music, Florida State University, Texas Christian University, and San Francisco Conservatory. He has been the featured Composer-in-Residence at various festivals including Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival, The Hawaii Performing Arts Festival, The Van Cliburn Foundation, Voices of Change, Santa Fe Song Festival, Songfest at Pepperdine University, Chautauqua, Aspen Music Festival, and Ravinia. In 2018, he was the commencement speaker at the University of Michigan. Other honors include the 2003 Alumni Merit Award for exceptional achievement and leadership from Carnegie-Mellon University, A Shen Family Foundation Award, the Stephen Sondheim Award, The Constance Klinsky Award, and many awards from ASCAP, of which he is a member; The National Endowment of the Arts, and The American Music Center.

The slang phrase, “Ring-a-ding-ding”, according to various dictionaries, is often used as an exclamation -- to express excitement, enthusiasm, or that something is outstanding or worthy of attention. “Ring-A-Ding-Ding” was also a song written by Jimmy Van Heusen and Sammy Cahn for Frank Sinatra. Recorded in 1960 and released in 1961 it became an instant hit. The suave swagger represents an era’s obsession with Las Vegas, the Rat Pack and that, as the lyrics indicate, “life is swell.”

Ricky Ian Gordon writes the following about his piano work ***Ring-A-Ding-Ding***: ***“Ring-A-Ding-Ding*** was born when I was creating my musical “*Dream True*” with Tina Landau and the piece followed decades in the life of an Architect, Peter, his wife, Madge, and his best friend, Vernon. “Ring-A-Ding-Ding” was a dance song in the 60s. If you listen to the title song on the PS Classics recording of “*Dream True*,” you will hear where some of the main themes of the piano piece come from.”

There are two spots in the score where the pianists are supposed to yell “Ring-A-Ding-Ding!!!” On the first commercial recording of the piece on Blue Griffin label with John Nauman and Sergei Kvitko at the piano, Ricky Ian Gordon was turning pages and was tasked with yelling the words. On this recording, with Ricky’s blessing, it is producer Sergei Kvitko who is now yelling “Ring-A-Ding-Ding!!!”

--- ***Music Notes by Victor and Marina A. Ledin, Encore Consultants LLC***

CREDITS

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Music notes by Victor and Marina A. Ledin, Encore Consultants LLC

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UKRAINIAN AND
AMERICAN MUSIC
FOR PIANO DUO

1 **Zoltan Almashi** *Carpathian Song* 06:35

John Corigliano *Gazebo Dances (1972)*

2 I. Overture 03:59

3 II. Waltz 02:33

4 III. Adagio 04:54

5 IV. Tarantella 02:31

Myroslav Skoryk *Three Extravagant Dances*

6 I. Entrance and Dance ... almost Hispano-Moresque 04:22

7 II. Blues ... almost American 05:54

8 III. Can-can ... as if from an old gramophone record 03:25

Lowell Liebermann *Romance, Etude and Chorale, Op. 134*

9 I. Romance and Etude 08:06

10 II. Chorale 08:23

11 **Bohdan Sehin** *Ru-um-bambar (1998, 2023)* 04:53

12 **Ricky Ian Gordon** *Ring-A-Ding-Ding* 03:35

REFERENCE
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59:15

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