

Once
upon a time katie mahan



STEINWAY & SONS



Once upon a time in my childhood

by katie mahan

One of the most beautiful gifts of childhood is the ability to dream big. As children, we are not hindered by difficulty or an adult sense of perfection. We instead often reach for the stars and strive to accomplish things that are beyond our current reality. As we grow up, those dreams and goals help us to discover our potential and shape our future. This album was inspired by my own childhood dreams **once upon a time.**

Throughout my life, I have found inspiration in many composers and works, from Bach to Gershwin, Beethoven to Debussy, but the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Franz Liszt presented on this album hold a particularly special place in my heart and memory. Each has been with me since my earliest years, being learned and relearned, discovered and rediscovered. They have inspired me, challenged me, taught me and grown with me, and in the process, helped to create the musician that I am today.

The album begins with Mozart's Fantasy and Fugue KV 394, a delightful and underplayed work which I first discovered at the age of twelve. Composed in 1782, the work owes its existence to Mozart's then new wife, Constanze Weber, and to a diplomat, music patron and amateur musician by the name of Baron Gottfried van Swieten who had an extensive collection of manuscripts of works by Bach and Handel. At the time, Mozart had recently moved to Vienna where he renewed contact with the Baron - the two had first met in 1768 - and went to his home day after day to play through the manuscripts and immerse himself in the works of the baroque masters. The music appealed not only to Mozart but also to Constanze as, in a letter to his sister, Wolfgang explains that "my dear Constanze is, in fact, the origin of this fugue coming into the world...Constanze will listen to nothing but fugues." As a twelve year old, I also had developed an obsession with the music of Bach - learning as much as I could possibly fit into my mind and fingers - and the discovery of the "baroque" side of Mozart delighted me. The Fantasy and Fugue KV 394 subsequently secured a place in my repertoire.

In contrast to the relatively seldom played Fantasy and Fugue KV 394, the Sonata in A minor KV 310 is one of Mozart's most beloved and frequently performed works for piano. As a young pianist, one of my early musical goals was to learn the complete piano sonatas of Mozart - whether out of the pure joy of playing Mozart with all its exhilarating passagework, or simply from the personal satisfaction of learning and memorizing so many pages of music written by a composer I adored, I cannot say! But in any case, I succeeded in learning and memorizing the majority of Mozart's sonatas in my early years, and one sonata that found itself repeatedly on my recital programs was the Sonata in A minor. While the outer movements appealed to me for their technical brilliance, it was the second movement with its sheer beauty and poignancy that really affected me. Composed in Paris in 1778, the dark and powerful sonata which was received with antipathy and neglect following the first performance, is one of only two sonatas composed in a minor key. Although Mozart left no written evidence linking it to events in his life, it is frequently associated with the death of his mother, Anna Maria, on 3 July 1778. Unable to get permission from the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg to accompany his son on a job-hunting tour to Paris, Leopold

Mozart had arranged for Anna Maria to travel with the twenty-two year old Wolfgang. Mother and son's stay in the French capital was marked by disillusionment and diminished productivity as Mozart neither secured a permanent post nor many commissions for new works. Upon the death of Anna Maria in Paris, Leopold accused his son of having ignored his mother's illness and being indirectly responsible for her death. Mozart wrote to a friend in Salzburg that "this has been the saddest day of my life" and it is frequently argued that the striking differences in key, tempo markings, as well as technical and contrapuntal innovations in KV 310 are directly related to the sudden loss of his mother and the resulting emotional estrangement between father and son.

Following the great Sonata in A minor, we return to two works from Mozart's childhood, the Allegro in C major KV 5a and Klavierstück in F major KV 33b. These two works take me back to my very earliest years, as they were on the program for my first recitals as a five year old. The Allegro KV 5a is believed to have been composed in 1762 in Salzburg when Mozart was six years old. It is the eleventh work in the "Nannerl Notenbuch" and, like all of Mozart's first compositions, was written down by his father Leopold. By the time Mozart composed the Klavierstück KV 33b in 1766, the young composer had learned how to notate music, and KV 33b was written in pencil on the back of a pamphlet advertising concerts by the *Zürcher Musikkollegium*.

The final work on this album is the Sonata in B minor by Franz Liszt, a work with which I fell in love at the age of seven. Although far too difficult for me to master at that tender young age, I was determined to learn the sonata and I pestered my mother - who was also my teacher through the age of eighteen - until she relented and permitted me to start learning it. At that time, I was not very fond of note reading and learned primarily by ear, but to ensure that I learn the sonata correctly, my mother lovingly wrote in all the notes of the difficult technical passages. Over the course of its thirty-some pages, I learned how to read music, and over the course of my lifetime, this work has appeared, disappeared and reappeared in my repertoire perhaps more than any other work. Composed in 1853, the sonata - which was initially described by critics as unplayable and by Clara Schumann as "a sheer racket" - is today widely considered to be Liszt's greatest work and the pinnacle of his piano writing. Filled with dazzling virtuosity and vast expressive range, it is recognized as one of the greatest works in the piano literature. Titled simply "Sonata," it has been interpreted as a musical portrait of the legend of Faust, an allegory about the Garden of Eden, a depiction of the Fall of Man and a struggle between the divine and the diabolical or, like Mozart's Sonata in A minor, with which it has many parallels, an autobiographical work depicting the conflicts within Liszt's own life and personality. Like Mozart, to whom Liszt readily acknowledged that he "owed the greater part of what he was as a musician," Liszt wrestled with questions of life and faith and it is therefore tempting to assume that he may have intended a programatic reading. The sonata has, however, managed to remain a mystery, and perhaps it is just this aspect, and the powerful way in which it invites performer and listener alike to ponder the myriad layers of Liszt's life and beliefs, that contributes to the work's enduring fascination.

This album is a journey back through my life, and is the realization of some of my most cherished dreams from childhood. It is my hope that the works included here will inspire my listeners just as they inspired me **once upon a time**. I would like to dedicate this album to my parents for encouraging me to dream big, and for always supporting my efforts to accomplish my dreams, no matter how lofty they may have seemed at the time.



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wolfgang amadeus mozart

Fantasy and Fugue in C major KV 394

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|------------------------------|--------|
| 1 I. Adagio | [5:50] |
| 2 II. Fuga. Andante maestoso | [3:03] |

wolfgang amadeus mozart

Sonata No. 8 in A minor KV 310

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 3 I. Allegro maestoso | [8:24] |
| 4 II. Andante cantabile con espressione | [11:07] |
| 5 III. Presto | [2:58] |

wolfgang amadeus mozart

6 Allegro in C major KV 5a

[3:22]

7 Klavierstück in F major KV 33b

[0:53]

franz liszt

8 Piano Sonata in B minor S. 178

[27:36]

katie mahan, piano



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