



BRUCE ADOLPHE

Chopin Dreams

Seven Thoughts Considered as Music • Piano Puzzlers

Carlo Grante, Piano



Chopin Dreams (2014)

- 1 New York Nocturne
- 2 Jazzurka
- 3 Piano Popping
- 4 Brooklyn Ballad
- 5 Quaalude
- 6 Hora

Seven Thoughts Considered as Music (2016)

- 7 No. 1: "The hidden harmony is better than the obvious one."
Heraclitus (6th-5th Century B.C.E.)
- 8 No. 2: "Don't be confused by surfaces; in the depths everything becomes law."
Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)
- 9 No. 3: "Beyond a certain point there is no return. This point has to be reached."
Franz Kafka (1883-1926)
- 10 No. 4: "Everything in nature contains all the powers of nature."
Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)
- 11 No. 5: "We are close to waking up when we dream that we are dreaming."
Novalis (1772-1801)
- 12 No. 6: "When the last red man has vanished from this earth, and his memory is only a story among whites, these shores will still swarm with the invisible dead of my people. And when your children's children think they are alone in the fields, the forests, the shops, the highways, or the quiet of the woods, they will not be alone."
Chief Seattle (1786-1866)
- 13 No. 7: "When the moon shines in its exceeding beauty, who would care to look at a painted moon?"
Shankara (686-718)

Piano Puzzlers (2002-2016)

- 14 Deck the Hall (Trad. Welsh Carol)
- 15 London Bridge is Falling Down
- 16 My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean
- 17 When the Saints Go Marching In
- 18 For He's a Jolly Good Fellow
- 19 Havenu Shalom Aleichem (Traditional Hebrew Song)
- 20 The Streets of Laredo
- 21 Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho (African American Spiritual)
- 22 Our Love is Here to Stay (Gershwin melody)

23:51

5:23
3:54
2:57
6:23
2:00
3:15

23:06

3:27
3:11
2:11
3:26
4:16
3:52
2:43

16:37

0:52
1:40
1:42
1:24
2:12
1:51
1:54
2:29
2:33

Bruce Adolphe (b. 1955)

Piano Music

Bruce Adolphe's music often addresses subjects ranging from human rights to neuroscience, and is performed throughout the world by leading soloists, ensembles, and orchestras, including Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, Joshua Bell, the Brentano Quartet, the Beaux Arts Trio, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Metropolitan Opera Guild, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the IRIS Orchestra, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Human Rights Orchestra, the Zürich Philharmonia, the Orquestra Metropolitana de Lisboa, and others.

Adolphe's works include two full-length operas that were performed at the 92nd Street Y in New York – *Mikhoels the Wise* (about the Jewish actor murdered by Stalin) and *The False Messiah* (about Shabtai Zvi). Adolphe's opera about Marian Anderson, *Let Freedom Sing*, with a libretto by Carolivia Herron, was premiered by the Washington National Opera and Washington Performing Arts Society. He has also composed an oratorio on Holocaust texts and melodies, *Out of the Whirlwind*, and a song cycle, *Ladino Songs of Love and Suffering*, both recorded on a GRAMMY®-winning Naxos CD (8.559413). Adolphe's violin concerto *I Will Not Remain Silent*, inspired by the life of Joachim Prinz, a leader of the Jewish community in Berlin during the Nazi period and later in the United States an outspoken civil rights leader and friend of Martin Luther King, Jr., was premiered by violinist Sharon Roffman with the IRIS Orchestra conducted by Michael Stern, and given its European premiere with violinist Ilya Gringolts and the Human Rights Orchestra conducted by Alessio Allegrini.

Composer-in-residence at the Brain and Creativity Institute at USC in Los Angeles, Adolphe has composed several works based on the writings of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio. *Self Comes to Mind*, written in collaboration with Damasio, was premiered at the American Museum of Natural History in 2009 with soloist Yo-Yo Ma, and released in 2014 as a download featuring

cellist Efe Baltacigil in concert in Alice Tully Hall. Adolphe's other works based on Damasio's writing include *Memories of a Possible Future*, commissioned by the Virginia Arts Center, *Obedient Choir of Emotions*, commissioned by the New York Virtuoso Singers, and *Musics of Memory*, composed for the Brain and Creativity Institute.

In 2015, Bruce Adolphe composed the score to *Einstein's Light*, a film by Nickolas Barris, released in 2016. The film addresses Einstein's violin playing and his love of Mozart and Bach, and Adolphe's score features music for violin based on phrases from Bach's *Sarabande in D Minor* from *Partita No. 2* and Mozart's *Violin Sonata, K.378*. The soundtrack is available from Sony Classical, featuring violinist Joshua Bell and pianist Marija Strokic, who have also performed it live, including at UNESCO in Paris for the opening ceremony of the International Year of Light 2015 and at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton as part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of General Relativity.

In July 2016, Carlo Grante was the soloist in the world premiere of Adolphe's *Piano Concerto*, with Fabio Luisi conducting the Zürich Philharmonia.

In addition to composing, Bruce Adolphe is the founder and director of the *Meet the Music!* family concert series and resident lecturer at The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center; creator/performer of public radio's weekly *Piano Puzzler* on *Performance Today*; composer-in-residence at the Brain and Creativity Institute at USC in Los Angeles; co-artistic director of *Off the Hook Arts* in Colorado; and founder and creative director of *Learning Maestros*. The author of several books on music, Adolphe has taught at Yale, The Juilliard School, and New York University. The second edition of his book *The Mind's Ear: Exercises for Improving the Musical Imagination* was published by Oxford University Press in 2013.

Chopin Dreams

I spend a lot of time, nearly every day, at a piano and have done so for about 54 years now. I may be improvising to get into the composing zone, playing jazz, reading through Bach for inspiration, or looking for odd musical connections to use in my piano puzzlers. It is not uncommon for my hands to be playing something while my mind is completely elsewhere.

My relationship to the piano, which began when I was six years old, is one of exploration: exploring the inner workings of the great piano repertoire; exploring the infinity of sensuously resonant harmonies; discovering my own deepest thoughts through dreamlike improvisations that continue to evolve over the years, like a giant chronicle of my subconscious.

A few composers have defined the way the rest of us use the piano – the way fingers move, how the instrument resonates, what its textures are, what the pedal is for, and even the way we think about what music for the piano means. A very short list of such seminal piano composers would have to include Chopin, the master of nuance, of delicate filigree and beguiling harmonies – the creator of the unique musical mixture of nobility and vulnerability, available only in his precious, pedaled perfume.

As the public radio piano puzzler on *Performance Today* – the Peabody Award-winning radio show – I have disguised over forty familiar melodies in the style of Chopin and also merged quite a few popular tunes with actual piano pieces by Chopin. But composing *Chopin Dreams* has nothing to do with piano puzzlers. This was not a matter of using Chopin's works for crafty comedic combinatorial composition; this instead was the far more intense process of communing with Chopin's art for the purpose of composing my own personal statements about this extraordinary music. *Chopin Dreams* is not a tribute to Chopin, but something more emotionally charged. To compose this work, I imagined Chopin alive today, living in New York, perhaps making some money at a jazz club rather than teaching so many students.

Chopin's enchanting cascades of notes that fall in graceful rhythmic independence over a steady bass are

very like an inspired jazz pianist's fluid melodic ornaments hovering over a groove. Did Chopin ever play a *blue note*, as it is called in jazz?

To answer that question, I turn to a description of Chopin improvising at the piano, written in the diary of the painter Eugène Delacroix, one of Chopin's closest friends:

"Little by little our eyes become filled with those soft colors corresponding to the sweet modulations taken in by our auditory senses. And then – the *blue note* resonates and there we are, in the azure of the transparent night."

Whether that particular *blue note* was a jazzy flatted third hanging out over a dominant seventh chord we will never know, but it may well have been, because the exact same *blue note* of jazz music does in fact exist in Chopin's music. It usually appears as an *appoggiatura* leaning on the minor ninth above a dominant seventh chord in a minor key. For a simple example, take a look at the very first bar of the *G minor Mazurka, Op. 67, No. 2*. That little F natural is a *blue note*. And that sort of thing helped inspire my *Chopin Dreams* to go much further.

In composing *Chopin Dreams*, I used several approaches:

I used particular works of Chopin as models and source material for three of the movements: *Brooklyn Ballad* uses Chopin's *G minor Ballade* as raw material; *Jazzurka* is based on the *A minor Mazurka, Op. 17, No. 4*; *Quaalude* is modeled on Chopin's *Prelude No. 3*.

I imagined Chopin as a jazz pianist playing a new kind of nocturne for *New York Nocturne*.

I picked two dance forms Chopin never heard of to create *Piano Popping* (based on some hip-hop rhythms) and *Hora* (I wondered what Chopin would play at a bar mitzvah.)

Finally, it was inspiring to imagine Carlo Grante playing the music as I composed it, bringing his penetrating virtuosity and precise pianism to every phrase. It is my pleasure to dedicate *Chopin Dreams* to maestro Grante.

Seven Thoughts Considered as Music

Seven Thoughts Considered as Music is dedicated to Helen Heslop and Carlo Grante.

The idea of this piece is, as the title suggests, to musically depict seven provocative and profound statements. I have been careful to select thoughts that are intellectually stimulating and emotionally charged, and – of particular importance – that use imagery suggesting musical parallels.

In the first thought (Heraclitus), music itself – harmony both obvious and hidden – is used as imagery, so music can express the idea naturally. In the second thought, Rilke contrasts surfaces with depths, another harmonically vivid image. Kafka (*No. 3*) contemplates a point of no return, which suggested to me a musical structure that I would otherwise not have imagined. Emerson (*No. 4*) talks of the power in nature, which I chose to portray in terms of restrained music that evolves and eventually explodes. Waking and dreaming (Novalis, *No. 5*) are natural subjects for music, and to "dream that we are dreaming" is a wonderfully musical image. Thought *No. 6* (Chief Seattle) is different from the others, not only in its length, but also in its social, historical, and political significance. Chief Seattle's phrase "memory is only a story" is deeply musical, as is the tone of the speech, with its ghosts crowding the living. The final thought of the set, Shankara (*No. 7*) draws attention to the problem of art itself as compared to nature (the moon) – which also applies to music as compared to birdsong, a howling wind, or a crack of thunder – and so it is a fitting end to this philosophical musical journey.

Piano Puzzlers

As a kind of sorbet after *Chopin Dreams* and *Seven Thoughts Considered as Music*, we return to Chopin as an inspiration, but now in the form of light-hearted piano puzzlers. I have been writing and performing piano puzzlers for the syndicated public radio program *Performance Today*, hosted by Fred Child, since 2002. The puzzlers are a mix of familiar melodies and classical styles or, in some cases, actual pieces by classical composers. On the radio program, brave music lovers call in and guess the tune and the style in which it is disguised. For this Chopin-centric recording, all the puzzlers are in the style of Chopin, so rather than a musical game we have a set of encore pieces. The folk song *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean* is set to the rocking-boat rhythm of Chopin's *Prelude No. 13*, and the nursery tune *London Bridge is Falling Down* remains in a major key while it crumbles chromatically in an "unabridged" version of Chopin's beloved *E minor Prelude*. The Hebrew melody *Havenu Shalom Aleichem* (Peace Be Upon You) appears in the left-hand in a setting based very closely on Chopin's *Prelude No. 6*. I have composed nearly 500 piano puzzlers in the 14 years since the show started, and Fred Child commented that if the puzzlers were played end-to-end, it would be longer than Wagner's *Ring* cycle. It is a great pleasure to hear Carlo Grante play them!

Bruce Adolphe

Carlo Grante



Carlo Grante has performed at the Musikverein, Vienna, the Chamber Music Hall at the Berlin Philharmonie, Wigmore Hall and the Barbican, London, the Sala Santa Cecilia, Rome, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Dresden Semperoper, Stuttgart Opera, Zurich Opera, the Rudolfinum, Prague, as well as at Lincoln Center and the Kennedy Center, New York. He has appeared as soloist with major orchestras including the Dresden Staatskapelle, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of Santa Cecilia, Rome, the Zurich Philharmonia, the MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, and Concertino Wien. He gave the first performance of all 53 of Godowsky's Studies on the *Études* of Chopin at the Newport Festival. Though best known for performances and recordings of Scarlatti, Mozart, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Busoni, Debussy and Godowsky, Carlo Grante has had many contemporary works dedicated to him, by Roman Vlad, Michael Finnissy and Bruce Adolphe, among others, and has made over fifty recordings. Carlo Grante is a Bösendorfer artist. The present recording was made on their completely redesigned new model concert grand piano, the 280VC. www.carlogrante.com

Bruce
ADOLPHE
(b. 1955)

Piano Music

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|--------------|---|--------------|
| 1-6 | Chopin Dreams (2014)* | 23:51 |
| 7-13 | Seven Thoughts
Considered as Music (2016)* | 23:06 |
| 14-22 | Piano Puzzlers (2002-2016) | 16:37 |

***WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING**

Carlo Grante, Piano

A detailed track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet.

Recorded at the Bösendorfer Factory, Wiener Neustadt,
Austria, on 27th and 28th November, 2015,
and on 8th February, 2016

Produced by Helen Heslop (HH Promotions, London)

Recorded, edited and mixed by Gerhard Kanzian
(KVK-Klangstudio)

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Booklet notes: Bruce Adolphe

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

Composer, educator, performer and author Bruce Adolphe has a close affinity with the piano, and he acknowledges the transformative influence of Chopin on the way the instrument has been perceived up until the present day. *Chopin Dreams* places the Romantic master firmly into modern times, building on his models and imagining him as a jazz pianist or exploring what he might have played at a *bar mitzvah*. The *Piano Puzzlers* take Chopin's style and mix it into what Dick Hyman has called 'the wittiest and funniest musical parodies imaginable.' *Seven Thoughts Considered as Music* are deeply personal and philosophical musical reactions to inspirational thoughts by the great minds of Emerson, Kafka, Rilke, Chief Seattle, Novalis, Heraclitus, and Shankara.

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Playing
Time:
63:36