

THE SPIRIO SESSIONS

URI CAINE | JENNY LIN



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STEINWAY & SONS

## THE SPIRIO SESSIONS

|   |      |
|---|------|
| 1 Sonata in B minor, K.27<br>(after Scarlatti)    | 2:52 |
| 2 Beltà, poi che t'assenti<br>(after Gesualdo)    | 2:59 |
| Caine: 9 Miniatures for 2 Pianos                  |      |
| 3 No. 1   | 1:22 |
| 4 No. 2   | 2:09 |
| 5 No. 3   | 1:30 |
| 6 Non mai non cangerò<br>(after Gesualdo)         | 2:34 |
| Caine: 9 Miniatures for Piano solo                |      |
| 7 No. 1   | 1:16 |
| 8 No. 2   | 1:39 |
| 9 No. 3   | 1:36 |
| 10 Sonata in D major, K. 492<br>(after Scarlatti) | 3:23 |
| 9 Miniatures for 2 Pianos                         |      |
| 11 No. 4  | 1:11 |
| 12 No. 5  | 0:54 |
| 13 No. 6  | 1:22 |
| 14 Itene, o miei sospiri<br>(after Gesualdo)      | 3:48 |

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|  |      |
|--|------|
| 9 Miniatures for Piano solo  |      |
| 15 No. 4   | 2:48 |
| 16 No. 5   | 1:35 |
| 17 No. 6   | 1:08 |
| 18 O dolce mio tesoro<br>(after Gesualdo)                              | 2:46 |
| 9 Miniatures for 2 Pianos  |      |
| 19 No. 7   | 1:00 |
| 20 No. 8   | 2:16 |
| 21 No. 9   | 2:57 |
| 22 Sonata in G major, K. 455<br>(after Scarlatti)                      | 2:34 |
| 9 Miniatures for Piano solo  |      |
| 23 No. 7   | 1:30 |
| 24 No. 8   | 2:06 |
| 25 No. 9   | 0:56 |
| 26 Piano Sonata No. 16<br>in C major, K. 545:<br>1st movement, Allegro | 3:16 |
| 27 Improvisation on<br>Mozart's Sonata No. 16<br>in C major, K. 545    | 4:45 |

Playing time: 58:12

*The Spurio Sessions* was recorded for Spurio in July 2014 at Steinway Hall, New York City. Audio recording made November 18, 2014 at Sono Luminus Studios in Boyce, Virginia.

Producer: Jon Feidner  
Audio Engineer and Mastering: Daniel Shores  
Spurio Editing: Kazumi Umeda, Jon Feidner  
Audio Editing: Dan Merceruo  
Equipment: Metric Halo ULN-8, DPA 4006 & AEA a840 microphones  
Executive Producers: Eric Feidner, Jon Feidner  
Art Direction: Jackie Fugere  
Design: Cover to Cover Design, Anilda Carrasquillo  
Spurio Record Piano: Steinway Model B # 567568 (New York)  
Spurio Playback Piano: Steinway Model B # 576497 (New York)  
Piano Technician: Glen Bingham

A very special thank you to Dato Low Tuck Kwong and Stephen CuUnjieng, without whom this recording project could not have been completed. We gratefully acknowledge their support and generosity.

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## TO IMPROVISE, OR NOT TO IMPROVISE...

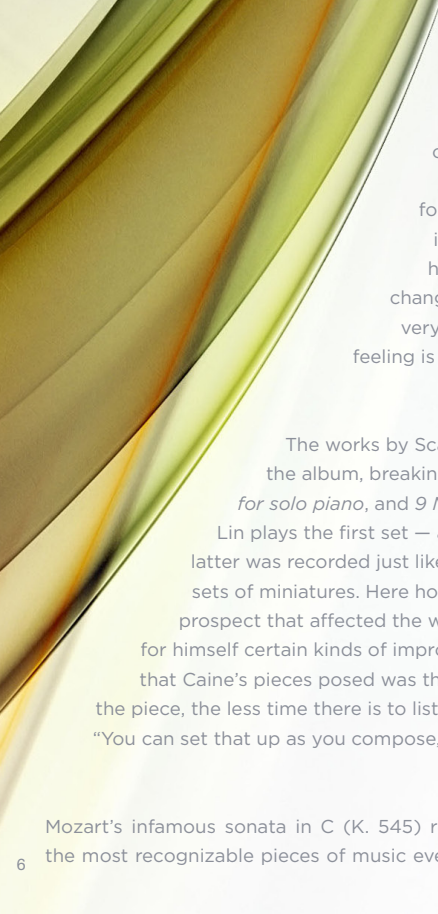
...that is the question. Jazz demands the ceaseless rhythmic and melodic innovation of a robust improvisation, while typically a set harmonic progression underpins the musicians' invention. These chord changes, sometimes substituted, sometimes embellished, lend jazz tunes their structure, serving as a roadmap for audiences and performers alike.

For classical musicians like Jenny Lin, the answer isn't quite so cut and dry. Ostensibly, classical music deals in written, notated, works — works that exist outside of and before performance. Similarly, audiences value the considered interpretations of that notation — interpretations that musicians have rehearsed to the point of perfection. This perspective carries more than just a grain of truth, but does mask the profound influence the practice of improvisation has had on the genre, as well as the impact great improvisers have had on what has always been a largely notated music. After all, Beethoven and Mozart were noted in their day for incredible improvisations, and the very practice of thinking about harmony in chords emerged from the live realization of figured bass in baroque compositions.

*The Spirio Sessions* offer us a different category altogether. To improvise, or not to improvise — why not both? Much of this album is filled with music you've likely heard before: sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, as well as piano reductions of choral motets by Carlo Gesualdo. Uri Caine's improvisations, based not on chord changes, but on the entirety of these through-composed works performed by Lin, set the Spirio Sessions apart and create a series of engaging semi-improvised piano duets.

"There is a long tradition in 'jazz history' of composers taking classical pieces and using them as a spring board for improvisation," says Caine, "and I think there are several approaches you can take. Sometimes you're just playing with the harmony as it goes by, like you do in jazz. Sometimes you take the motives and ideas that come at you and you create a call-and-response — it's like having a dialogue with the music. Other times you lay low, and allow the music to happen while you accompany it. There are a lot of different strategies that you can use. It's a challenge — choosing to be supportive or disruptive. I often try lots of things that I'm not happy with how they come out, so I just keep working at it." The classical selections on the album all lend themselves in different ways to this improvisatory process. The Scarlatti sonatas (**K. 27, K. 55, and K. 492**) — one faster, one slower, and one at an unassuming medium tempo — show off three different styles of the composer, almost as if they formed a larger sonata of their own. They also showcase Scarlatti's genius as a master of keyboard composition. It was exactly this naturally pianistic compositional style that led Caine and Lin to choose Scarlatti for this project.

A Renaissance composer renowned for his singularly eccentric harmonic sensibility, Carlo Gesualdo broke every rule in the book when he crafted his madrigal books in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The four songs (*Beltà, poi che t'assenti, Itene, o miei sospiri, Non mai non cangerò, and O dolce mio Tesoro*) twist unexpectedly through densely chromatic sound worlds only to leave listeners suspended in delicate cadential



moments. According to Caine, this collage-like juxtaposition of harmonic spaces posed an entirely separate challenge than the Scarlatti: “You can map out areas where you’ll respond in different ways, for example by emphasizing the starkness or by intensifying the chromaticism. There’s also the harmonic rhythm, or the way that the harmony changes. Sometimes there are a lot of changes in a very short period of time, while at other times the feeling is much more spacious. Those types of contrast invite a different kind of improvisation.”

The works by Scarlatti and Gesualdo are scattered throughout the album, breaking up two sets of pieces by Caine: *9 Miniatures for solo piano*, and *9 Miniatures for 2 pianos*. As the names suggest, Lin plays the first set — a through-composed work — alone, while the latter was recorded just like the sonatas and motets that pepper the two sets of miniatures. Here however, Caine improvises over his own music, a prospect that affected the way he initially wrote Lin’s part: often to set up for himself certain kinds of improvisation to explore later. The larger challenge that Caine’s pieces posed was the small scope of each movement. The shorter the piece, the less time there is to listen, react, and craft an effective improvisation. “You can set that up as you compose, but at the end of the day you do what you’re going to do in the moment.”

Mozart’s infamous sonata in C (K. 545) rounds out the Spirio Sessions. Easily one of the most recognizable pieces of music ever written, this sonata is presented differently

than the other works on the album: here Lin’s “straight” version and Uri’s improvisation are offered separately. This decision not only accentuates the purity of the original — a crucial feature of all Mozart, says Lin — but also puts Caine’s improvisatory prowess on full display.

Caine is used to hearing accusations of iconoclasm from purists who take exception to projects like the Spirio Sessions. “For many people, [improvising over classical works] seems to be a violation. It really doesn’t come from that impulse though — rather, I think of it as a musical challenge.” In the case of the Mozart, Caine recalls struggling with K. 545 as a child: “My mother used to say when I was practicing, ‘Mozart didn’t write that!’ and I would respond, ‘I know, I’m just trying to work it out.’” Even today, he continues to grapple with the masters’ work for the challenges it poses. “I’ve recently started playing Mozart’s piano concertos because people say you can improvise in the cadenzas. It’s great experience, because I have to practice very hard on things that are part and parcel of the classical music experience, like the terror of making a mistake or playing in an environment where audiences are judgmental and might not accept it. I have the highest respect for those standards. Some people say I’m trying to mess with it maliciously, but that’s not true: the truth is I aspire to it.”

## ABOUT THE RECORDING

This album was imagined at the same time that Steinway was developing Spirio, a high-resolution player system designed to recreate an artist’s performance so accurately that, if you closed your eyes, it would be impossible to tell whether it was the artist or the Spirio system playing the Steinway piano. Jenny Lin has supported the development of this new technology through her performances, recorded on a unique Steinway piano designed to capture every nuance of the artist’s interpretation. Uri Caine joined Jenny in



the Spirio studio in New York, and both artists agreed that the technology represented their performances so accurately, that the official “studio” recording of these sessions could happen without them.

So neither Uri Caine nor Jenny Lin was present in the recording studio when this album was made. What’s more, not a single duet from the Spirio Sessions was captured by the pianists at the same time. Lin recorded all of her music on a ‘record piano’ at Steinway Hall on 57th Street in New York City. Then, as that performance of Lin’s was played back through a Spirio piano, Caine improvised on the same record piano that Lin had originally played. Both sets of Spirio performances were then taken to the recording studio and recorded separately on a Steinway Spirio piano, and the separate parts were then synced together. That is what you hear in the Spirio Sessions: two pianos playing themselves exactly as Uri Caine and Jenny Lin played them. Lin’s Gesualdo sings, her Scarlatti dances, and the human spark that brings Mozart alive shines through her playing. All of these, and every spontaneous thought, each artistic whim from Caine’s mind is recorded and recreated perfectly in Spirio. The Spirio Sessions stand as testament, and the ears will tell.

— Robert Hillinck



Bill Douthart

## URI CAINE

Uri Caine was born in Philadelphia and began studying piano with Bernard Peiffer and composition with George Rochberg. He played in bands led by Philly Joe Jones, Hank Mobley, Johnny Coles, Mickey Roker, Odean Pope, Jymie Merritt, Bootsie Barnes and Grover Washington. He attended the University of Pennsylvania and studied music composition with George Rochberg and George Crumb. Caine

has recorded 25 CDs as a leader. His most recent album is *Callithump* (Winter and Winter 2014).

Recently Caine has received commissions from the Vienna Volksoper, The Seattle Chamber Players, Relâche, The Beaux Arts Trio, the Basel Chamber Orchestra, Concerto Köln and the American Composers Orchestra. From 2006–2009 he was composer in residence for the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and premiered his Concerto for Two Pianos and Chamber Orchestra with Jeffrey Kahane in May 2006. In 2009 he was nominated for a Grammy Award for *The Othello Syndrome*.

During the past several years, Caine has worked in groups led by Don Byron, Dave Douglas, John Zorn, Terry Gibbs and Buddy DeFranco, Clark Terry, Rashid Ali, Arto Lindsay, Sam Rivers and Barry Altschul, the Woody Herman Band, Annie Ross, the Enja Band, Global Theory and the Master Musicians of Jajouka. He has performed at many jazz festivals including The North Sea Jazz Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, Monterey Jazz Festival, JVC Festival, San Sebastian Jazz Festival, Newport Jazz Festival, as well as classical festivals including The Salzburg Festival, Munich Opera, Holland Festival, Israel Festival, IRCAM, and Great Performers at Lincoln Center.

Recent compositions include *The Passion of Octavius Catto* written for the Philadelphia Orchestra and gospel choir and soloists and *Sunburst*,

a piano concerto composed for the Naples Symphony Orchestra, both premiered in 2014. New projects in 2015 include a new piece for piano and orchestra for the American Composers Orchestra and new pieces for the Prism Saxophone Quartet and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra. He lives in New York City with his wife, Jan.

## JENNY LIN

Jenny Lin is one of the most respected young pianists today, admired for her adventurous programming and charismatic stage presence. Her ability to combine classical and contemporary literature has brought her to the attention of international critics and audiences. She has been acclaimed for her “remarkable technical command” and “a gift for melodic flow” by *The New York Times*. *The Washington Post* praises “Lin’s confident fingers” and “spectacular technique” and *Gramophone* has hailed her as “an exceptionally sensitive pianist.” Martha Argerich declared, “Miss Jenny Lin is a very gifted young musician and a brilliant pianist.”



Jenny’s concerts have taken her all over the world, from Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and

Kennedy Center to San Francisco, Canada, and throughout Europe and the Far East. Her extensive discography includes over twenty critically acclaimed recordings on Steinway & Sons, Hänssler Classic, and BIS Records. Her most recent release on the Steinway & Sons label — a disc of Stravinsky’s solo piano works — includes a rarely-recorded arrangement of the *Firebird* Suite by Guido Agosti. Her disc of Federico Mompou’s *Música Callada* was selected as one of the best albums of the year by *The New York Times* in 2011, while *Classics Today* praised her *24 Preludes and Fugues* by Dmitri Shostakovich as “hands down the finest version of this massive work,” also voted a Best of 2009 by *The Washington Post*. Two new releases are scheduled for 2015, an album for children and a two-piano disc with Uri Caine.

Born in Taiwan and raised in Austria, Jenny studied with Noel Flores at the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna, with Julian Martin at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, and with Dominique Weber in Geneva. She has also worked with Leon Fleisher, Richard Goode, and Blanca Uribe, and with Dimitri Bashkurov and Andreas Staier at the Fondazione Internazionale per il Pianoforte in Como, Italy. She holds a bachelor’s degree in German literature from The Johns Hopkins University.