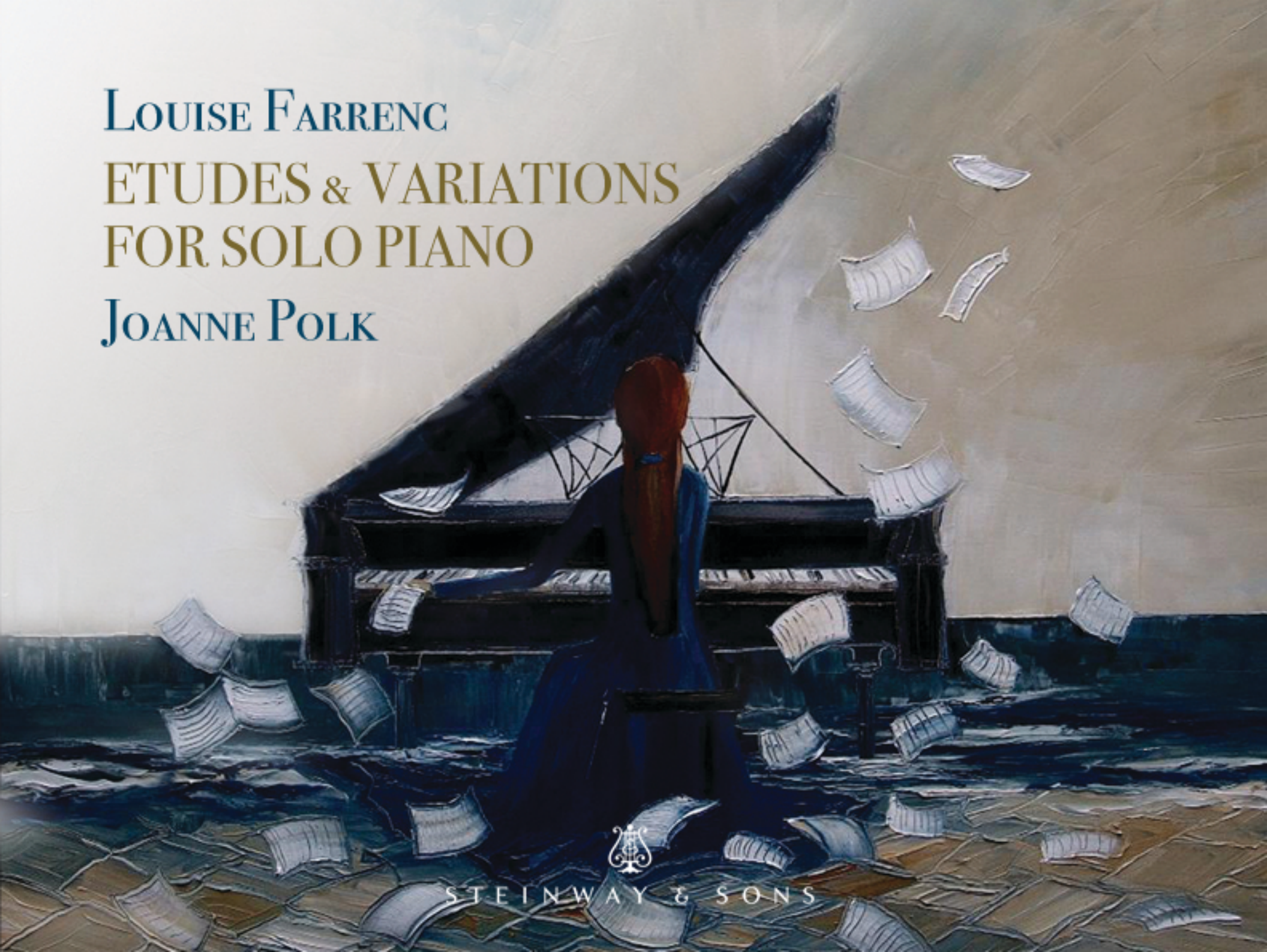


LOUISE FARRENC
ETUDES & VARIATIONS
FOR SOLO PIANO
JOANNE POLK



STEINWAY & SONS



LOUISE FARRENC (1804 – 1875)

ETUDES & VARIATIONS FOR SOLO PIANO

JOANNE POLK

- 1 Air Russe Varié 11:04
- 2 Les Italiennes, Op. 14: No. 1, Cavatine de Norma 6:46
- 3 Souvenir des Huguenots, Op. 19 6:26

Etudes, Op. 26 - Book 1

- 4 No. 3, Allegro non troppo 1:40
- 5 No. 5, Vivace 2:32
- 6 No. 9, Andante con moto 2:03
- 7 No. 10, Adagio 4:50
- 8 No. 11, Presto 3:18
- 9 No. 12, Moderato: Fuga a due Soggetti 3:20
- 10 No. 14, Vivace 3:10
- 11 No. 15, Andante affettuoso 2:48

Etudes, Op. 26 - Book 2

- 12 No. 17, Allegro agitato 1:44
- 13 No. 18, Moderato e cantabile 3:11
- 14 No. 21, Adagio 4:13
- 15 No. 22, Allegro molto 4:25
- 16 No. 24, Tempo di Marcia 4:26
- 17 No. 25, Allegro energico 2:02
- 18 No. 29, Fuga. Andante 1:56

Playing Time: 70:05

Even pianists well versed in the repertoire of the 19th century might be forgiven for being unfamiliar with the music of **LOUISE FARRENC**, one of a small handful of successful female composer/performers whose works have been unfairly neglected over the past century and a half.

As a woman trying to make a mark in the male dominated world of 19th century music, Louise Farrenc (1804 – 1875) fared better than most. She rose to prominence, as was so often the case with women in that era, by virtue of both her talent and her familial connection to prominent figures in the music business. Like Clara Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn, Farrenc grew up in a family of artists (both painters and sculptors), where her gift for music was discovered early and encouraged with lessons in theory and composition provided by Anton Reicha, one of Berlioz's teachers at the Paris Conservatory. Especially important in the development of Farrenc's career was the fact that her husband, Jacques Aristide Farrenc, owned a music publishing business in Paris and was not afraid to encourage his wife's career by printing her music. Farrenc was therefore able to continue her career as a prominent French pianist in the early 19th century, eventually becoming the first female professor of piano at the Paris Conservatory in 1842. Throughout her distinguished career, she composed a remarkable amount of music in many genres, both large and small: piano music, chamber works (including a very popular nonet), and three symphonies, all of which were published and performed regularly in Paris and elsewhere.

As a composer of piano music, Farrenc produced an important collection of 30 etudes (1839) written in all major and minor keys. These etudes were favorably reviewed in the Parisian musical press in 1840 and were eventually adopted by the Paris Conservatory as required piano repertoire in 1845. Like the more famous etudes of her compatriots Chopin and Liszt, those by Farrenc are effective both as targeted technical studies and as expressive concert pieces. The present recording offers a selection of 15 of these etudes as examples of Farrenc's work in this genre.

Sets of piano variations made up a large part of the compositional output and concert programs of most major pianist-composers of the Romantic era. Farrenc's variations, titled *Air Russe Varié*, begin with what she labels a "Preludio," only then proceeding to a statement of the minor-mode folk melody on which the following eight variations are based. This work, like her etudes, is one that requires real pianistic virtuosity.

Among the most popular concert works for piano in the mid-19th century, were those works by Franz Liszt cast either as variations on or paraphrases of melodies drawn from popular operas of the day. In a similar fashion, Farrenc composed her own variations on opera tunes, represented on this recording by the sets based on Bellini's *Norma* and Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. These sets of variations on opera melodies were clearly aimed at audiences that knew the operas of the time and would have instantly appreciated the pianistic arrangements usually performed by the composer him- or herself in concert.

Louise Farrenc commanded an important presence in the musical life of 19th-century Paris alongside her more well-known compatriots Chopin and Liszt. The fact that her music has gotten lost over the intervening years says more about the societal biases of her time than it does on the quality of her music—something that this recording hopefully makes clear and rectifies.

— Dr. Jeffrey Langford

Pianist **JOANNE POLK** was catapulted into the public eye with her recordings of the complete piano works of American composer Amy Beach (1867-1944) on the Arabesque Recordings label. Ms. Polk celebrated the centennial of Beach's Piano Concerto by giving the work its London premiere with the English Chamber Orchestra at the Barbican Center under the baton of Paul Goodwin. A few days later, Ms. Polk performed the Piano Concerto with the

Women's Philharmonic in San Francisco with conductor Apo Hsu in a performance described as "brilliant" by critic Joshua Kosman of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He went on to describe Ms. Polk's performance as, "an enormously vital, imaginative reading. Her playing was expansive in the opening movement, brittle and keen in the delightful scherzo. She brought a light touch to the foreshortened slow movement and fearless technical panache to the showy conclusion."

The first recording in the Beach series, *By the Still Waters*, received the 1998 INDIE award for best solo recording. *Empress of Night*, the fifth volume of Ms. Polk's survey of Beach's piano works, includes the Piano Concerto with the English Chamber Orchestra, Paul Goodwin conducting. The sixth volume of the series, *Morning Glories*, joins Ms. Polk with the Lark Quartet in three outstanding chamber music works by Amy Beach. Two all-Beach performances at Merkin Concert Hall, which featured Joanne Polk and the Lark Quartet, were applauded by the *New York Times*, as they deemed Polk's performances "polished and assured." The *American Record Guide* reported, "Polk and the Larks played their hearts out. We in the audience shouted ourselves hoarse with gratitude."

Prior to recording the complete piano music of Amy Beach, Ms. Polk recorded *Completely Clara: Lieder by Clara Wieck Schumann*, her debut CD for Arabesque Recordings, featuring Metropolitan Opera soprano Korliss Uecker. This CD was selected as a "Best of the Year" recording by *The Seattle Times* and was featured on Performance Today on New York Public Radio. Ms. Polk's CD for Albany Records, *Callisto*, features the solo piano music of Judith Lang Zaimont. Her CD titled *Songs of Amy Beach*, recorded with baritone Patrick Mason for Bridge Records, was nominated for a Grammy Award. In 2010, Ms. Polk's two-CD set of solo piano music by Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, *Songs for Pianoforte*, was released on the Newport Classic label. Ms. Polk's solo piano CD, titled *Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn*, was released in June, 2012 on Bridge Records.

In September, 2014, Ms. Polk's CD titled *The Flatterer*, solo piano music of French Romantic composer Cécile Chaminade, was released on the Steinway and Sons Label. The CD was a "Pick of the Week" on New York's classical radio station WQXR, and debuted at number 1 on the Classical Billboard Chart. In September, 2017, Joanne Polk's CD, *Gershwin & Wild*, was released on the Steinway and Sons. It features Earl Wild's transcriptions of Gershwin songs, as well as Wild's Piano Sonata. *American Record Guide* called Ms. Polk's playing on this CD, "plush and dreamily attractive..."

In December, 2014, Joanne Polk was named as one of Musical America's Top 30 Professionals of the Year in an article titled, "Profiles in Courage." Ms. Polk's profile focused on her work promoting the music of women composers.

Ms. Polk received her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music Degrees from The Juilliard School, and her Doctor of Musical Arts Degree from Manhattan School of Music. She has given master classes at many summer festivals and universities across the country, including Summit Music Festival, New York Summer Music Festival, Montclair State University, Kutztown University, and the University of Minnesota. In August 2012, Ms. Polk was one of three directors launching Manhattan in the Mountains, a three-week summer music festival in the Catskill Mountains, devoted to chamber music, solo performing, and community engagement.

Ms. Polk recently completed a five-city, three-week concert and master class tour of Taiwan and China. As well, in 2019, two of Ms. Polk's CDs were included on New York City's classical radio station WQXR's Essential Piano Recordings. Ms. Polk is a member of the piano faculty of Manhattan School of Music, and is an exclusive Steinway artist.

Throughout my lifetime as a pianist, and in particular for the past decades as a champion of music composed by women, I have been loved and supported, professionally and personally, by cherished family, friends and colleagues, as well as experts in various fields, from whom I have sought counsel, comfort and inspiration. To all, I express my profound appreciation and gratitude: Dr. Jeffrey Langford, Dr. Julian Langford, Steven Epstein, Jon Feidner, Judith Lang Zaimont, Josann McGibbon, Debra Kinzler, Nina Svetlanova, Dr. Roberta Jellinek, Dr. William Becker, Dr. Nina Sugar, and in loving memory of Lee and Lois Polk, and Dr. Lisa Goldsmith.

All of you have touched my life in distinctive and unique ways, and I bow to the light in each of your generous hearts.

— Joanne Polk

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Recorded May 15 – 17, 2019 at The Recital Hall of the Performing Arts Center,

Purchase College, State University of New York.

Produced and Engineered by Steven Epstein

Equipment: Recorded at 24bit/96khz resolution utilizing the Sequoia Digital Audio Workstation

Microphones: 2 DPA Omnidirectional 4006 TL Microphones

Executive Producer: Jon Feidner

Production Assistant: Renée Oakford

Art Direction: Jackie Fugere

Design: Cover to Cover Design, Anilda Carrasquillo

Photo of Joanne Polk: Jeffrey Langford Photography | Cover Painting: Justyna Kopania

LOUISE FARRENC

ETUDES & VARIATIONS FOR SOLO PIANO

JOANNE POLK

French pianist and composer Louise Farrenc commanded an important presence in the musical life of 19th century Paris alongside her more well-known compatriots Chopin and Liszt. As a composer of piano music, Farrenc produced a significant collection of 30 etudes written in all major and minor keys. The present recording offers 15 of these etudes as well as 3 sets of variations, including ones based on Bellini's *Norma* and Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*.

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- 3 Souvenir des Huguenots, Op. 19 6:26
- 4 – 11 Etudes, Op. 26 - Book 1 (Excerpts) 23:41
- 12 – 18 Etudes, Op. 26 - Book 2 (Excerpts) 21:57

Playing Time: 70:05



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