



JENNY

LIN

SOLO PIANO WORKS



STEINWAY & SONS

STRAVINSKY

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PUBLISHING EDITIONS

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Piano Sonata (1924)

- 1 I 3:08
- 2 II 4:58
- 3 III 2:44

Four Etudes, Op. 7 (1908)

- 4 Etude 1 1:22
- 5 Etude 2 2:47
- 6 Etude 3 2:15
- 7 Etude 4 2:07

8 **Ragtime for 11 instruments** (1918), (transcribed by composer) 5:22

9 **Polka** from *Trois pièces faciles* for piano 4-hands (1915),
arr. by Soulima Stravinsky 0:58

10 **Tango** (1925) 3:31

11 **Valse** from *Trois pièces faciles* for piano 4-hands (1915),
arr. by Soulima Stravinsky 2:03

12 **Piano-Rag-Music** (1919) 3:18

13 “Na kogo ti nas pokidayesh” from the
Prologue to Mussorgsky’s opera
Boris Godunov (1918) (transcribed by composer) 1:33

Serenade in A (1925)

- 14 Hymn 3:08
- 15 Romanza 2:47
- 16 Rondoletto 2:36
- 17 Cadenza Finala 2:37

18 **Circus Polka** (1942) 4:01

Two Sketches of a Sonata (1966–67)

- 19 I 0:21
- 20 II 0:32

Firebird Suite (arr. by Guido Agosti)

- 21 Danse infernale du roi Kastcheï 5:17
- 22 Berceuse 3:31
- 23 Finale 3:20

Playing time: 64:16



STRAVINSKY

FOR ONE

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) was a citizen of and commenter on the modern age, a whirlwind force of creativity, a voracious musical omnivore. His musical trajectory—from “primitive” to neoclassical to serialism—paints him as a stylistic chameleon, yet the Russian’s distinct musical sensibility is present throughout his oeuvre.

A tremendous orchestrator of symphonic music (*The Rite of Spring*, *The Firebird*) and dramatic works (*Petrushka*, *Les noces*, *L’Histoire du soldat*, *Jeu de cartes*), Stravinsky’s smaller-scale opuses, including those here for solo piano, tend to escape the spotlight. This is a pity: Stravinsky’s solo piano is packed with as much theatricality as his music for larger and louder forces. From instant to instant, this theater can be comedic, grotesque, awkward and then suddenly intimate and moving.

Listeners familiar with Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* will recognize the seemingly infinite tail-swallowing bass line that opens the first movement of the 1924 **Piano Sonata**, penned six years previous to the Symphony. Here is Stravinsky's neoclassical irony in all its glory: there is respect for the sonata form here, but it's tempered with a saboteur's delight—as things don't ever quite come together. When they do, it's with surprising cadences that arrive unprepared, yet the unexpected resolution always seems to fit. The outer movements—each labeled as $J = 112$ —are also linked via common thematic material. If the Sonata is bookended by Bach counterpoint, the middle movement, Adagietto, gives a heavy nod to Beethovenian ornamentation.

In addition to being a terrific orchestrator, Stravinsky was a master of rhythm. Even though the composer's rhythmic patterns are rarely regular, they always stick. And the juxtaposed meters can seem downright sadistic! While chromaticism and Romanticism characterize the **Four Etudes** (1908), the studies are also packed with brutal rhythms and polyrhythm. The first weaves a melody hazardously through five-against-three and five-against-two rhythms. The second finds an onslaught of six-against-three, -four and -five. The third Etude takes a 6/8 breather with some smooth sailing. But a rousing final Etude finds us back in the thick of it, with the piece commencing on an offbeat before an awkward correction midway through the piece. The last two Etudes are dedicated respectively to Andrey and Vladimir Rimsky-Korsakov, the sons of Stravinsky's teacher, Nicolai.

Stravinsky's fascination with ragtime (and jazz) first found its way into his music with *L'Histoire du soldat*, written in 1918, around the same time as **Ragtime for 11 instruments**; the composer's own piano transcription of *Ragtime* soon followed. "My knowledge of jazz," writes Stravinsky in his book *Expositions and Developments*, "was derived exclusively from copies of sheet music, and as I had never actually heard any of the music

performed, I borrowed its rhythmic style not as played, but as written. I *could* imagine jazz sound, however, or so I like to think. Jazz meant, in any case, a wholly new sound in my music, and *L'Histoire* marks my final break with the Russian orchestral school in which I had been fostered." Indeed, *Ragtime for 11 instruments* is Stravinsky's own quixotic, idiomatic ragtime with very little of Scott Joplin. For the pianist, the challenge here is to relay the layers of the various orchestral instruments while delivering Stravinsky's meandering through line.

The **Polka** and **Valse** are from *Trois pièces faciles* (1915) for four hands, decidedly *moins facile* here when arranged for two hands. The Polka, dedicated to Serge Diaghilev, sets a peculiar melody over an oom-pah bass line. The Valse, dedicated to Satie, starts simply enough before the melody spirals into the stratosphere.

The rather Russian **Tango** (1940) looks backward to Stravinsky's earlier *Ragtime for 11 instruments*. To sustain syncopation, the meter is a constant 4/4 and the 88-measure piece falls into eight-bar blocks. Traditional Tango tropes can be heard, the melody is easygoing, but the dense counterpoint is all Stravinsky.

Piano-Rag-Music (1919) was composed, Stravinsky notes in his *Chronicle of My Life*, with "Artur Rubinstein and his strong, agile, clever fingers in mind," and focuses on the piano's percussive possibilities. The piece is improvisatory in nature, reading as a stream of cadenzas. The awkward juxtapositions are of course intentional and the scent of *L'Histoire du soldat* is always present.

In a touching turn of fatherhood, Stravinsky wrote a simple piano arrangement of the chorus of the **Prologue to Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov** for his children.

Serenade in A (1925) is gentle neoclassicism with a wink. Despite dense textures throughout, there is an abundance of soaring melody lines that are vocal in nature. These four character pieces are inspired by dance forms and recall salon music—“in imitation of the *Nachtmusik* of the 18th century,” notes Stravinsky, “which was usually commissioned by patron princes for various festive occasions.” Stravinsky included four movements “typical of this kind of musical fete.” These included a sobering (and here, dissonant) **Hymne**; a **Romanza** that serves as an “homage...to the guests”; the **Rondoletto** as a period dance form; and an “ornate signature”—the **Cadenza Finala**. All the movements are based in the key of A, but deceptively so: each miniature opens and closes on A, but A never finds itself as a harmonic destination.

Circus Polka was written in 1942 for the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus in New York, and first performed there by a Ballet of Elephants that spring. It is dedicated to a young elephant. The circus’s commission came to George Balanchine, who was asked to choreograph a “ballet of the elephants” featuring *elephanti ballerina prima* Modoc and 49 members of the *corps des elephants*—in pink tutus of course—along with 50 human ballerinas. Eric Walter White, in his *Stravinsky, the Composer and His Works* reports that Balanchine immediately phoned Stravinsky: “‘What kind of music?’ asked the composer. ‘A polka.’ ‘For whom?’ ‘Elephants.’ ‘How old?’ ‘Young.’ ‘If they are very young, I’ll do it.’” *Circus Polka* quotes Schubert’s *Marche Militaire*. 425 performances of the elephant act, which premiered at New York’s Madison Square Garden, were given. The choreographer Paul Taylor would create a piece to *Circus Polka* solely for human dancers, which premiered in 1955.

Two Sketches of a Sonata (1967) are just that. This unfinished business of a would-be new Sonata finds Stravinsky in the serialism woodshed. Pianist Jenny Lin first encountered Stravinsky for piano via the late Italian pianist and teacher Guido Agosti (1901–89), who presented

her with his **Firebird Suite** (1928), a transcription undertaken with Stravinsky’s blessing. Lin found the work maddening as a teenager but returned to it for this collection with greater poise. Still, the pianist notes, “it feels like you need a third hand.” *The Firebird* was a collaboration with Stravinsky choreographer Mikhail Fokine for his Ballets Russes company and launched the composer to fame. The Russian fairytale tells the story of a Prince who captures a bird with wings of fire, releases it, receives a magic egg from the bird for his trouble, and uses the egg to free a Princess held captive by an Evil Magician; the Prince and Princess are wed as the Firebird looks on from afar. Stravinsky penned an orchestral suite from the ballet score. In 1928, Agosti, a student of Busoni, transcribed three movements from the suite which makes great technical demands on the pianist while guarding the polyrhythms, color and grand sweep of the Stravinsky masterwork.

—Ben Finane

Ben Finane is Editor in Chief of the American print quarterly Listen: Life with Classical Music.



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 The Kennedy Center to San Francisco, Canada, and throughout Europe and the Far East. Her extensive discography includes critically acclaimed recordings on Steinway & Sons, Hänssler Classic, and BIS Records, with over twenty albums to her credit.

Her most recent release on the Steinway & Sons label—*Get Happy*—is a collection of virtuosic show tunes, featuring arrangements by Earl Wild and Dick Hyman among others. 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 *ClassicsToday* 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*.

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 Bashkirov 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.

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Engineer: Daniel Shores
Equipment: Metric Halo ULN-8, DPA 4006 microphones
Executive Producers: Eric Feidner, Jon Feidner
Art Direction: Jackie Fugere
Piano: Steinway Model D # 590904 (New York)
Piano Technician: John Veitch



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