

NATASHA

Brahms | Kahane | Prokofiev | Balakirev

Natasha Paremski, piano



STEINWAY & SONS

NATASHA PAREMSKI

With her consistently striking and dynamic performances, pianist Natasha Paremski reveals astounding virtuosity and voracious interpretive abilities. She continues to generate excitement from all corners as she wins over audiences with her musical sensibility and flawless technique.

Born in Moscow, Paremski moved to the United States at the age of eight and became a U.S. citizen shortly thereafter. She is now based in New York. Natasha was awarded several prestigious artist prizes at a very young age, including the Gilmore Young Artist Award in 2006, the Prix Montblanc in 2007, and the Orpheum Stiftung Prize. In September 2010, she was awarded the Classical Recording Foundation's Young Artist of the Year.

At fifteen she debuted with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and recorded two discs with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra under Dmitry Yablonsky — the first featuring Anton Rubinstein's Piano Concerto No. 4 and Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, while the second featured Chopin's complete shorter works for piano and orchestra. Her first recital album was released in 2011 and debuted at No. 9 on the Billboard Traditional Classical chart. In 2012 she recorded Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Fabien Gabel. In 2016, she collaborated with Zuill Bailey on a recording of the Prokofiev Cello Sonata, released on the Steinway & Sons label.

With a strong focus on new music, Paremski's growing repertoire reflects an artistic maturity beyond her years. In the 2010-11 season, she played the world premiere of a sonata written for her by Gabriel Kahane, which is included on this album. At the suggestion of John Corigliano, Paremski brought her insight to his Piano Concerto with the Colorado Symphony. She has played several pieces by noted composer, pianist, and Steinway Artist Fred Hersch in recital.

Paremski actively concertizes, and has performed with major orchestras across North America and Europe, as well as toured with Gidon Kremer and the Kremerata Baltica, and appeared with the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra in Taipei. She gives recitals at high-profile venues across the globe, and continues to extend her performance activity and range beyond the traditional concert hall, having worked with dance companies and on multiple film projects.

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Sonata No. 2 in F-sharp minor, Op. 2

1. Allegro non troppo ma energico 5:50
2. Andante con espressione 4:25
3. Scherzo - Allegro 4:09
4. Finale - Introduzione Sostenuto;
Allegro non troppo e rubato 11:04

GABRIEL KAHANE

Piano Sonata

Dedicated to Natasha Paremski

5. Allegro con fuoco 7:55
6. Autumn 2007 5:36
7. Allegro 3:28

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Sonata No. 7 in B-flat major, Op. 83

8. Allegro inquieto 8:37
9. Andante caloroso 6:18
10. Precipitato 3:10

MILY BALAKIREV

11. Islamey: an Oriental Fantasy, Op. 18 8:31

Total time: 69:03

Written at the early age of 19, Johannes Brahms' **F-SHARP MINOR SONATA** was dedicated to Clara Schumann, the object of an unrequited love that would last throughout the composer's life. All of the passion and grief of this one-sided affair explode in this youthful work, which in spite of its emotional force still displays an intricate and masterful development of thematic material that is far from standard. The expanded opening chords of the first movement return to shape the theme and variations of the second, this time outlining a tritone — the most painful interval in music — both to accentuate the emotional content of the original and to connect the musical material to an old German *Minnelied* called *Mir ist Leide*: "I am suffering." Contradictory instructions at the movement's close anxiously underline a dichotomy: the right hand is marked "*con molto agitazione*" while the left, "*sempre molto sostenuto*." The Trio — as if a dream or hallucination — emerges out of what has been an emotional storm: a beautiful and simple pastoral scene. It quickly unravels when a motive from the Scherzo begins the storm anew. The Introduction and Coda of the fourth movement are meditations, improvisations on the thematic material of the first movement, both themes drawing again from the opening outburst of the whole piece. After a painful, dissonant, and polyphonic statement of the first theme, the second theme is almost insulting in its irony. It's true that Brahms had a great sense of humor — evident in his letters — but this dance-like joke seems only to poke fun at a broken heart. At the end of all this turmoil, he escapes to the calm after the storm, F-sharp major.

From the very opening measures, the **KAHANE SONATA** is striking, virtuosic, and incredibly demanding of the performer, both technically and emotionally. There is no introduction, nothing to prepare you. It just begins, anxious and fervent, even Brahmsian in texture. The second theme is borrowed from the first and is more lyrical, melodious, and more intimate, though it never abandons the sense

of the opening's urgency. A masterfully crafted fugue is at the core of the movement. Its subject is built on the bass of the opening, which steadily evolves and by means of an *accelerando* finally explodes, transforming into a completely new, ethereal, sheer texture. While the first movement seems so unsettled, searching, like a chameleon changing colors to blend into the environment, the second achieves a human poignancy that never fails to move me. This movement quotes one of Kahane's original song, "Durrants," that he wrote in fall of 2007 — a nod to his roots as a singer-songwriter. The third movement is a kind of chaconne, based on a virtuosic and demanding *ostinato* in the bass. Its iciness is very reminiscent of Sergei Prokofiev, a composer I know Gabe idolizes.

The first movement of Prokofiev's **SONATA IN B FLAT MAJOR**, OP. 83 — *Allegro inquieto* — typifies this haunting coldness. The brittle, icy triplets and unceasing pulse that drive the music are at the very core of this work, which was composed in some of the darkest years in modern Russian history: between 1939 and 1942. The first theme is like a march, accented B-flats stabbing persistent and invasive, only to be disturbed by dissonant B-naturals. This march cares for no one and nothing, the pulse driving it forward, accentuating its machine-like nature. Then it dissolves, and gives way to the second theme marked *Andantino, piano, espressivo e dolente* — a single voice, beautiful and poignant in its representation of the individual. Even musically, this melody is removed from the rest of the texture, as if out of fear. More voices enter and leave, the individual always fighting the machine. The second movement is marked *Andante caloroso*. It is a sweeping and romantic duet — two people, perhaps lovers, talking, sharing a memory. Then, *poco piu animato*. A dark cloud gathers quickly and

unleashes a rapturous and pained fury. A fragment of the opening melody returns, but everything breaks down. It was all a dream, and the third movement is the Machine. Marked *Precipitato*, Prokofiev doesn't actually indicate a tempo, which leaves a lot of room for debate. I prefer a faster tempo because there is something frightening about the speed, something horrifying and destructive about the brutality of the 7/8 rhythm distributed across the measure in groups of 2-3-2.

Another Russian composer, Mily Balakirev, was so inspired by the beauty of the Caucasus Mountains and the spirit of its people that he was compelled to write what would eventually become his most celebrated work: **ISLAMEY: AN ORIENTAL FANTASY, OP. 18**. Written in 1869, the marathon of pyrotechnics that is *Islamey* has stood the test of time more so than any other work in Balakirev's *oeuvre*. "Islamey" is, in fact, a folk dance of the Circassian people of the North Caucasus Mountains. The sensual middle section, a love song from the Tatar folk tradition, is bookended by a fast-paced, percussive Circassian folk dance-tune. The coda is a return from the Central Asian exoticism back to the traditional fast-and-faster Russian dance: Trepak, of Nutcracker fame. The fiendishly challenging work was such a success that it was played not only by such great Russian virtuosos as the composer himself, Nikolai Rubenstein, and Alexander Scriabin (who famously injured himself playing it), but crossed the border and became a favorite of Franz Liszt. Ravel once said that in writing *Gaspard de la nuit*, he wanted to achieve the same level of virtuosic challenge as *Islamey*. I revel in its bravura, athleticism, and beauty.

— Natasha Paremski



STEINWAY & SONS
SPIRIO

This album is comprised of previously released performances.

Tracks 1–10 recorded at the Recital Hall of the SUNY Purchase Performing Arts Center,

Sept. 7–9, 2010. Track 11 recorded at Steinway Hall, Oct. 6, 2015.

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Recording Engineer (Track 11): Lauren Sturm

Mixing and Mastering Engineer: Daniel Shores

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Natasha Paremski, piano

Through this music, Natasha Paremski gives a voice to the many who seek to be heard: those who seek the freedom of individuality, the comfort of acceptance, the solace of love.

JOHANNES BRAHMS

1-4 Sonata No. 2 in F-sharp minor, Op. 2 25:28

GABRIEL KAHANE

5-7 Piano Sonata 16:59
Dedicated to Natasha Paremski

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

8-10 Sonata No. 7 in B-flat major, Op. 83 18:05

MILY BALAKIREV

11 Islamey: an Oriental Fantasy 8:31

Total time: 69:03



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