

# TWO MARIMBAS IN BERLIN

Piano Masterworks and Modern Classics  
arranged for Two Marimbas

J.S. BACH · CHOPIN · HAYDN · MIKI  
PIAZZOLLA · RACHMANINOV

Performed and arranged by  
**DOUBLEBEATS**

## TWO MARIMBAS IN BERLIN

### Piano Masterworks and Modern Classics arranged for Two Marimbas

<b>Fryderyk CHOPIN (1810–1849)</b>			
1 <b>Étude in E flat major, Op. 10, No. 11</b>	<b>2:02</b>	12 Variatio 17. a 2 Clav.	0:54
(1829–32)		13 Variatio 21. Canone alla Settima. a 1 Clav.	1:21
2 <b>Étude in A minor, Op. 25, No. 4</b>	<b>1:47</b>	14 Variatio 14. a 2 Clav.	1:01
(1835–37)		15 Variatio 16. Ouverture. a 1 Clav.	1:24
3 <b>Étude in A minor, Op. 10, No. 2</b>	<b>1:19</b>	16 Variatio 20. a 2 Clav.	1:01
(1829–32)		17 Variatio 23. a 2 Clav.	1:07
4 <b>Étude in A flat major, Op. 25, No. 1</b>	<b>2:16</b>	18 Variatio 18. Canone alla Sexta. a 1 Clav.	0:48
‘Aeolian Harp’ (1835–37)		19 Variatio 26. a 2 Clav.	1:08
		20 Variatio 29. a 1 ô vero 2 Clav.	1:04
<b>Sergey RACHMANINOV (1873–1943)</b>			
5 <b>Prélude in G minor, Op. 23, No. 5</b>	<b>4:05</b>	<b>Astor PIAZZOLLA (1921–1992)</b>	
(1901)		<b>Histoire du Tango (1986) (selection)</b>	<b>8:16</b>
		21 I. Bordel 1900 *†	3:18
		22 III. Nightclub 1960	4:58
<b>Johann Sebastian BACH (1685–1750)</b>			
<b>Goldberg Variations, BWV 988</b>	<b>16:40</b>	<b>Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732–1809)</b>	
(1741) (selection)		23 <b>20 Variations in A major, Hob.XVII:2</b>	<b>15:11</b>
6 Aria	2:08	(1771)	
7 Variatio 1. a 1 Clav.	0:57		
8 Variatio 7. a 1 ô vero 2 Clav.	1:01	<b>Minoru MIKI (1930–2011)</b>	
9 Variatio 5. a 1 ô vero 2 Clav.	0:46	24 <b>Marimba Spiritual</b>	<b>10:46</b>
10 Variatio 10. Fughetta. a 1 Clav.	0:50	for marimba and three percussionists	
11 Variatio 28. a 2 Clav.	1:10	(1984)†	

All works arranged by DoubleBeats

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

DoubleBeats

Ni Fan, Marimba, \*Percussion

Lukas Böhm, Marimba, †Percussion

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### Piano Masterworks and Modern Classics arranged for Two Marimbas

‘Our musical culture is shaped by percussion as never before.’ – Lukas Böhm, 2020

With *Two Marimbas in Berlin*, percussionists Lukas Böhm and Ni Fan, as the duo DoubleBeats, present world premiere recordings of four pinnacles of the keyboard repertoire – J.S. Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, Rachmaninov’s *Prélude No. 5* from his *10 Préludes, Op. 23*, Chopin’s *Études* and Haydn’s *20 Variations in A major, Hob.XVII:2* – in arrangements for two marimbas. Alongside are two modern classics: Piazzolla’s *Histoire du Tango*, originally written for flute and guitar, and Minoru Miki’s *Marimba Spiritual* for marimba and three percussionists, in a reimagining for marimbas and a range of percussion by DoubleBeats. The arrangements reveal not only the versatility of the original material, which together spans three centuries of music history, but also the inventiveness and vision of the interpreters.

The 24 études for solo piano that make up Chopin’s *Opp. 10* and *25* cycles may be technical exercises, but their extra-musicality and picture painting has ensured their sustained popularity and place in the repertoire. *Étude in E flat major, Op. 10, No. 11*, with its spread of undulating arpeggios, creates a gently rippling texture that translates idiomatically to the soft, resonant tones of the marimba. By contrast, *Étude in A minor, Op. 25, No. 4*, marked *Agitato*, is closer in character to a technical study but its syncopated staccato rhythm, which sets left-hand leaps against right-hand chords, creates a narrative of high drama.

*Étude in A minor, Op. 10, No. 2* was intended as an exercise for developing the weaker fingers of the pianist’s right hand, and it offers a technical workout for percussionists too, the rapid chromatic-scale figures, shared here between the two marimbas, requiring exceptional dexterity and control. *Étude in A flat major, Op. 25, No. 1* earned its nickname, ‘Aeolian Harp’, from Robert Schumann, who was an admirer of Chopin’s achievement in these works. Comprising rapid broken chords, shifting harmonies and a melodic line that floats high above the arpeggios, the étude is here transcribed faithfully between the two marimbas, each player performing a separate hand from the piano score.

Following the publication of Chopin’s *24 Préludes, Op. 28*, in all major and minor keys, which redefined the piano prelude, Rachmaninov, like several other notable composers, wrote a set of his own. His *24 Préludes*, one in each key, were originally published in instalments, building on the popularity of his early *Prélude in C sharp minor, Op. 3, No. 2* from 1892. The *Prélude in G minor, Op. 23, No. 5*, completed in 1901, appears early in the cycle. Its percussive nature, with its ominous and obsessive ‘rat-a-tat’ rhythm heard in the lower right-hand, dominates the outer sections of the piece, while the flowing middle section divides naturally between the two marimbas. The ending disappears like a breath of air.

The music of J.S. Bach is among the most versatile in the classical catalogue, and the *Goldberg Variations* for keyboard have inspired arrangers for centuries. Not all the variations are suitable for the transition to percussion duo, but DoubleBeats have constructed a sizable set comprising the *Aria* and 15 of the 30 variations. The *Aria* has a timeless and intensely private quality, and this is captured by the marimba, whose texture and colours are surprisingly similar to those of a clavichord. Gradually the variations diversify in tempo and rhythm, testing the ability

of the players to stay together and to keep Bach's intricate counterpoint to the fore.

*Variatio 1* has a lively, flowing discourse with a continuous semiquaver movement. It is followed on this recording by *Variatio 7*, a lilting dance in 6/8 time. The busy patter of *Variatio 5* follows, the steady flow of the music prompted by single notes in the left hand of the keyboard part. *Variatio 10*, a *Fughetta*, recalls the stately phrasing of the *Aria* before *Variatio 28*, where the trills assigned to the keyboard player's right hand by Bach are ripe for transcription and repetition on the marimba.

*Variatio 17* demands considerable virtuosity, with a tumbling sequence of semiquavers separated by a third, and is complemented by the thoughtful *Variatio 21*, one of the quietest moments in the piece. The bright trills of *Variatio 14* lead to *Variatio 16*, marked by the composer as an *Ouverture*. Its dotted figuration recalls the French style in rhythms that are sharply defined in a percussion arrangement. The bubbly *Variatio 20* exchanges semiquaver ideas in quick formation, while *Variatio 23* works in bell-like sequences of thirds, both drawing parallels in sound to the upper registers of an organ. *Variatio 18* is a canon at the melodic interval of a sixth, before *Variatio 26* sets a slow-moving dance figure against quickfire semiquavers. *Variatio 29* provides a grand finish to this arrangement, its long runs of notes flowing right down to the lowest range of the marimbas.

Argentine composer Ástor Piazzolla wrote *Histoire du Tango* for flute and guitar in 1986, but over the years the work has proved equally effective in a number of different instrumental combinations, with the marimba often substituted for the guitar. The work acts as an entry point to the tango, detailing the history of the dance in four movements. *Bordel 1900*, the first movement, paints a portrait of the French, Italian and Spanish women in the bordellos teasing the men who came to see them. It is performed here using two marimbas and a cajón, a box-shaped percussion instrument. The third movement, *Nightclub 1960*, takes account of the changes in Buenos Aires at the turn of that decade, notably the integration of tango with the Brazilian bossa nova. The marimba duo builds up to a thrilling finish.

Haydn's *20 Variations for Keyboard, Hob.XVII:2* is thought to have been written for harpsichord or a newly acquired square piano at the composer's home in Eisenstadt. He conceived the work in G major, in his early thirties, but it was temporarily buried by his large output of sonatas, variations and dances for the keyboard. Clearly the work still meant something to Haydn, for he returned to it over 20 years later. Moving the music up a tone to A major, he revisited the variations before finally publishing the complete set in 1789. The theme is a simple one in triple time, balancing one note in the right hand against three in the left. Gradually the rhythms become more intricate as the composer explores the limits of the triple time metre. The tonality remains firmly rooted in A major for much of the piece, and there are lively exchanges between the players in the third, fifth and sixth variations especially. The technical demands, which include broken chords (*No. 9*), thirds (*No. 10*) and octaves (*No. 11*), transfer naturally in these arrangement for two marimbas. Halfway through the variations assume the form of a *chaconne*, the Baroque dance-variation form, before the final variation expands the spread of chords and finishes the work with a flourish.

Haydn's lighthearted *Variations* is thrown into sharp relief by Japanese composer Minoru Miki's *Marimba Spiritual* for marimba and three percussionists. Miki's first compositions for the marimba date from 1968, when the solo piece *Time* was swiftly followed by the *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra* the following year. He did not write for the instrument again until 1983, when a commission from Keiko Abe requested a work for marimba and three percussionists. Writing quickly, Miki completed *Marimba Spiritual* between Christmas Day 1983 and 13 January 1984. The world premiere was given at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam two months later, after which Abe took it

on a European tour. In 1988 the Safri Duo made a successful arrangement for two players; the DoubleBeats version on this recording is for marimbas and a range of percussion: an odaiko, shime, bongo, bass drum, waterphone, spiral cymbal, caxixi (a shaker) and Asian gongs.

*Marimba Spiritual* expresses anger and sorrow at the suffering experienced by those caught up in famine in Africa in the early 1980s. The first section is a requiem to those lost; the second offers hope in the form of a 'lively resurrection'. The rhythm and note patterns are notated, but there is room for interpretation in the percussion parts, where only relative pitches and tone qualities are noted. The patterns for the second part are taken from the festival drumming of the Chichibu area, northwest of Tokyo, and the performers are asked to pay special attention to the balance between the two parts.

**Ben Hogwood**

## Lukas Böhm

Lukas Böhm studied at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin and with the Berlin Philharmonic as a scholar of the Karajan Academy. As one half of the percussion duo DoubleBeats, with Ni Fan, he won first prize at the 2018 Osaka International Music Competition in Japan and first prize at the 2017 Universal Marimba Competition in Belgium. The duo was also awarded the Ritter Prize by the Oscar and Vera Ritter Foundation in 2015. In addition, Böhm is a laureate of the International Competition of Timpani of Lyon and the Italy Percussion Competition. Concert tours and guest professorships have taken Böhm to Europe, Asia, and North and South America, and he has made several recordings. In 2018 he was made professor at the Academy of Music and Dance in Cologne, and a further appointment followed at the Carl Maria von Weber University of Music in Dresden in 2019. He has chamber music partnerships with Alexej Gerassimez and Li Biao and is a regular guest with orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Deutsche Oper Berlin and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin.



## Ni Fan

Ni Fan performs internationally as a soloist and chamber player and has played percussion concertos with numerous world class orchestras. She holds a teaching position at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin and was appointed as distinguished professor at the China Conservatory of Music. In 2013 she became the first percussionist to be awarded the Prix Montblanc, and with her percussion partner Lukas Böhm she won first prizes at the 2017 Universal Marimba Competition in Belgium and Osaka International Music Competition in Japan. The duo, DoubleBeats, also received the 2015 Ritter Prize from the Oscar und Vera Ritter Foundation and are beneficiaries of Yehudi Menuhin's Live Music Now initiative. Fan studied at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin. She is a regular guest at the festivals such as the China-UK International Music Festival, PAS China International Percussion Festival, International Percussion Ensemble Week in Croatia, Cap Ferret Music Festival in France, Budapest Spring Festival, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, International Mercedes-Benz Music Festival, and Kissinger Sommer festival.



With *Two Marimbas in Berlin*, award-winning duo DoubleBeats presents world premiere recordings of four pinnacles of the keyboard repertoire and two modern classics in their own remarkable arrangements for marimbas and percussion. Soft, resonant tones and high drama emerge through the duo's exceptional dexterity and control in works by Chopin and Rachmaninov, as well as in Bach's iconic *Goldberg Variations*. Haydn's lighthearted *Variations* contrast with the thrills of Piazzolla's *Histoire du Tango*, and the album finishes with Minoru Miki's poignant *Marimba Spiritual*.

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**Fryderyk CHOPIN (1810–1849)**

- |   |                                                               |      |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Étude in E flat major, Op. 10, No. 11 (1829–32)               | 2:02 |
| 2 | Étude in A minor, Op. 25, No. 4 (1835–37)                     | 1:47 |
| 3 | Étude in A minor, Op. 10, No. 2 (1829–32)                     | 1:19 |
| 4 | Étude in A flat major, Op. 25, No. 1 'Aeolian Harp' (1835–37) | 2:16 |

**Sergey RACHMANINOV (1873–1943)**

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|---|------------------------------------------|------|
| 5 | Prélude in G minor, Op. 23, No. 5 (1901) | 4:05 |
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**Johann Sebastian BACH (1685–1750)**

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|------|-------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 6–20 | Goldberg Variations, BWV 988 (1741) (selection) | 16:40 |
|------|-------------------------------------------------|-------|

**Astor PIAZZOLLA (1921–1992)**

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|-------|--------------------------------------|------|
| 21–22 | Histoire du Tango (1986) (selection) | 8:16 |
|-------|--------------------------------------|------|

**Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732–1809)**

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|----|---------------------------------------------|-------|
| 23 | 20 Variations in A major, Hob.XVII:2 (1771) | 15:11 |
|----|---------------------------------------------|-------|

**Minoru MIKI (1930–2011)**

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|----|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 24 | Marimba Spiritual for marimba and three percussionists (1984) | 10:46 |
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WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

DoubleBeats

Ni Fan and Lukas Böhm, Marimbas and Percussion

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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