

THE BOULANGER LEGACY



LILI BOULANGER

[1] NOCTURNE

[2] CORTÈGE

GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ

[3-6] SONATA NO. 3 FOR VIOLIN & PIANO

LILI BOULANGER

[7] D'UN MATIN DE PRINTEMPS

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

[8-14] SONATA FOR VIOLIN & PIANO

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

[15] LE GRAND TANGO

NADIA BOULANGER

[16] TROIS PIÈCÈS: I. MODÉRÉ

ABOUT THE ALBUM

Few composers with such a small oeuvre can be said to have had such huge influence as Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979). Although she was also a conductor and pianist, played a major role in the Monteverdi revival, and was an inspiring figure to all Neoclassical composers (indeed, she even counted Igor Stravinsky as a close friend), she is especially remembered as the most famous music pedagogue of the 20th century.

Exactly how many students Nadia Boulanger taught has never been accurately recorded, but the list of famous ones is long enough. From Aaron Copland to Jean Françaix, from Philip Glass to Daniel Barenboim, from Elliott Carter to Quincy Jones (the producer of Michael Jackson's best-selling albums)—they all came to visit 'Mademoiselle' (her preferred title) to gather around her piano and learn. She taught six days a week, without a break for either lunch or dinner. However critical she was, most composers who had lessons with her spoke highly of her. Many of them proudly put her name on their resumes.

But besides all that, Nadia Boulanger was also something else: the older sister.

Nadia was born in Paris to a well-to-do musical family. She was the daughter of Raissa Myshetskaya, a Russian woman who claimed to be a princess and who had married her conservatory teacher: the composer and conductor Ernest Boulanger (1815-1900), who was 41 years her senior. Composers such as Gabriel Fauré and Charles Gounod were frequent guests while Nadia was growing up. For Nadia, making and composing music was the most normal thing in the world. By the age of seven, she was already taking her first lessons at the conservatory.

When she was six, her sister Lili was

born, following the birth of two other sisters who had died in infancy. Lili Boulanger (1893-1918) suffered from bronchial pneumonia from the age of two. Despite continual issues with her health, she turned out to be an even more gifted student than Nadia and learned to sing and play the piano, violin, and harp.

That Nadia meanwhile belonged to the greatest talents of her generation was proven in 1908 when she won Second Prize in the musical composition category of the prestigious Prix de Rome competition. The Prix de Rome was the most important arts competition in France; a young composer's entire conservatory training was dedicated to winning the top prize. Laureates were given a scholarship to travel to Rome, where they could study and be inspired.

Though it was a disappointment that Nadia came so close to victory without taking the first prize, her sister made up for it. Lili won the Prix de Rome in 1913 with her cantata *Faust et Hélène*, which she dedicated not to a teacher as per usual, but to Nadia, who had helped her so much. Lili Boulanger was the first female winner.

By then, it was clear to everyone that Lili would not grow old. On March 15, 1918, she died of Crohn's disease, still during the First World War. Her opera, *La princesse Maleine*, remained unfinished. While Nadia would go down in history as the greatest pedagogue of her time, Lili would always remain the greatest promise.

Nadia, who lovingly embraced Lili from an early age, was full of praise for her sister's work and continued to promote Lili's oeuvre throughout her life. After Lili's death, she herself would hardly compose anymore. The earlier death of her close friend Raoul Pugno had also been a heavy blow, causing her career as a

performing musician to stagnate. Nadia never married but always continued to teach.

On this album, *The Boulanger Legacy*, we combine work by Nadia Boulanger's students with Lili Boulanger's music for piano and violin. We start with the beautiful *Nocturne* from 1911. Although the violin version is better known, it was originally written for flute and piano. Toward the end of the *Nocturne*, Lili gives a nod to Claude Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, quoting its opening measure. In the work of Lili Boulanger, the emphasis is mostly on the human voice, and the melody of the *Nocturne* also has a vocal quality. The piece has nothing to do with the night; the title was invented by the publisher. The *Nocturne* was published as a diptych (*Deux morceaux*) together with *Cortège*, which she composed during her residency in Rome in 1914.

The history of *D'un matin de printemps* (1917) is another example of how Lili Boulanger allowed the full potential of her music to shine by adapting it to different instrumental settings. *D'un matin de printemps* was originally written for violin and piano, but Lili then arranged the piece for piano trio, for flute and piano, and even made an orchestral version. It would be the last work she completed.

Of the many students whose music Nadia influenced, there is one we especially wanted to honor: Grażyna Bacewicz.

If I had to name the most underrated composer of the 20th century, the first one that comes to mind is Bacewicz (1909-1969). In Poland, where she came from, she is well-known, but in the rest of the world, there is still a lot of work to be done. She was a great violinist. She was admitted to the class of violinist Carl Flesch in Paris, where she also took lessons with Nadia Boulanger. Bacewicz would put her name to seven violin concertos, seven string quartets, and four

symphonies: vibrant pieces, sometimes with folk music influences and sometimes very modern. The combination of piano and violin suited her best; moreover, she was able to perform them herself. She wrote five violin sonatas. We chose the third, from 1948, because we feel it best complements the other pieces. You can hear French influences, but it's also very individual. The movements are rich in contrast, and the whole sonata is wonderfully catchy.

The composer and music critic Virgil Thomson, also a pupil of Boulanger, once joked: "Every town in America has two things: a five-and-dime and a Boulanger pupil." He wasn't far off. During the Second World War, Boulanger stayed in the United States. The school of which she was to become director, in Fontainebleau, France, attracted countless ambitious American music students. In an endearing reference to her last name, she was sometimes dubbed the *boulangerie*—as if she were delivering composers like loaves of bread.

The American composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) also looked up to Nadia Boulanger and often relied on her for advice. Bernstein was one of the last people to speak with Nadia before she died. His only violin sonata dates from 1939 and is therefore even older than his first published work (the *Clarinet Sonata* from 1942). The *Violin Sonata*, actually a series of variations, was written prior to his encounters with Boulanger, but it seemed appropriate to add this piece. In it, we hear how a young person with already great qualities plays with form and tries to relate to Modernism. The more often Dina and I perform it, the more enthusiastic we become about the piece.

The fact that Bernstein reused material from the *Violin Sonata* for his ballet *Facsimile* and his second symphony, *The Age of Anxiety*, shows that the piece was

was also dear to his heart. The melody in the fourth variation has even been taken over literally in *The Age of Anxiety*, with one adaptation; Bernstein changed a D in the melody into a D sharp. Verification in the manuscript of both pieces (with thanks to Robert Lipartito, the Music Reference Specialist of the Library of Congress in the United States) shows that both decisions were intentional. Because *The Age of Anxiety* was written later, and we found the D sharp itself more convincing, we decided to follow Bernstein's later decision for this album.

The year 2021 marks the one hundredth anniversary of Astor Piazzolla's (1921-1992) birth, and as a former student of Nadia Boulanger, he could not be missed on this album. In his younger years, the Argentinian composer looked to Stravinsky, Bartók, and Ravel as his examples, and so he concluded that there could be no one better to guide him in his exploration of European music than Nadia Boulanger. But their first meeting, in 1954, was a disappointment. Piazzolla showed his new teacher his work: not original enough, she judged. She asked him about his activities in Argentina, and Piazzolla revealed that he made a living as a *tanguero*; his instrument was the bandoneon. Boulanger asked him to play one of his own tangos. Upon hearing it, she declared: "Here is the true Piazzolla—do not ever leave him." The story is often quoted to emphasize that Boulanger didn't make slavish copies, but let her students be the best versions of themselves. In practice, this artistic freedom came only after endless hours of counterpoint exercises and analysis of Brahms—the only late-Romantic composer who could count on her unreserved approval.

Back in Argentina, Piazzolla would develop into the great tango innovator, integrating jazz and classical music into the traditional genre; tango was no lon-

ger just dance music, it could be art in and of itself. Many of the pieces he created have been written out and are played in arranged form by classical musicians. He would also write scores himself. In 1982, he composed *Le Grand Tango* for the legendary cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. The arrangement for violin and piano on which we rely was made by Sofia Gubaidulina.

During the rehearsal process, we listened to Piazzolla's own performances and immersed ourselves in different tango styles. Bandoneon player and tango specialist Leo Verveelde, who worked together with the great tango player Osvaldo Pugliese on many occasions, listened with us and gave us advice on the techniques and approach of the rhythms in tango.

The finale on our album could not have belonged to anyone but Nadia Boulanger. Unfortunately, she didn't write anything for the combination violin and piano, so we made our own arrangement of the first of her *Three Pieces for Cello and Piano* (1914). The melody is so poignant that one wonders whether she has not underestimated herself as a composer. Just like Lili, we would have liked to hear more from Nadia, but we are grateful that she has inspired so many young artists.

Merel Vercammen

SPECIAL THANKS TO

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MEREL VERCAMMEN

Dutch violinist Merel Vercammen graduated cum laude from the Royal College of Music in London. She received prizes at the London Grand Prize Virtuoso Competition, the National Competition of the Foundation for Young Musical Talent of the Netherlands and the Princess Christina Concours. Merel has performed throughout the world and played in renowned concert halls such as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg and Wigmore Hall in London.

Merel had her first violin lessons when she was five years old and began studying at the HKU Utrecht Conservatory under Eeva Koskinen at the age of fifteen. At the Royal College of Music in London, she earned a Bachelor of Music as well as a Master of Performance, under Jan Repko. She then proceeded to study under Ilya Grubert at the Santa Cecilia Music Foundation in Portogruaro, Italy. Furthermore, she has followed masterclasses by Josef Rissin, Lewis Kaplan, Daniel Hope, Alina Ibragimova and Zakhar Bron. Her debut album *Symbiosis* with pianist Dina Ivanova came out on Gutman Records in March 2019 and has been very well received in the international press.

As a soloist, Merel has performed violin concertos by Beethoven, Brahms and Otto Ketting, the last of whom conducted his own work. In 2017, she premiered a violin concerto by composer Mathilde Wantenaar, written especially for her. In addition, she has developed an interactive performance about music and the brain and engages in improvisation. In September 2019, Merel released her second album, *The Zoo*, which contains free improvisations with eight duo partners, and in 2020 she released a digital EP, *Silent City*, with cellist Maya Fridman.

merelvercammen.com

DINA IVANOVA

Russian pianist Dina Ivanova has won prizes in various competitions, including second prize at the Liszt Competition in Weimar, second prize at the Ricardo Viñes Competition in Spain, an Honorary Mention Award at the Paderewski Competition in Poland, and the Artist Recognition Award at the International Keyboard Festival in New York. In 2017, Dina won the audience award and third prize from the jury during the Liszt Competition in Utrecht.

Dina started taking piano lessons from her mother at the age of four. She studied at the Central Music School in Moscow and the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow under Alexander Mndoyants. As of September 2018, she is studying under Grigory Gruzman at the University of Music Franz Liszt in Weimar. Dina has followed masterclasses by Dmitri Bashkurov, Leslie Howard, Jerome Rose, Leon Fleisher, Awadagin Pratt and Pavel Gililov.

As a soloist, she has performed with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, the Thüringer Philharmonie, and the Israel Symphony Orchestra, among others. As part of the Career Development Programme offered by Utrecht's Liszt Piano Competition, Dina engaged in an extensive concert tour as a soloist, including concerts with the Korean Symphony Orchestra in Seoul and the KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra in Durban, South Africa; as well as recitals in South America, the United States, Russia, South Africa and Europe. Dina has also recorded work by composer Sergei Lyapunov for the multiyear CD project *Anthology of Russian Music*.

dinaivanova.com





A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

My love story with classical music starts in the year 2012. After hearing a recording of Beethoven's violin concerto performed by Jascha Heifetz, I knew that it would become an integral part of my life. Since then, I found joy in attending several live concerts a month, but also thought immediately about how I could share this newfound love. Then, in the deafening silence of the lockdown of April 2020 all dots were connected: as in my work as an acupuncturist, I wanted to create a movement of energy. This time by supporting musicians spreading music close to their heart. By creating a foundation that would support them financially so they could focus on the artistic side and leave the recording process in the more than capable hands of TRPTK.

I met Merel at the release concert of *The Zoo*, where I invited her to perform a house concert for some of my closest friends.

I admired her courage to always go her own way. By reintroducing improvisation and championing women composers, she connects a young and diverse audience. I was therefore very happy to support her dream for recording this album.

Gilles Stoop



Our goal is to create immersive experiences through sound. By creating an acoustic hologram, our recordings give you the illusion of being at the world's most beautiful concert halls and churches – all this, while never leaving your listening room.

No costs or efforts are spared to seize that magical moment in which music is being created, and bring it home to you in the highest quality. Why? Simply because this is how music should be experienced: fresh and alive, not canned and with a stale aftertaste of conservation. To us, music is life, and should be lived to the fullest in an authentic and uncompromising way.

Through these recordings, we bring you closer to the music and the musicians than you've ever imagined. The devil is in the details, and the ability to catch those makes all the difference between good quality and excellent quality. Listening to our recordings, you're able to perceive every breath, every bowing, every movement with an astonishing clarity. Not only do you hear the music, you hear the music as it's being created. This adds a human dimension to your listening experience, connecting you instantly and instinctively to what you're listening to.

The basis for all of our recordings is our Optimised Omnidirectional Array (OOA for short), developed by founder and lead audio engineer Brendon Heinst. With OOA, we aim to create a truly accurate image of the soundstage, while retaining uncoloured transparency in the tonal characteristics of the recording. Unlike many current recording techniques, OOA was developed scientifically through simulation and modelling, as well as through many extensive listening tests with an independent listening panel. But however great any microphone array can be, the signals still have to be converted into the digital domain. Our aim at TRPTK is to do this conversion process completely and utterly uncoloured, preserving all the tiniest little details without the harshness usually attributed to digital recordings. The way we do this is by recording at 352.8 kHz 32 bits DXD, at 16 times higher than CD quality. This means, in musical terms, that everything in the original performance is preserved. From the huge 32-foot pipe of a cathedral organ, to the highest notes on a piccolo flute. From the softest whispers all the way to the searingly loudest orchestral hits.

Speaking of soft whispers and loud orchestral hits; we choose our artists not just by their ability to amaze us. We're eager to collaborate with musicians and composers who walk that fine line between renewing genres and connecting to audiences. Together with them, we can achieve our goal of creating daring recordings that stay loyal to the idea of always aiming for the highest quality possible.

Because at TRPTK, we bring you not just the sound, but the core of music.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads 'Brendon Heinst'.

recording & mastering engineer at TRPTK

CREDITS

Executive producer	Gilles Stoop
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Artwork	Brendon Heinst

This album was recorded between at the Westvest90 church in Schiedam, The Netherlands, between September 29th and October 1st 2020. Dina Ivanova plays on a Steinway Model D-274 concert grand.

EQUIPMENT

Microphones	DPA d:dicate 4006A DPA d:dicate 4015A Sony C100
AD/DA converters	Merging Technologies Hapi Merging Technologies Anubis
Master clock	Grimm Audio CC2 at 352.8 kHz
Monitoring	KEF Blade Two loudspeakers KEF LS50 loudspeakers Hegel H30 amplifiers Sennheiser HD800S headphones
Power conditioning	Furutech Daytona 303E CAD Ground Control GC1
Cabling	Furutech custom microphone cables Furutech custom balanced interlinks Furutech custom power cables Furutech custom loudspeaker cables
Misc.	JCAT NET Card FEMTO JCAT M12 Switch Gold Furutech e-TP609E NCF Furutech NCF Boosters R.T.F.S. acoustic modules

Grimm | AUDIO

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