

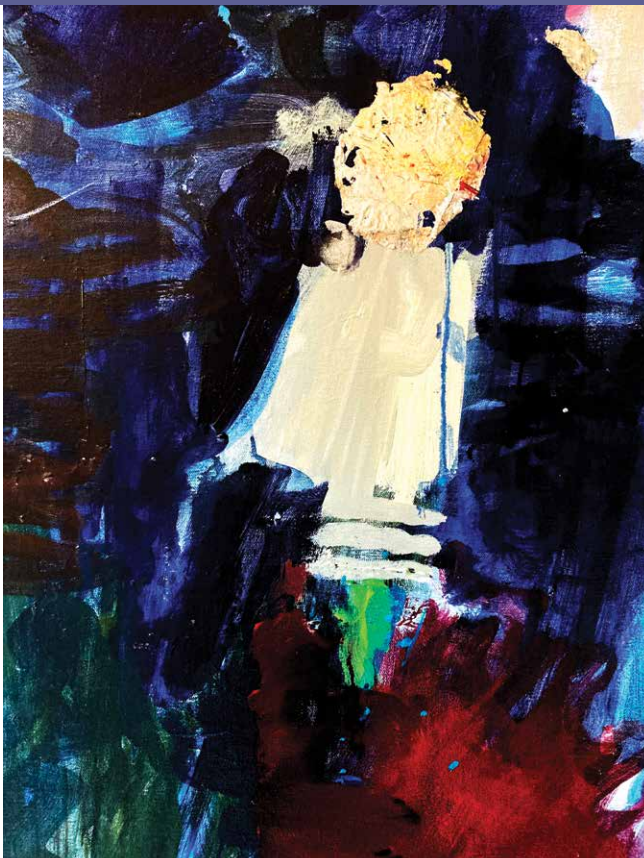
FANTASY

OPPENS

PLAYS

KAMINSKY

CEDILLE
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FANTASY

OPPENS
PLAYS
KAMINSKY

URSULA OPPENS, PIANO

LAURA KAMINSKY (B. 1956)

Piano Quintet (19:03)

- 1 I. Anthem (4:17)
- 2 II. Lamentation; coming into light (7:32)
- 3 III. Maelstrom, and... (7:12)

Cassatt String Quartet

4 **Fantasy (20:51)**

**Reckoning: Five Miniatures for
America for Piano Four Hands (8:57)**

- 5 Majestic. Yet. (1:48)
- 6 Hurling. Still. (1:39)
- 7 Reverie (1:36)
- 8 Divided (2:31)
- 9 Forward. Yet. (1:21)

with Jerome Lowenthal

10 **Piano Concerto (20:58)**

*Arizona State University Orchestra
Jeffery Meyer, conductor*

TT: (70:04)

All world premiere recordings

PROGRAM NOTES

by Laura Kaminsky

The four works on this recording, aptly titled *Fantasy: Oppens Plays Kaminsky*, span more than a decade of joyful music-making with my beloved colleague and friend, Ursula Oppens. Having Oppens as a musical partner is indeed a fantasy, a dream come true. It also brings together other artists with whom I have had long, profound, and similarly exultant collaborations. Included are works for solo piano, piano four-hands, chamber ensemble, and orchestra, encompassing a range of my musical interests and obsessions and revealing for the listener the breadth of Oppens' exquisite artistry and formidable virtuosity.

The Piano Quintet is in three movements. *Anthem* is built on a persistent, yet constantly changing rhythmic groove in 13/8 and is a melding of West African drumming patterns, which I studied assiduously while living in Ghana in 1992–1993, with the irregular dance rhythms I encountered during the year I worked in Eastern Europe (1996–1997). It offers a bit of joy for this dark time. *Lamentation; coming into light* opens with a piano solo that comes out of the depths, soulfully and solemnly and, joined by the quartet, morphs into an uneasy, gnarly world of both yearning and agitation, finding peace

along the way, but then returning to the initial darkness. *Maelstrom*, and... is a whirl of clusters in the piano, gossamer at times, aggressive at others, leading all five players eventually to a place of calm and beauty before drifting away.

Commissioned by Ursula with generous support from the Newburgh Institute for Art and Ideas, I composed the Quintet as a birthday gift to her, with my deepest appreciation for her immense artistry, capacious mind, and open heart. Oppens and the Cassatt String Quartet gave its premiere performance on February 2, 2019 on *Only at Merkin with Terrance McKnight: Ursula Oppens 75th Birthday Tribute* at the Kaufman Music Center in New York City.

Fantasy, begun in 2007 out of a desire to write a single-movement, free-form, yet organically conceived work for solo piano, was composed slowly. Written for pianist Jenny Lin, it was not completed until 2010. The sprawling work took a while to take shape, and even longer to reveal itself to me, as I worked from improvisation at the keyboard, despite my limited ability as a pianist. I wrote it in stages, in between other works, both at home in New York and during travels both domestically and abroad. I am grateful

to have had residencies at both the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and Dorland Mountain Artist Colony in California during its long gestation period.

Ms. Lin gave *Fantasy* its first performance at the Grand Montgomery Chamber Music Series in upstate New York on November 21, 2010, followed shortly thereafter by a performance at the historic Hudson Opera House. Oppens offered the New York premiere over three performances during the Here and Now Labor Day Festival at Brooklyn's Bargemusic, August 30–September 2, 2017.

As this recording project began to take shape, I thought to write a piece especially for it, one that I could offer as a gift to Ursula Oppens and her partner, pianist Jerome Lowenthal. The result, *Reckoning: Five Miniatures for America for Piano Four Hands*, was composed in 2019 in reaction to what is an extraordinary time in American history. The tumultuousness of the political landscape, the piercing divisions in the social compact, the sense that we were living through a time of deep threat to the powerful, noble, and yet compromised and troubled vision that America represents, led me to write this set of miniatures. *Reckoning* is at once

angry, anguished, and defeated, yet also hopeful and forward-looking. The movements are titled:

I. Majestic. Yet.

II. Hurling. Still.

III. Reverie

IV. Divided

V. Forward. Yet.

Ursula and Jerry offered the premiere performance of *Reckoning* in Chicago at Roosevelt University's PianoFest on November 2, 2019.

The Piano Concerto is scored for single winds, brass (1 horn, 2 trumpets, 1 trombone), strings, 2 percussion (vibraphone, tamtam, 3 gongs, 3 wood blocks, bass drum, and 4 graduated drums), and solo piano. Visual images are the source of its inspiration, in particular, the light on both the Hudson River, which I see from my studio window in The Bronx, and on the Neva River in St. Petersburg, Russia. I had been a Likhachev/Ruskiy Mir Foundation Cultural Fellow there in 2009, conducting research on Soviet-era music, and subsequently returned as a visiting artist over a period of years. The notions of flow and stasis, and reflection and absorption are addressed

musically in one extended movement. As with the *Fantasy*, the music came out of improvisation. The Concerto commences with a piano cadenza that serves as the conceptual basis for the rest of the work.

The Piano Concerto was jointly commissioned by The Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress and the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic of St. Petersburg, Russia, Jeffery Meyer, Artistic Director. The work received its world premiere performance on November 26, 2011 at the Small Philharmonic Hall in St. Petersburg as part of the 23rd International Sound Ways New Music Festival.



LAURA KAMINSKY

"Possessing an ear for the new and interesting," (*The New York Times*) Laura Kaminsky frequently addresses in her work such critical social and political issues as sustainability, war, and civil rights. "Her music is full of fire as well as ice, contrasting dissonance and violence with tonal beauty and meditative reflection. It is strong stuff." (*American Record Guide*)

Her first opera, *As One* (2014; co-librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed), which boldly and sympathetically delves into the life of a transgender individual, is the most produced contemporary opera in North America since 2016, and has played in Europe, Australia, and Canada. Her catalogue is replete with scores tackling environmental and social justice issues. These include *Rising Tide*, *Horizon Lines* and *Terra Terribilis: Concerto for Three Percussionists and Orchestra*. And *Trouble Came: An African AIDS Diary* and *Elegy for the Silenced Voice* both spotlight the AIDS pandemic. Vukovar Trio is a cry against ethnic cleansing. *The Full Range of Blue and Transformations II for String Quartet* shed musical light on 9/11. *Hometown to the World* (librettist Kimberly Reed; commissioned by Santa Fe Opera

for a 2021 premiere) is a gut-wrenching exploration of U.S. immigration policy.

Awarded the Polish Gold Cross of Merit (Złoty Krzyż Zasługi RP) by the President of Poland for exemplary public service and humanitarian work, the Composers Now Visionary Award, the Polish Ministry of Culture National Heritage Chopin Award, and a Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress Award, Kaminsky has been granted support from the National Endowment for the Arts, Opera America, Chamber Music America, BAM/Kennedy Center De Vos Institute, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Aaron Copland Fund, USArtists International, CEC ArtsLink International Partnerships, Likhachev-Russkiy Mir Foundation, and others.

Kaminsky is Head of Composition at the Conservatory of Music Purchase College/ SUNY and has served as Composer Mentor for the Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative and Juilliard School's Composer Blueprint Fellowship with National Sawdust. Scores are available through Bill Holab Music; recordings are on the Albany, Bridge, BSS, CRI, Capstone, Cedille, Mode, and MSR labels. Kaminsky is a BMI composer.

www.laurakaminsky.com



URSULA OPPENS

Ursula Oppens, a legend among American pianists, is widely admired particularly for her original and perceptive readings of new music, but also for her knowing interpretations of the standard repertoire. No other artist alive today has commissioned and premiered more new works for the piano that have entered the permanent repertoire.

With five Grammy nominations to her credit, Ms. Oppens established her reputation early on with a classic recording of Frederic Rzewski's *The People United*

Will Never Be Defeated. She has released *Piano Songs*, music by Meredith Monk, with pianist Bruce Brubaker; *Winging It: Piano Music of John Corigliano*; *Oppens Plays Carter* (complete Elliott Carter piano works); *Piano Music of Our Time*; *Keys to the City*, (complete Tobias Picker piano music); and, with pianist Jerome Lowenthal, Messiaen's *Visions de l'Amen* and Debussy's *En blanc et noir*.

Over the years, Ms. Oppens has premiered works by such leading composers as John Adams, Luciano Berio, William Bolcom, Anthony Braxton, Elliott Carter, John Corigliano, Anthony Davis, John Harbison, Julius Hemphill, David Hertzberg, Laura Kaminsky, Tania Leon, György Ligeti, Erik Lundborg, Witold Lutoslawski, Harold Meltzer, Meredith Monk, Conlon Nancarrow, Tobias Picker, Bernard Rands, Frederic Rzewski, Allen Shawn, Alvin Singleton, Joan Tower, Lois V Vierk, Amy Williams, Christian Wolff, Amnon Wolman, and Charles Wuorinen.

As an orchestral guest soloist, Ms. Oppens has performed with the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, American Composers Orchestra, Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), and

the orchestras of Chicago, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Milwaukee. Abroad, she has appeared with such ensembles as the Berlin Symphony, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Deutsche Symphonie, and the Scottish BBC and London Philharmonic Orchestras. In addition to collaborating with the Cassatt Quartet, she has performed chamber music with the Arditti, JACK, Juilliard, and Pacifica quartets.

Ursula Oppens teaches at Mannes College, The New School, and is a Distinguished Professor of Music at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City. She served as Distinguished Professor of Music at Northwestern University from 1994 to 2008. In 2019, Ms. Oppens was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from The New England Conservatory.



CASSATT STRING QUARTET

Acclaimed as one of America's outstanding ensembles, the New York City-based Cassatt String Quartet has performed throughout the world, with appearances at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall; Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall; the Tanglewood Music Theater; the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC; Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris; Centro Nacional de las Artes, Mexico City; Maeda Hall, Tokyo; and Beijing's Central Conservatory. At the Library of Congress, the Cassatt performed on the library's matched quartet of Stradivarius instruments.

Esteemed music critic Alex Ross named the Cassatt three times to his "10 Best Classical Recordings" list in *The New Yorker*, and the ensemble has been featured on NPR's "Performance Today," Boston's WGBH, New York's WQXR and WNYC, Canada's CBC Radio, and Radio France.

The Cassatt has received numerous awards from the National Endowment for the Arts; USArtists International; Chamber Music America; CMA/ASCAP; the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust; Meet the Composer; and the Amphion, Copland, Fromm, and Alice M. Ditson Music Foundations. Since 1995, the ensemble has been on the performing artist roster for the New York State Council on the Arts.

Named for celebrated impressionist painter Mary Cassatt, the quartet consists of Muneko Otani, violin; Jennifer Leshnowar, violin; Ah Ling Neu, viola; and Elizabeth Anderson, cello.



JEROME LOWENTHAL

Born in 1932, Jerome Lowenthal continues to fascinate audiences with his combination of youthful intensity and eloquence born of life-experience. He is a virtuoso of the fingers and emotions.

Lowenthal made his New York Philharmonic debut in 1963, playing Bartok's Second Piano Concerto. Since then, he has performed virtually everywhere, from the Aleutians to Zagreb. He has appeared as soloist with celebrated conductors including Barenboim, Ozawa, Tilson Thomas, Temirkanov, and Slatkin, and with such giants of the past as Bernstein, Ormandy, Monteux, and Stokowski. Mr. Lowenthal has played sonatas with Itzhak

Perlman; piano duos with Ronit Amir (his late wife), Carmel Lowenthal (his daughter), and Ursula Oppens; and quintets with the Lark, Avalon, and Brentano Quartets. He has recorded *Two-Piano Music of Messiaen and Debussy* with Oppens and Liszt's complete *Années De Pèlerinage* on a 3-CD set. Other recordings include concertos by Tchaikovsky and Liszt, solo works by Sinding and Bartók, and chamber music by Arensky and Taneyev.

Teaching is an important part of Mr. Lowenthal's musical life, including 20 years at the Juilliard School and 42 summers at the Music Academy of the West. Mr. Lowenthal has worked with an extraordinary number of gifted pianists, whom he encourages to understand the music they play in a wide aesthetic and cultural perspective — and to project it with the freedom which that perspective allows.

ASU SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

One of the top orchestral programs in the United States, the Arizona State University (ASU) Orchestras explore the vast creative range of today's orchestral repertoire and bring its audiences an engaging variety of

masterworks, new music, groundbreaking guest artists, multi-media collaborations and award-winning programming. The ASU Orchestras are creating a new model for professional and pre-professional arts organizations that value the diverse potential of human creativity. The program is committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion through music and the arts.



JEFFERY MEYER

Jeffery Meyer has developed a career as an accomplished conductor, pianist, and educator throughout North America, Europe, Russia, and Asia, with a reputation for championing contemporary orchestral

music and innovative collaborations. His programming has been awarded multiple prizes including three ASCAP Awards for Adventurous Programming and two Vytautas Marijosius Memorial Awards in Orchestral Programming.

Meyer is Director of Orchestras at Arizona State University as well as Artistic Director of the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic in Russia. Praised as “one of the most interesting and creatively productive conductors working in St. Petersburg” by renowned musicologist Sergei Slonimsky, Jeffery Meyer’s extensive work with the St. PCP has been noted for its breadth and innovation, including the premiere of Kaminsky’s Piano Concerto. *The New York Times* described the orchestra’s 2010 American debut, with three performances at New York City venue, Symphony Space’s Wall-to-Wall *Behind the Wall: Music from the Soviet Era Festival*, during Laura Kaminsky’s tenure as Artistic Director, as “impressive,” “powerful,” “splendid,” and “blazing.”



ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

Flute

Jiyoung Lee

Oboe

Kathleen Romero

Clarinet

Taylor Stirm

Bassoon

Leon Jin

Horn

Jeremy Ulm

Trumpet

Mason Christofferson

Taylor Hubbard

Trombone

John Pisaro

Percussion

Tim Suh

Travis Rowland

Violin I

Izayah Dutcher, concertmaster
Julian Nguyen
Dylan Feldpausch
Sicong Chen
Jingting Liu
Hyuk-Min Kwon
Sarah Abbott
Hsiang-Jen Yang

Violin II

Kah Yan Lee, principal
Esther Witherell
Ramon Soberano
Grace Wills
Mei Liu
Yuka Kubota
Weichao Zhu

Viola

Chloe Calvino, principal
Jacob Anderson
Esther Kim
Iris Yang
Bryson Merkley
Maya Mokofisi

Cello

Elliot Yang, principal
Jun Lee
Jacob Barker
Lucas Buterbaugh
Cameryn Baum
Xuehui Yu

Bass

Nathaniel De la Cruz, principal
Evan Pardi
Lea Ale

Conductor

Jeffery Meyer

Assistant Conductors

Francisco Hernández Bolaños
Michelle Di Russo
Yun Song Tay

Piano Quintet recorded September 28, 2019; ***Fantasy*** and ***Reckoning*** recorded February 1, 2020, Buchwald Hall, Leonard and Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, NY

Producer and Engineer Judith Sherman

Engineering and Editing Assistant

Jeanne Velonis

Steinway Piano Technician Zeno Wood

Piano Concerto recorded February 9, 2020, Gammage Auditorium, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ

Producer Judith Sherman

Engineer Alex Kosiorek

Engineering Assistant Melanie Montgomery

Editing Assistant Jeanne Velonis

Mastering Bill Maylone

Publishers

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Reckoning © 2019 Bill Holab Music

Piano Concerto © 2011 Bill Holab Music

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