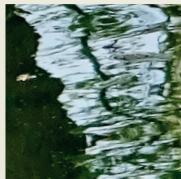


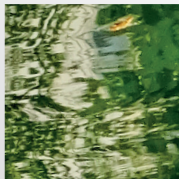
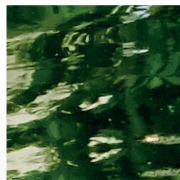
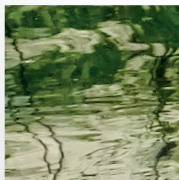
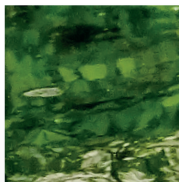


Fenêtre sur le jardin

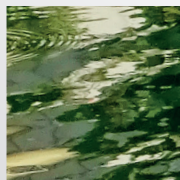
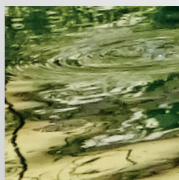
PIANO **KSENIA
KOUZMENKO**

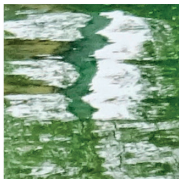
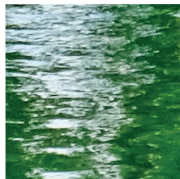
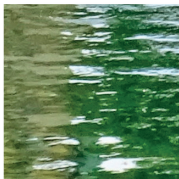
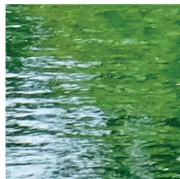
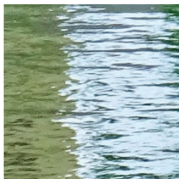


**CZECH MUSIC
FOR PIANO SOLO**

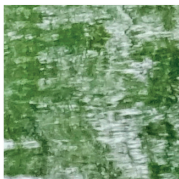


Josef **Suk**
Jaroslav **Kvapil**
Bohuslav **Martinů**
Miloslav **Kabeláč**
Leoš **Janáček**





KSENIA
KOUZMENKO
PIANO



Fenêtre sur le jardin

CZECH MUSIC FOR PIANO SOLO

Josef Suk (1874 - 1935)

1. **Love Song** op.7 no.1 (1891) 6:33

Jaroslav Kvapil (1892 - 1958)

Through the Valley of

Grief and Sorrow (1922) *

2. Lento melancolico 2:24
3. Andante 1:22
4. Poco appassionato 0:30
5. Largo lamentoso 1:25
6. Con moto 1:44
7. Allegro 1:13
8. Andante addolorato 1:43
9. L'istesso tempo 1:53
10. Allegro risoluto - Meno mosso 2:28

Bohuslav Martinů (1890 - 1959)

Windows on to the Garden (1938)

11. Poco andante 1:53
12. Allegro moderato 2:04
13. Moderato 2:13
14. Allegretto 1:37

Miloslav Kabeláč (1908 - 1979)

Short Piano Pieces (1946 - 1961) *

15. Allegro inquieto 2:26
16. Andante tranquillo 2:58
17. **Meditation**. Lento
Con espressione, ma semplice 3:20
18. **Memories**. Adagio 1:51
19. **Enigma**. Lento patetico 2:22
20. Moderato 2:13
21. **Memories**. Allegro 2:21

Leoš Janáček (1854 - 1928)

In the Mists (1912)

22. Andante - Poco mosso 3:28
23. Molto Adagio - Presto 4:47
24. Andantino - Poco mosso 2:23
25. Presto - Meno mosso - Andante 4:17

Total playing time: 61:43 min.

* **World premiere recording**

Fenêtre sur le jardin

Sometimes projects arise which just keep expanding. This was the case for me after the CD “Whispering Leaves” which cellist Lucie Štěpánová and I released in 2018 with works by Janáček, Páleníček and Martinů. While preparing for this recording I was listening and reading an enormous amount about Czech music, as well as playing a lot of other Czech composers. Because of this I became intensely fascinated with this music.

The immediacy, the honesty of expression has an incredible appeal to me. It is the sort of music which you experience directly, right now in this moment, not only as a performer but also as a listener. You stand in the middle of the story. It is fascinating music, but strangely enough there is still much left to explore. The beautiful music of Jaroslav Kvapil for instance is all but forgotten.

And sometimes you have to undertake real journeys. Working on this project we have also tried to follow in the footsteps of the composers. Climbing the church tower of Polička, in which Martinů was born, playing on his grand piano, wandering through Janáček's Hukvaldy and around the villa of Kaprál in beautiful Tři Studně, walking in the rapeseed fields of Fryšták, where Kvapil was born and grew up. And much more. In Vieux Moulin a 94 year old neighbour told us that Martinů was a strangely silent man, who never spoke and didn't come into the village. They thought he was deaf, and sometimes saw him sitting under a pear tree behind the house, thinking and writing. As well we went to antiquarians and libraries, searching for scores and books. It is incredibly moving to hold a first print of “In the Mists” in your hands, to receive a shipment of unknown Czech music from an antiquarian, or to be allowed to touch that piano of a composer. With tears in my eyes I played the first bars of Suk's “Love Song” on his own grand piano in Křečovice, in the presence of his grandson Jan Suk. This is only the beginning of all the new solo and chamber music projects which I would love to share with you.

Ksenia Kouzmenko



Ksenia in Hukvaldy





Martinů about the view from the church tower in Polička

"From one side the view over the pond, the baths, from the other side the cemetery, and the village which went on and on. In the North there is only a surface without forests, and the city in the foreground, everything in miniature, with small houses and small people, and above that a big and vast space. I think that this space is one of the strongest impressions from my childhood, which is the most often on my mind and which plays without any doubt a big role in all my compositional ideas. It is not the small interests of people, their worries, their pains, and even their joys which I saw from far away, or better, from high above. It is this space which is always before my eyes, and for which I always look, it seems to me, in my works. In this space there was a myriad of images to choose from. The sky changed and nature changed. From a snowy white surface the scenery gradually turned into red fields, green surfaces and blue forests. The sober atmosphere of winter started to live, the fields were covered with red wheat, and life passed over from the city to the fields. Then there were the nights, the thunderstorms, the fires around..." (Martinů in Paris in 1934, abridged version.)

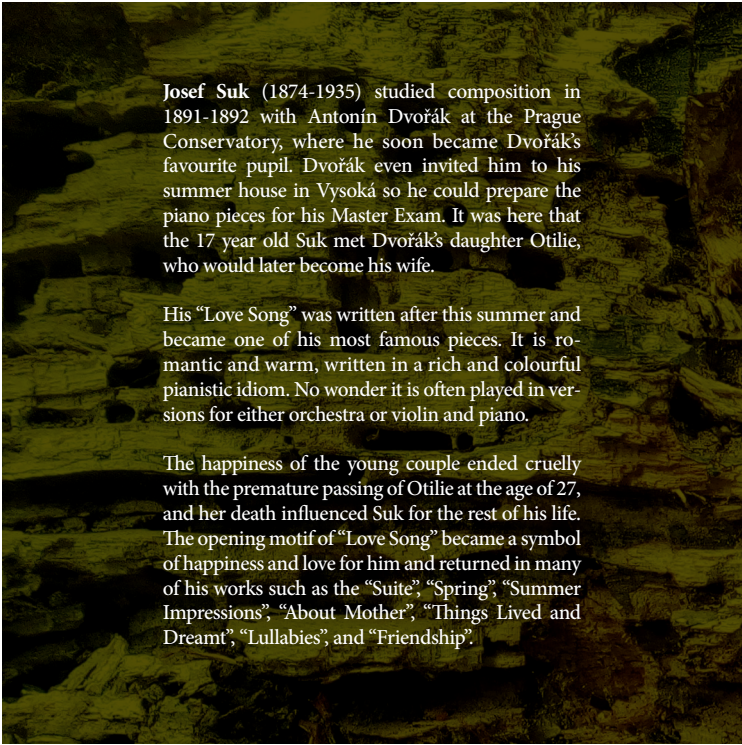
Martinů lived for almost twelve years up in that tower.

From: Jaroslav Mihule: "Bohuslav Martinů", Prague 1966, publ. Editio Supraphon, Praha.





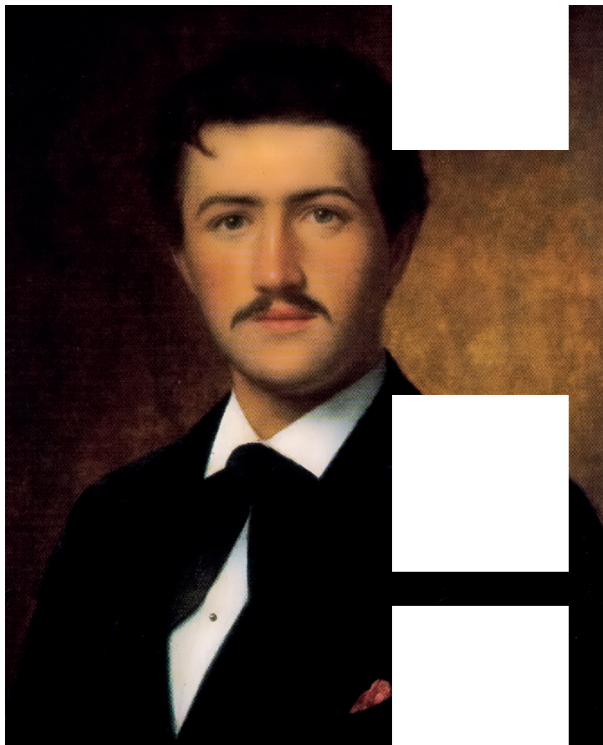
On the road to Polička



Josef Suk (1874-1935) studied composition in 1891-1892 with Antonín Dvořák at the Prague Conservatory, where he soon became Dvořák's favourite pupil. Dvořák even invited him to his summer house in Vysoká so he could prepare the piano pieces for his Master Exam. It was here that the 17 year old Suk met Dvořák's daughter Otilie, who would later become his wife.

His "Love Song" was written after this summer and became one of his most famous pieces. It is romantic and warm, written in a rich and colourful pianistic idiom. No wonder it is often played in versions for either orchestra or violin and piano.

The happiness of the young couple ended cruelly with the premature passing of Otilie at the age of 27, and her death influenced Suk for the rest of his life. The opening motif of "Love Song" became a symbol of happiness and love for him and returned in many of his works such as the "Suite", "Spring", "Summer Impressions", "About Mother", "Things Lived and Dreamt", "Lullabies", and "Friendship".



Jaroslav Kvapil (1892-1958) has almost completely been forgotten, but he was without a doubt one of Janáček's most important pupils at his Organ School in Brno (1906-1909). Kvapil was known as an excellent pedagogue, pianist, composer, and conductor. Upon completion of his studies with Janáček at the age of 18 he was immediately appointed as a teacher in Brno. He later continued his studies in Leipzig with Max Reger and performed frequently as a soloist and chamber musician. In Brno and other Moravian cities he played not only his own works but also the works of Bedřich Smetana, Josef Suk, Vítězslav Novák and Leoš Janáček. He was the leader and conductor of the Choir of Beseda Brněnská for years, and thanks to his efforts not only a vast amount of the big classics were performed but also much contemporary Czech music.

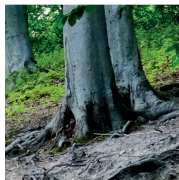
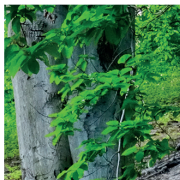
He received several offers from international conservatories to travel and teach but he wanted to stay in Moravia. "I never had a bigger wish than to stay at home, to work at home, to live in the Czech spirit..."

He shares an immediacy of expression with Janáček, as well as an enormous richness of invention. With Reger he shares a predilection for contrapuntal forms and variation technique, and with Dvořák the importance of the melodic line; but one encounters the personal, deeply felt inner expression of Kvapil himself everywhere in his work. He worked to promote the music of Janáček, including premiering his Violin Sonata and conducting the premiere of large scale works such as the Glagolitic Mass. Kvapil himself composed more than 120 works: piano and organ pieces, songs, chamber music, 4 symphonies, a cantata, and an opera.

The cycle "Through the Valley of Grief and Sorrow" consists of 9 pieces. They can best be described as short mood pictures. Psychological miniatures which always shine through another music form - a song, dances, folk music, nature images - but above all it is a glance into the inner world of a human being. Its fast changing colour and atmosphere is reminiscent of Robert Schumann, and the pieces are polyphonically very refined. A number of motifs return, each time in a different light. This recording is the world premiere on CD of this beautiful, forgotten cycle.



*Leoš Janáček with members of the Moravian Composers Club in 1922;
standing, left to right: Vilém Petrželka, Břetislav Bakala, Jaroslav Kvapil, Václav Kaprál
seated, left to right: Dr. Ludvík Kundera, Leoš Janáček, František Neumann*



*Václav Kaprál, Vítězslava Kaprálová
with her dog Šotek, Bohuslav Martinů
(Tři Studně, June 1938)*



Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959) lived in France from 1923 to 1941, but the summer of 1938 was spent in Czechoslovakia. First in his native Polička, and after that he was invited to spend the month of June in the summer villa of Václav Kaprál in Tři Studné. Kaprál was a student of Janáček and his daughter, Vítěslava Kaprálová, studied at that time with Martinů. This would be one of the happiest periods of his life, the memories of which he continuously cherished. "I have such a longing to return to Bohemia that every day here seems lost. It seems to me that I have ended one epoch of my life, the epoch of preparation and that now my place is nowhere else than at home". He seriously considered returning, but sadly it would be his last visit to his homeland.

In memory of this summer Martinů wrote his cycle *Windows on to the Garden* ("Fenêtre sur le jardin") in August 1938. By this time he was back in France and staying in Vieux Moulin, the native village of his wife, where they usually rented a house for the summer. Martinů's music is often judged on its harsher, more modernist aspects but in these transparent sketches we encounter him as mild, tender, and playfully lyrical.

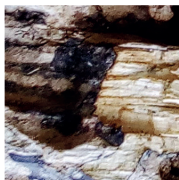


Miloslav Kabeláč (1908-1979) was an important figure of Czech musical life in the 20th century. He studied not only at the conservatory but also at the technical university. He was a promising pianist but decided to concentrate on composing, and for decennia was the chief editor of Czech Radio. He was a pioneer in the field of electronic music, and did much research on non-European music. In addition he conducted regularly, and taught composition at the Prague Conservatory.

The “Short Pieces” of Miloslav Kabeláč don’t form a cycle and were written at different moments in his life. The first piece dates from 1946 while the most recent was written in 1961.

The pieces form sort of micro-worlds. Kabeláč is very choosy and precise with his musical material. Time and again he succeeds in creating a hypnotic atmosphere with very few resources. In the second piece he plays with the light and shadow of major and minor triads and the mirroring of intervals, while the sixth piece sounds like some far-eastern musical instrument. The pieces are often very personally charged. Hidden in the first motif of the fifth piece “Enigma” is the cryptogram of his wife’s name, Berta Rixová, a concert pianist and fellow teacher at the Prague Conservatory. Kabeláč refused to separate from his Jewish wife during World War II, and it would not be the last time he came into conflict with a totalitarian regime.





From 1907 onwards the publishing of Czech compositions became an important purpose for the Club of Art Friends of Brno. They held a competition, which in 1912 was specifically for piano compositions and vocal music. **Leoš Janáček** (1854-1928) was declared the winner by the piano jury for his cycle "In the Mists" while Jaroslav Kvapil won the vocal competition with a song cycle. However there was not enough money to publish both winners so Janáček stepped aside and granted his pupil Kvapil the opportunity. "In the Mists" was published a year later, in 1913.

It was written during a difficult period of his life, a few years after suffering the death of his daughter Olga and while his operas were still being rejected by the Prague Opera House. The famous writer Milan Kundera (whose father Ludvík was a colleague of Janáček's and a researcher of his work) calls him "the only great composer for whom one could use the term 'expressionist' in its full and literal meaning: for him everything is expression, no single note has right to exist if it is not expressive." The four movements of this cycle mirror with exceptionally powerful purity the vulnerable fluctuating of the soul, swerving between hope and despair. But we also come across some sound notations from Janáček's lifelong collection. For example in the third movement I recognize the water drop motif which he notated on one of his many walks around Hukvaldy; even the key corresponds. The metamorphosis of these short motifs plays an important role in the extremely dynamic development of the pieces.

Jaroslav Kvapil said of Janáček as a teacher: "Slow thinking irritated him, also prolonged, unadventurous compositions. He liked us to express ourselves in short, concise terms, which was, in fact, his own method of self-expression."

"...I have never known a tidier, more healthy place with stronger air and brighter sunshine. Here I have found peace. I work a little and in the evening I sit under my lime tree and gaze into the forest until nightfall. Silence falls from each tree to the ground..."

Leoš Janáček (Hukvaldy, 1918)



Hukevaldy



KSENIA KOUZMENKO

Ksenia Kouzmenko is renowned internationally for her sensitive and technically accomplished piano playing, and is a much sought after partner in chamber music.

Ksenia was born in Minsk, Belarus, to a family of pianists. She studied with Vladimir Zaretsky and Grigory Scherschewsky, the former teacher of her father, at the National Music College in Minsk. At the age of twelve Ksenia made her solo debut with orchestra. Over the next few years she performed the piano concertos of Beethoven and Rachmaninov. She graduated cum laude, with a Gold Medal. Ksenia continued her piano studies at the National Music Academy with Igor Olovnikov, where she received her Master degree cum laude as a soloist, teacher, and in vocal accompaniment and chamber music. She pursued her postgraduate studies with Naum Grubert at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague, with financial support of the Yuri Egorov Foundation.

She has taken part in many masterclasses with outstanding musicians such as Abbey Simon, György Sándor, Earl Wild, György Kurtág, and Ivan Moravec, and attended courses in Bach-interpretation with Walter Blankenheim. In the summer of 1997 she followed an intensive chamber music program at Tanglewood in the USA.

Ksenia has received prizes for accompaniment at numerous international competitions. As a soloist she won the 2nd prize at the Tromp Competition in Eindhoven, where she also received the Audience Prize, and the 3rd prize at the Rencontres Musicales de Gaillard, France.

She has performed with the National Symphony Orchestra of Belarus, the Brabants Orkest, the Collegium Instrumentale Brugense, and the Nederlands Blazersensemble. She was a soloist in the Kurtág-project of the Royal Conservatory conducted by Reinbert de Leeuw, and on recommendation of György

Kurtág himself played his “...quasi una fantasia...” with the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana conducted by Olivier Cuendet, at the Lugano Festival. She recorded concerts for the National Broadcast Corporation of Belarus, Radio-televisione Svizzera, Dutch television, and Dutch and Belgian national radio channels (Radio 4 and Brava).

Ksenia has performed in Germany (Beethoven Festival in Bonn), England, Greece, Switzerland, Belgium (Festival van Vlaanderen), Italy, Slovenia (Tartini Festival), Spain (Festival “Semana de Musica Caja Astur”), Russia (Hermitage, St. Petersburg), and all over the Netherlands.

She has played chamber music in almost every combination possible, and has built up an enormously broad repertoire ranging from Bach to Kurtág. Ksenia is constantly searching for new compositions and is fond of making unusual, inspiring programs. Among her long-time partners are wonderful musicians such as the violinist Lisa Jacobs, cellist Lucie Štěpánová, and clarinetist André Kerver.

Since 1999 Ksenia has been teaching at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague.

In 2013 violinist Lisa Jacobs and Ksenia Kouzmenko released the CD “Poème” on Challenge Records, featuring compositions of Franck and Ysaÿe. The CD “Whispering Leaves” with the cellist Lucie Štěpánová was released in 2018 on Cobra Records, with works of Janáček, Pálenciček and Martinů. In the same year her solo CD “Ranges of Érdar” came out on Zefir Records, recorded on a Grand Érdar from 1863. Ksenia is already working on the continuation of her projects.

Ksenia Kouzmenko is a convincing performer, whose elegant gestures are always subordinated to the music. She sweeps the listener along on her musical explorations (Tromp Competition).

Recording: Mediatrack
Producer/recording engineer: Tom Peeters
Piano technician/tuner: Charles Rademaker
Recording location: Westvest 90, Schiedam, The Netherlands
Recording dates: July 16, 17, 18 & 19, 2018
Microphones: Brüel & Kjær 4003, Neumann modified by Rens Heijnis
Microphone cables, interlinks: Acoustic Revive

Text: Ksenia Kouzmenko
Translation: Servaas Jansen, Katya Woloshyn
Photography: Ksenia Kouzmenko (Moravia 2018)
Portrait: Cornelia Unger. Portrait Ksenia in Hukvaldy: Servaas Jansen
Artwork design: Egbert Luijs (studioEGT)

Special thanks to Servaas Jansen

www.kseniakouzmenko.jouwweb.nl
www.cobrarecords.com

"...I want to be in direct contact with the clouds, I want to feast my eyes on the blue of the sky, I want to gather the sun's rays into my hand, I want to plunge myself in shadow, I want to pour out my longings to the full: all directly". Leoš Janáček

