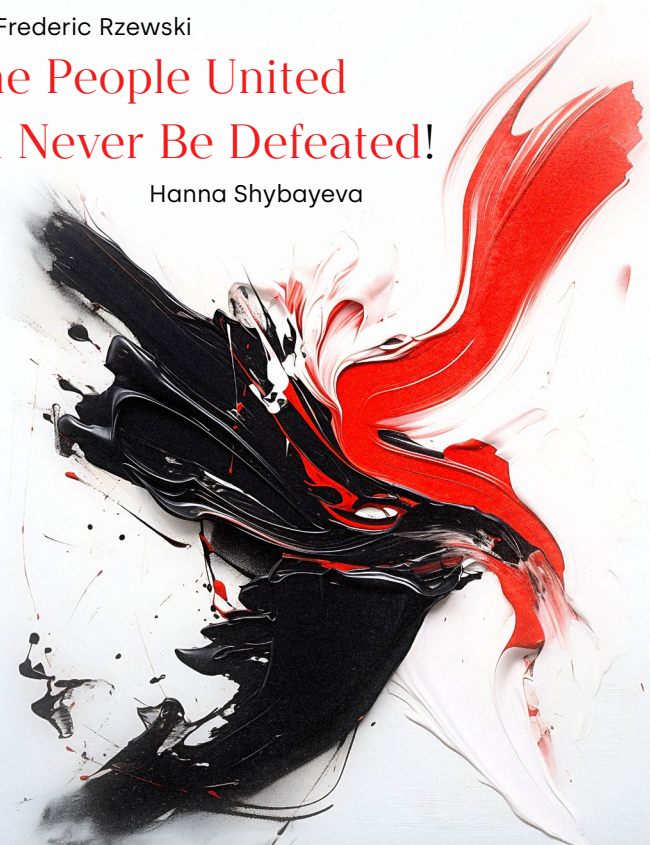


Frederic Rzewski

The People United Will Never Be Defeated!

Hanna Shybayeva



Frederic Rzewski

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Hanna Shybayeva piano live at soundsofmusic festival

1	Thema. With determination	1:38
2	Var. 1. Weaving, delicate but firm	1:02
3	Var. 2. With firmness	0:58
4	Var. 3. Slightly slower, with expressive nuances	1:24
5	Var. 4. Marcato	1:08
6	Var. 5. Dreamlike, frozen	1:12
7	Var. 6. Same tempo as beginning	1:18
8	Var. 7. Tempo, lightly impatiently	1:07
9	Var. 8. With agility, not too much pedal, crisp	1:27
10	Var. 9. Evenly	1:43
11	Var. 10. Comodo, recklessly	1:06
12	Var. 11. Tempo I	0:45
13	Var. 12	1:18
14	Var. 13	2:03
15	Var. 14. A bit faster, optimistically	1:33
16	Var. 15. Flexible, like an improvisation	1:39
17	Var. 16. Same tempo as preceding, with fluctuations, much pedal	1:56
18	Var. 17	1:18
19	Var. 18	1:36

20	Var. 19. With energy	0:46
21	Var. 20. Crisp, precise	0:45
22	Var. 21. Relentless, uncompromising	1:01
23	Var. 22	0:56
24	Var. 23. As fast as possible, with some rubato	0:33
25	Var. 24	2:42
26	Var. 25. With fluctuations	2:08
27	Var. 26. In a militant manner	1:18
28	Var. 27. Tenderly, and with a hopeful expression	5:50
29	Var. 28	1:36
30	Var. 29	0:34
31	Var. 30	2:47
32	Var. 31	1:02
33	Var. 32	1:01
34	Var. 33	1:31
35	Var. 34	1:16
36	Var. 35	1:15
37	Var. 36. Cadenza	5:25
38	Thema. Tempo I	3:24

About the album

The country I was born in had many names: Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Byelorussia (meaning “White Russia”), Republic of Belarus, and now simply Belarus. Headed by a president who is named “the last dictator in Europe” having been in power since 1994. For years, the usual practice of disposing of political opponents also took place in Belarus: disappearances, assassinations, and imprisonments of opposition leaders have been the order of the day. Many of my fellow countrymen have been protesting for years against the unfair and fraudulent elections, and the violence used against our own people. But during the summer of 2020, the resistance of the opposition was so strong and brought so many people together, that these uprisings finally received broad international attention, and was discussed and covered in the press on a global scale.

During the summer of 2020 and numerous following months, thousands of Belarusians took to the streets for peaceful demonstrations against the regime and its fake election results, knowing they would most likely end up imprisoned by the authority's police. For these acts of demanding fair elections, they were only met with unimaginable violence and abuse. Today, hundreds of them are still imprisoned without any fair trial, and many without legal help. People are still getting arrested every day in Belarus; not just for their participation in the 2020 protests, but also for following “the wrong” media channels or reading “the wrong” books. Many of the political prisoners and incarcerated opposition leaders are being completely isolated from the outside world; even their own families and lawyers know nothing about their situation or well-being. Many are held in inhuman conditions and meet mental and physical torture on a daily basis.

Driven by our urge to help, to not remain “powerless musicians outside of politics”, and to contribute to aid the situation as much as we can, my colleagues and I organize benefits and informative events about the present situation in Belarus and share stories about political prisoners. Also, because we — in our comfortable lives in Western Europe — unfortunately get used to this kind of news very quickly.

From Belarus, Russia, as well as from many other countries, I feel that we should never look away from and forget about what is happening around the corner from us.

Being a musician, I mostly communicate with the world through music and performance, which is why the decision to play this cycle by Frederic Rzewski was immediate and self-evident. The emotional and technical richness of the piece allows me to express pretty much everything I felt and continue to feel about the events in Belarus in 2020 and today. The immense variety and sometimes sudden changes of musical styles, the complex and versatile emotional world of the cycle calls for a straight connection with our human nature and mirrors the struggles we all go through during our lifetime. All of this makes this music accessible to any ear and even bewitches the unexperienced listener. Remaining complex, but also unexpectedly simple at times, Rzewski's music reaches his goal to be understood by everyone, speaking directly to our hearts.

Maybe this can also be reaffirmed by the words of journalist Job van Schaik in his review of this performance upon the kind invitation of the Soundsofmusic festival in Groningen: *"Blown away. Speechless. Deeply moved [...] when the theme returned in all its original form after an hour of intense musical fireworks, tears came as well. After the concert, we almost forgot to applaud. We looked at each other and fell silent. What can you say after such a performance? So, we just stammered something like 'unbelievable,' with our faces contorted with emotion."*

Music and song have always had a strong role in supporting the spirit and energy of people during revolution and war. During the protests of Belarus, there were songs and music that became symbolic for the people and were used massively during the demonstrations. Some of these songs, I took the liberty of integrating into the free cadenza allowed by the composer in the end of the cycle.

This recording is dedicated to all people all over the world, who are fighting for their fundamental rights: people who stand up and protest against dictatorship and injustice, against violence and abuse of power. **Hanna Shybayeva**



Frederic Rzewski, pianist/composer

Without a doubt, Frederic Rzewski (1938-2021) was the most virtuosic pianist among 20th-century composers. Renowned music publicist Nicolas Slonimsky wrote: *"He is furthermore a granitically overpowering piano technician, capable of depositing huge boulders of sonoric materials across the keyboard without actually wrecking the instrument."* For anyone who has ever seen Rzewski performing live, this compliment will sound fully justified.

After studying at Harvard and Princeton, moving to Europe in 1960 was crucial in establishing Rzewski's identity. In Rome, at that time a hotspot of musical innovation, he teamed up with composers Luigi Nono and Cornelius Cardew, and gained a reputation for being a dynamic, impressive new music pianist. Composers such as Bruno Maderna and Karlheinz Stockhausen loved to write for him, since technical performance seemed to never be a problem for him. In 1966, together with Alvin Curran and Richard Teitelbaum, Rzewski founded the legendary group Musica Electronica Viva (MEV), experimenting in an enervating way with live electronics and improvisation. The trio's music was wilder, more atonal, and more freewheeling than any free jazz around those days. MEV's fusion of improvisation and theatricality gradually merged into Rzewski's own compositional work.

Rzewski's compositions illustrate the desire for contemporary music with greater accessibility, comprehensible for working class people. He applied minimalist techniques before the term minimal music was coined, resulting in iconic pieces such as *Coming Together*, *Attica*, *The Price of Oil*, and *The Triumph of Death*. Crucial for Rzewski was his friendship with British composer Cornelius Cardew, whose last piano works embraced the 19th-century Romantic idiom to express left-wing social realism. "Music probably can't change the world," Rzewski wrote, putting things into perspective. "But it is a good idea to act as if it could."

The piano has always remained Rzewski's main focus. He often worked the sounds of household and other objects into pieces, using the piano key as a percussion tool, or asking the performer to gesture, vocalize or whistle. Although he may not

have invented the speaking pianist genre, he incorporated spoken word into his solo piano works in a unique way, such as in *De Profundis*. His most frequently performed piano works include timeless pieces like *Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues*, *Four Pieces*, *North American Ballads*, *The Road*, and of course *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!*.

Until a very old age, Rzewski remained a versatile pianist who revived the age-old tradition of a composer/pianist, demonstrating his great sense of dynamics, concentration, and personal projection in his live concerts, and successfully inspiring interpreters from all over the world, such as Hanna Shybayeva.

The People United Will Never Be Defeated!

In 1975, Frederic Rzewski wrote what turned out to be his most successful piece: *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!*, a piano solo of just over an hour that included all music the composer could imagine and had internalized. It is a grand stylistic synthesis; postmodernism *avant la lettre*.

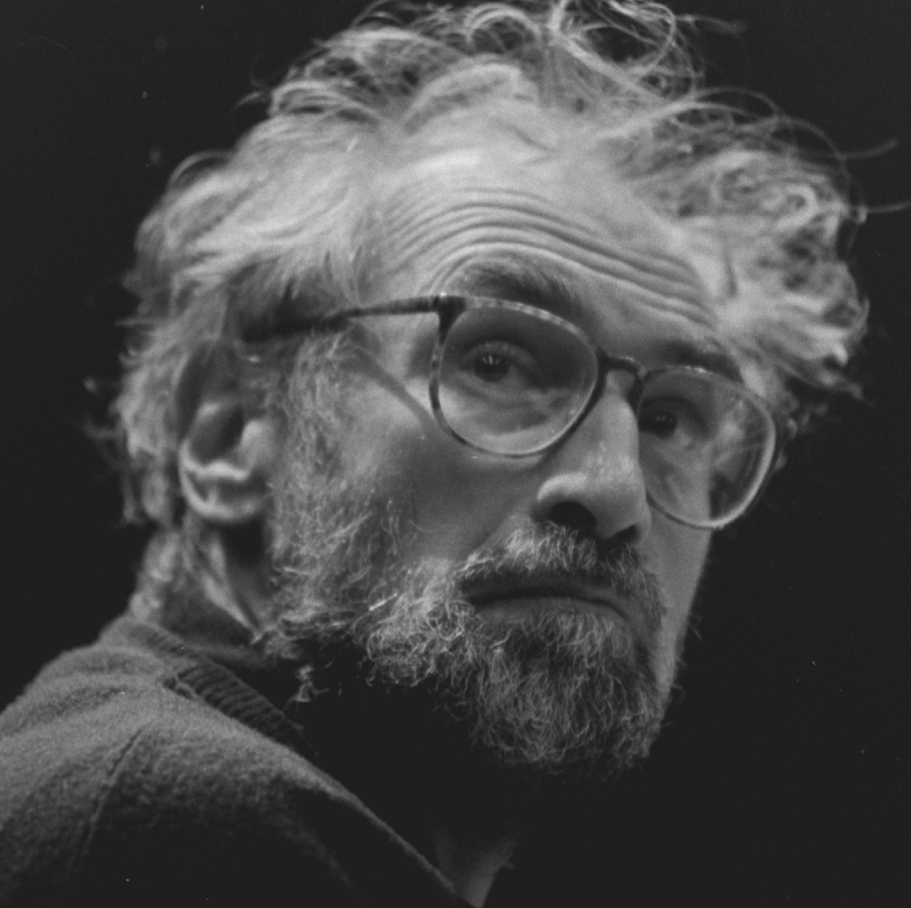
The main framework of the piece is formed by Chilean composer Sergio Ortega's song *¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!*, one of the many songs that emerged from the Unidad Popular coalition in Chile between 1969 and 1973, prior to the overthrow of Salvador Allende's government. Rzewski composed the variations in 1975 as a tribute to the struggle of the Chilean people against the newly imposed repressive regime of Augusto Pinochet. The work also contains allusions to other left-wing struggles from the same and immediately preceding period, such as quotations from the Italian traditional socialist song *Bandiera Rossa* and the *Solidarity Song* by Bertolt Brecht and Hans Eisler.

The 36 variations in *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!* are mostly short and building up to powerful climaxes. In groups of six, they follow the 36 bars of the melody in Ortega's song. These variations unfold from brash romanticism to pointillist post-Webern explosions, jazzy reflections, pompous marches, modal

reflections, and increasingly intensive allusions to the theme. Not only are all sorts of genres covered, but the expressiveness of the variations vary enormously as well: from anxious to exuberant, from introverted to extraverted, from sad to festive. The pianist does not only need virtuoso technique; they need to whistle, close the piano lid, and harmonically receive the reverberations of forceful strokes on the keys. Like in Johann Sebastian Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, the final variation is a direct reformulation of the original theme, intended to be heard with new meaning after a long journey through all the previous variations. After this last revival of the theme, Rzewski himself always improvised a long, dazzling cadence.

The People United Will Never Be Defeated! expresses that, for Rzewski, music shouldn't be just notes, sounds, and numbers, but have something to do with reality: *"Reality is both rational and irrational. The universe has a structure with elements that can be predicted, but there are things that have no structure and that cannot be predicted. I think it's interesting to have pieces with an elaborate structure and, at the same time, a basically chaotic spin which goes nowhere and that may lead to unpredictable and even incoherent results. And I think this helps to make the music more like real life."* At the same time, he said to a fellow pianist after a performance of *The People United*: *"You play the last octave, close the music, you leave, and its life goes on."* **Frits Selie**







Hanna Shybayeva

Belarusian-born Dutch pianist Hanna Shybayeva began her international career at the age of eleven, winning recognition by both the public and the press for her captivating energy, a great sense of form, and a rich color palette. Devoted to music in every way, Hanna enjoys her solo performances as much as being a partner in both chamber and vocal music. Her interests in different musical genres and art forms resulted in many daring and border-crossing projects, both as a soloist and as a member of the New European Ensemble, an ensemble based in the Netherlands known for being one of the most innovative and vibrant groups for new music today. Hanna's repertoire is extremely versatile and travels from the Baroque era to the present, including projects and programs with contemporary jazz, improvisation, and tango music.

Hanna's festival performances include, among others, New Music Week Shanghai, George Enescu Festival Bucharest, West Cork Chamber Music Festival, International Chamber Music Festival Utrecht, Festival 20/21 Belgium, Forte Music Fest Almaty, Sound Of Stockholm Festival, Festival Ticino Musica Italy, Festival van Vlaanderen Belgium, Barletta Piano Festival Italy, La Grange aux Pianos France.

Hanna is very active when it comes to making and publishing recordings, and has brought out numerous albums highly regarded in the press. In 2019, she began a collaboration with Naxos Music Group and recorded the complete collection of Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Concerts in chamber music arrangements by Vinzenz Lachner. In 2016, she released her first LP recorded as a live "direct to 2-track" analog vinyl at the legendary Bauer Studios Ludwigsburg in Germany. She is the first classical musician that has participated in this Studio Konzert Limited Edition vinyl series.

On this album, Hanna performs on a Steinway Model D-274 Grand Piano, graciously provided by Piano's Maene.

For more info: www.hannashybayeva.com



In the heart of what we do lies a simple truth: music should be felt as much as heard. Our label is founded on the idea that the purest form of listening replicates the magic of a live performance. It's not about grandeur; it's about authenticity, about capturing the essence of the moment when music comes alive.

With each recording, we try to craft an auditory journey, where the walls of your listening space dissolve to reveal the vaulted grandeur of a concert hall, the sacred quiet of a church, or the intimate warmth of a studio. Our role is that of a careful curator — we blend into the background, allowing the artists and the space to speak through the music.

We choose artists who resonate with this philosophy: musicians who inspire us not just with their talent, but with their drive to push boundaries whilst maintaining a heartfelt connection to their audience. It's this balance that guides our collaborations and helps us fulfill our pledge to bring forth recordings that honour the integrity of high fidelity sound, and the essence of musical storytelling.

At TRPTK, we quietly step back and let artistry take the spotlight. We're here to capture rather than enhance, and to deliver not just the sound, but the very soul of the music to you.

founder & senior recording and mastering engineer

Equipment used on this recording

Microphones

Josephson C617 with Microtech Gefell MK221 capsules *main mics*

Josephson C42 *height mics*

Microphone preamplifiers

Grace Design m801mk2

AD/DA conversion (11.2MHz 1bit)

Merging Technologies Hapi mkII

Merging Technologies Anubis

Grimm Audio CC2 *master clock*

Weiss Engineering Saracon *samplerate converter*

Monitoring

Grimm Audio LS1be *main loudspeakers*

Grimm Audio SB1 *subwoofers*

KEF LS50 Meta *height loudspeakers*

Hegel C55 *amplifier*

Cabling

Purecable Optimus Link *microphone cables*

Purecable Optimus Power *power cables*

Grimm Audio TPR XLR *microphone cables*

Grimm Audio TPR8 *breakout cables*

Tuning

Pura Power Supplies the Dodo *linear power supply*

Pura Power Supplies the Sauropoda *line conditioner*

Pura Power Supplies the Nautilus *power distributor*

Computer Audio Design GC3 *ground conditioner*

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Recording & mastering engineer **Brendon Heinst**

Assistant recording engineer **Antal van Nie**

Editor **Hans Erblich**

Photography **Nikolaj Lund [12], Anco C Wieringa [7 & 11]**

Artwork **Brendon Heinst**

Liner notes **Hanna Shybayeva & Frits Selie**

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Recording format **11.2MHz 1bit in 5.1.4-channel immersive**

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