

SATORI

CAROL MCGONNELL



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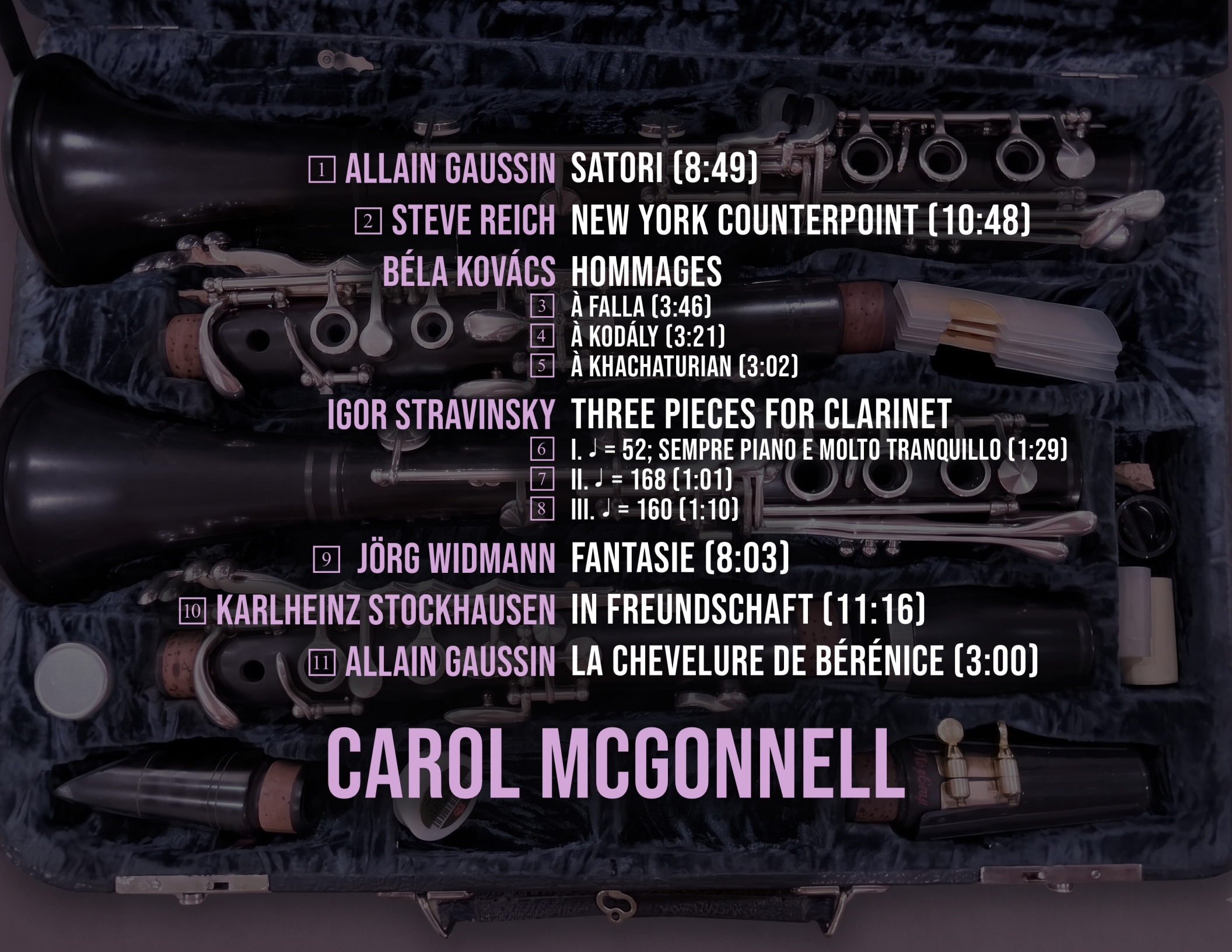
insight that

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transcends logic

sə-'tôr-ē

A collection of pieces that highlight the expressive possibilities of the clarinet.



1 ALLAIN GAUSSIN SATORI (8:49)

2 STEVE REICH NEW YORK COUNTERPOINT (10:48)

BÉLA KOVÁCS HOMMAGES

3 À FALLA (3:46)

4 À KODÁLY (3:21)

5 À KHACHATURIAN (3:02)

IGOR STRAVINSKY THREE PIECES FOR CLARINET

6 I. ♩ = 52; SEMPRE PIANO E MOLTO TRANQUILLO (1:29)

7 II. ♩ = 168 (1:01)

8 III. ♩ = 160 (1:10)

9 JÖRG WIDMANN FANTASIE (8:03)

10 KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN IN FREUNDSCHAFT (11:16)

11 ALLAIN GAUSSIN LA CHEVELURE DE BÉRÉNICE (3:00)

CAROL MCGONNELL

Connection is the reason I play music.

Connecting with other musicians onstage, telling stories through vibrations in the air and the magic that comes from connecting with the audience. The connection with the composer is at the heart of that of course. I love the journey of learning a new piece and investigating what the composer wanted us to experience and what they had in mind at any given moment.

I'm so lucky to have been able to spend my life exploring what all of this means. I've played all over the place, from Suntory Hall to Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall to the Berlin Philharmonie. I've performed with phenomenal musicians such as the Midori, Daniel Hope, Jonathan Biss, Pekka Kuusisto, Barbara Hannigan and Frederica von Stade. I love playing chamber music and I've had the honor of playing with groups such as The Danish, JACK, Modigliani and Marmen Quartets. I've played at many festivals including Marlboro, Mecklenburg, Spoleto and Santa Fe Chamber Music. Recently I was featured with Leila Josefowicz, Paul Watkins and Kirill Gerstein playing Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* for a PBS documentary celebrating 50 years of the Santa Fe Festival.

I am a founding member of the Argento New Music Project, I've played with most of New York and Berlin's contemporary ensembles and some of my first professional gigs were with Ensemble Modern in Frankfurt.

I love teaching. I've given masterclasses and workshops at places from Harvard University to the Guildhall School in London. I've been on faculty at Queens College and at Juilliard as college auxiliary faculty.

I really hope you enjoy my new album, Satori. Please stay in touch at carolmcgonnell.com

– Carol McGonnell



Allain Gaussin: *Satori* (1989)

Satori is a Japanese word used in Zen Buddhism. It refers to a unique and extremely rare moment of self-awakening—an illumination—where the whole being resonates with the forces of the universe.

Gaussin's *Satori* feels sculpted toward that state. Despite its technical complexity, I feel there is not one extra note in the entire piece. Everything is exquisitely sculpted to take the listener on a journey out into the cosmos and into the field of all possibilities.

Steve Reich: *New York Counterpoint* (1985)

There are two qualities in this piece that always feel like magic. One is the moment when unexpected flowers suddenly bloom out of a perfectly controlled, almost monochrome texture. For this recording, I aimed for absolute consistency—of rhythm, color, breath, and emotional tone—so that those blossoms could have space to appear.

The other is the way he piles the clarinets on top of each other, from the depths of the bass clarinets to the stratosphere of the B-flat, creating pulsing pillars of sound and giving rise to sonic architecture that's so satisfying to the ear.

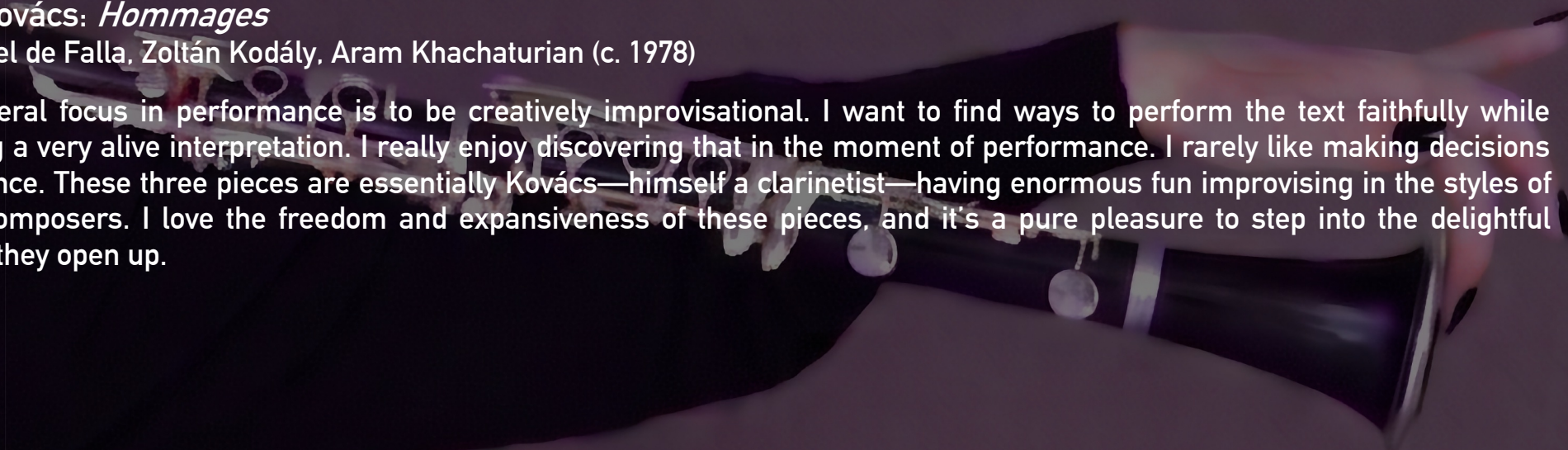
There are endless ways to perform this music. For the opening of Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center, I was asked to create a version with eleven clarinetists of Lincoln Center—each of us with a strong musical personality and approach to the piece. There was no shared world we would all strive to inhabit. With the legendary Bill Siegmund, editing became its own wild and joyful expedition. Instead of consistency, we embraced idiosyncrasy; a garden of unexpected flowers bloomed again.

That recording was later chosen to launch Apple Classical at the Apple Store on Fifth Avenue. Like my two daughters, these versions couldn't be more different—but I love them both!

Béla Kovács: *Hommages*

à Manuel de Falla, Zoltán Kodály, Aram Khachaturian (c. 1978)

My general focus in performance is to be creatively improvisational. I want to find ways to perform the text faithfully while creating a very alive interpretation. I really enjoy discovering that in the moment of performance. I rarely like making decisions in advance. These three pieces are essentially Kovács—himself a clarinetist—having enormous fun improvising in the styles of other composers. I love the freedom and expansiveness of these pieces, and it's a pure pleasure to step into the delightful worlds they open up.



Igor Stravinsky: *Three Pieces for Clarinet* (1918)

One of my first regular gigs as a music student was touring with the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra. I loved learning about early jazz and how it was being adapted for accompanying silent movies of the day. I recognize elements of ragtime—deeply anchored and wonderfully creative rhythms—and certain idiomatic motifs reminiscent of jazz clarinetists from that era, such as Sidney Bechet. It's mind-expanding to play these pieces with those influences flying around.

Jörg Widmann: *Fantasie* (1993)

Widmann is another clarinetist-composer and in this piece he brings so much joyful freedom and spaciousness. *Fantasie* is written without barlines which gives it a feeling of being uncaged and this encourages a rhapsodic interpretation. He says he was influenced by klezmer, jazz, and also Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for Clarinet*.

Karlheinz Stockhausen: *In Freundschaft* (1977)

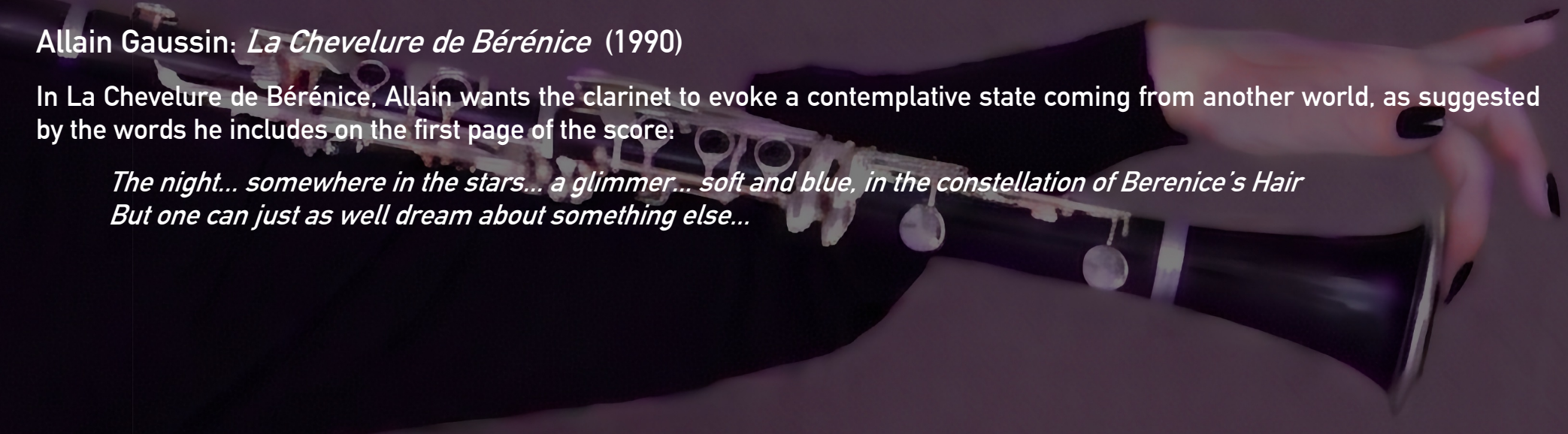
In Freundschaft was the first piece of solo clarinet music I ever learned. I was 20 and studying at the Hochschule in Frankfurt when composer Dániel Biró asked me to play it in a concert he was curating. I had one month to learn and memorize the piece—it was truly trial by fire. The experience expanded my awareness of my own capabilities.

The piece is highly structured: every element is taken through a process of strict transformation to create a kind of figure-eight that spans the musical structure of the entire work. Stockhausen asks the performer to embody this musical transformation through movement, visually drawing this structure as it unfolds. You might expect the result to be a dry, abstract, academic exercise, but that couldn't be further from the case. The physical movement opens up dimensions of expression that have continued to inspire my style of playing ever since.

Allain Gaussin: *La Chevelure de Bérénice* (1990)

In *La Chevelure de Bérénice*, Allain wants the clarinet to evoke a contemplative state coming from another world, as suggested by the words he includes on the first page of the score:

*The night... somewhere in the stars... a glimmer... soft and blue, in the constellation of Berenice's Hair
But one can just as well dream about something else...*



Gaussin: Satori and Widmann recorded at Evangelische Kirchengemeinde Berlin-Dahlem, spring 2022

Producer: Carol McGonnell • Audio engineer: Burkhard Scheibe

Reich recorded at Emil Berliner Studios, Berlin, 2020

Producer: Carol McGonnell • Audio engineer: Philip Krause

Kovács recorded at Mendelssohn Remise, Berlin, May 2021

Producer: Carol McGonnell • Audio engineer: Burkhard Scheibe

Stravinsky recorded at Scholes Street Studio, Brooklyn, 11 November 2024

Producer: Gene Gaudette • Audio engineer: René Allain

Stockhausen recorded at Centre Français de Berlin

Producer: Carol McGonnell • Audio engineer: Sebastian Merk

Gaussin: La Chevelure de Bérénice recorded at Tonstudio Peter Rahe, Berlin, spring 2021

Producer: Carol McGonnell • Audio engineer: Dan Katz

Mastered for CD, streaming, and download by Gene Gaudette, Urlicht AudioVisual

Produced for Urlicht AudioVisual by Carol McGonnell and Gene Gaudette

Thanks to the many people at Evangelische Kirchengemeinde Berlin-Dahlem, Emil Berliner Studios, Mendelssohn Remise, Scholes Street Studio, Centre Français de Berlin, Tonstudio Peter Rahe, and Bisonsdisc who made this release possible.

Special thanks for

Support from Ciara Higgins and the Dublin International Chamber Festival

Support from Michel Galante and the Argento New Music Project

Album cover and design by Michael Hanuschik

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