

UNBROKEN

Music from Ukraine

Viktorina Grynenko, Violin



Anna Pidgorna
Zoltan Almashi
Boris Loginov
Valentin Silvestrov
Oleg Bezborodko

UNBROKEN: MUSIC FROM UKRAINE

The initial motivation for this album was my reaction to the full-scale war in Ukraine. Being away from Ukraine since 2011, yet visiting every year over the summers, I have “lived” all the events of the Revolution of Dignity, annexation of Crimea, war in the East of Ukraine, and finally on February 24, 2022, Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It is a special kind of helplessness one feels when watching one’s homeland steeped in bloodshed.

I always endeavour to include Ukrainian pieces in my concert programs and research. In my view, at the time of this war, when Ukrainian cultural artefacts are being physically destroyed, the only meaningful action I felt I could take as a musician was to amplify Ukrainian voices for audiences around the world.

For me, all the works on this album are about resilience and the generosity of the Ukrainian spirit. Pidgorna’s creative visual score is inspired by a jagged hole in a door, mirroring the physical wound all Ukrainians carry in their hearts. The listener can decide which parties are on either side of the doors in *Through Closed Doors*. Almashi’s *Duo for Two Violins, No. 1* is melodious and expressive, a sincere and passionate plea for the end of the war. Loginov’s *sleep during insomnia* depicts the shock and the journey of every Ukrainian since February 2022. Silvestrov’s *Melodies of the Moments, Cycle I* quietly echoes memories from our peaceful lives. And finally, Bezborodko’s victorious *Concert Fantasy on Cossack Beyond the Danube* recalls the perseverance of the Ukrainian people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All these works were recorded with friends who felt it was important to engage with Ukrainian music at this time: my mentor Guillaume Tardif, collaborative pianist Roger Admiral, violinist Vladimir Rufino, violist Fabiola Amorim, and cellist Amy Nicholson. The recording of this project was generously funded by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. Thank you to my husband Thomas Mathieu for always supporting me in everything and taking pictures for this project.

I wish to thank Zoltan Almashi, Oleg Bezborodko, Boris Loginov, and Anna Pidgorna for providing information necessary to compiling these notes.

Viktoria Grynenko, Violin

Viktoria Grynenko is a Ukrainian-born, multifaceted artist based in Edmonton, Canada. In addition to violin performance, she also focuses on research and educational projects that involve rarely performed works for violin. Her efforts have been encouraged by Canadian and international organizations, such as the KUN Foundation, the Strauss Foundation, and by the Edmonton Artists Trust Fund Award. Building on her Ph.D. thesis obtained in 2021 from the University of Alberta and exploring relationships between violin and dance performance, Grynenko continues her active involvement in multi-disciplinary projects with local and international dancers. Recent highlights include her participation in the Mozarteum Summer Music Academy (Salzburg, 2019), conference presentations and performances at the Centro Studi Opera Omnia Luigi Boccherini (Lovere, 2023), the Institute for Musicology and the Institute for East European History of the University of Vienna (Vienna, 2023), as well as a residency with the New Chamber Ballet (New York, 2024). In 2023, Viktoria Grynenko released her debut album *Violin in Movement*, showcasing little-known works composed or arranged for violin and piano and relating to ballet and dance. She studied with Liudmyla Skorokhod and Leonid Shukhman in Ukraine, and with Oleg Pokhanovski, Yehonatan Berick and Guillaume Tardif in Canada.

Grynenko is passionate about giving back to the community, and to that end has been teaching with El Sistema programs across Canada for over a decade. Also active in other spheres, she was a founder of Job Hub Ukraine, a platform assisting Ukrainian refugees with their job searches in Canada, and she is currently a co-chair for Arts Habitat Edmonton.

In this recording, Viktoria performs on a Hermann Janzen violin, with a bow by Herbert Wanka.

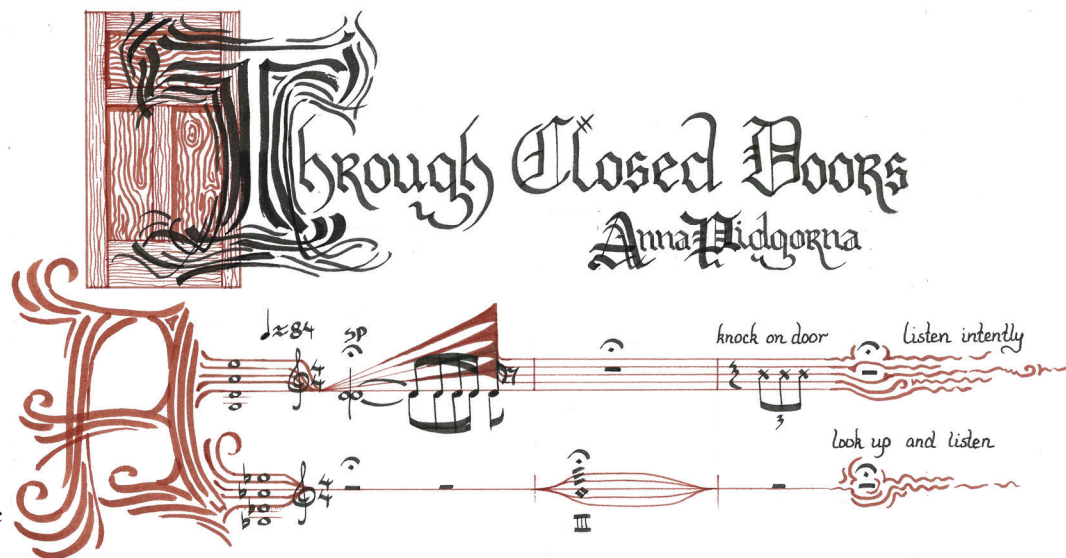


Through Closed Doors (2014)

Through Closed Doors is a clandestine dialogue between two people trapped on opposite sides of a closed door. The definitive version of the score is inscribed on a restored antique door, which was once hacked with a hatchet, leaving a jagged hole. This disturbingly fascinating wound inspired the dramatic conception of this piece and some of its musical gestures. The phrasing draws loosely on speech and song patterns, while the work's structure grows around the door, guided by its various panels and defects. The graphic notation, designed specifically for this piece, eliminates accents, dynamics, and bow pressure markings by incorporating them directly into the staff lines. The wavering staves resemble natural wood patterns and invite the performers to approach the score intuitively. The layout of the musical lines on the door guides the physical manifestation of the drama being played out in the music. This work was commissioned by Thin Edge New Music Collective and premiered by Ilana Waniuk and Suhashini Arulanandam in 2014, in Toronto, Canada.

Anna Pidgorna, Composer (b. 1985)

Anna Pidgorna is a Ukrainian-Canadian composer, vocalist and multi-media artist who combines sound, visual arts, video, theatre and writing in her work. She is strongly influenced by Ukraine's folk music, incorporating elements of the country's singing and poetic tradition into her vocal practice and instrumental compositions. Pidgorna and Maria Reva received the *Mécénat Musica Prix 3 Femmes 2020 Award*, and have written several operas together, including *Our Trudy*, and *Plaything*. Pidgorna draws much of her inspiration from the natural soundscape, often imitating birds and animals in her work. A student of the visual arts from an early age, she has incorporated visual elements into some of her manuscripts, including *Through Closed Doors* and *Mirror, Mirror*. Her works have been commissioned, performed and recorded by soloists, ensembles, presenters and festivals across the world. She holds the Ph.D. from Princeton University, the M.Mus. from the University of Calgary, and the B.A. degree from Mount Allison University.



Anna Pidgorna's *Through Closed Doors* - opening line



Through Closed Doors notated on the antique door

Duo for Two Violins, No. 1 (2007–2022)

Composed in 2007 and revisited in 2022, this work was commissioned by Anna Savytska and Jakub Dzialak, a violin duo known for their performances of experimental music. Almashi knew the musicians, however, as virtuoso violinists with great richness of sound, which inspired him to write *Duo for Two Violins, No. 1*. He aspired to create a piece that allowed the duo to exploit the violin's conventional range of sound: "I was sure that deep inside, they [Anna Savytska and Jakub Dzialak] wish for a contemporary piece where one can simply play with a beautiful sound, play sincerely and expressively".

Zoltan Almashi, Composer (b. 1975)

Zoltan Almashi is a Ukrainian composer, cellist, teacher, music activist, and organizer of festivals and concerts. He was awarded the Levko Revutsky State Prize (2003), the Boris Lyatoshynsky State Prize (2013), the Artemy Vedel "Kyiv" Prize (2024), the Viktor Kosenko Prize (2024), and was named People's Artist of Ukraine (2024). He has over 80 works to his credit, mainly for chamber orchestra and characterized by their bright imagery, emotional expressivity, structural clarity, and dramatic impact. Stylistically, these works centre on neo-Romantic trends in contemporary music while employing twentieth-century compositional methods. In addition to composing, Zoltan Almashi has taught at the Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine since 2002, while also working as a performer and solo instrumentalist with the National Chamber Soloists "Kyiv Chamber" and the "Rikoshet Contemporary Music Ensemble," both since 2000.



Guillaume Tardif, violin

sleep during insomnia (2022)

The impulse to create *sleep during insomnia* originated in the composer's need to "do something" at the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. This piece for string quartet and electronics is inspired by various forms of sleep and insomnia. According to Loginov, at the start of the all-out war, everyone was "... sleeping and awake at the same time, we [Ukrainians] could sleep very little, or not sleep at all, or sleep but wake up several times, night or day, constantly waiting for bad news, or even worse news". His creative process began by experimenting with sounds recorded prior to the Russian invasion, such as his wife's breathing, the rumblings of an old garage door, and stones clashing or falling. The piece unfolds around the funeral song referred to as "eternal sleep" from Sergei Taneyev's cantata *Ioann Damaskin*, a spiritual work that is eventually dissolved in the sounds of war in Loginov's piece. It should be noted that Loginov's inclusion of a Russian composer's work is primarily not an attempt at reconciliation. The composer employs ambivalent elements, such as bells, which resound in both Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox churches, but in different ways such as sounding the alarm for an attack from either side, or calling for "holy war," to the synchronized *col legno* of the quartet's final moments, which resemble an actual clock, but also constitute a very quiet military march. Taneyev's recorded excerpts are also ambivalent, as Loginov remarks: "Highly spiritual, beautiful music, unexpectedly takes the form of [a] scary force that no longer serves anything good, or even worse, serves (!) as the instrument for evil deeds. Something beautiful and deeply spiritual transforms into something beyond these categories and

melts into a new quality. It's also about how something beautiful can be something terrible at the same time. As when in your house, in the ticking of your clock, through half-sleep, through the breathing of the people you love, you can hear in your head the alarm of church bells, and the march of soldiers, and strange music that has already ceased to be what it was at the beginning".

Boris Loginov, Composer (b. 1990)

The Ukrainian composer Boris Loginov graduated from the National Academy of Music of Ukraine, composition class of Levko Kolodub. As a participant of the scholarship program *Gaude Polonia* he studied at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music (Warsaw, Poland). His works were performed by Orest Smovzh (violin), Antonii Baryshevskyi (piano), Nina Guo (vocal), Carine Levine (flute), Gleb Kanasevich (clarinet), as well as by the contemporary music vocal ensemble *Alter Ratio*, the *Sed Contra Ensemble*, and the *Synaesthesia Ensemble*. Loginov's recent activities include his participation in the *Weltoffenes Berlin* program (Germany, 2022–2023) and a Harris Program Distinguished Professor residency at Dartmouth College (USA, 2024).



From left to right: Fabiola Amorim (viola), Amy Nicholson (cello), Viktoria Grynenko (violin), Vladimir Rufino (violin).

Melodies of the Moments, Cycle I (2004)

This set is a part of a 72-minute super cycle consisting of 22 pieces in seven cycles entitled *Melodies of the Moments* for violin and piano. Written between 2004 and 2005, the cycle is intended as a “single lied,” according to the composer. Silvestrov compared his miniatures to Bach’s *The Art of Fugue*; as Tatjana Frumkis wrote in the Foreword to the score published by M.P. Belaieff, “This work could be called ‘The Art of Melody’ ... [in the Bach] there was a didactic aim, indeed, here there is no ‘art,’ only fleeting melodies, songs without words—words that are possibly lost or forgotten”. In Silvestrov’s own words, “Music is still song, even if one cannot literally sing it: it is not a philosophy, not a worldview. It is, above all, a chant, a song the world sings about itself, it is the musical testimony to life”. The five pieces (“Elegy,” “Serenade,” “Intermezzo,” “Barcarole,” “Nocturne”) are quiet, introspective, melancholic, and extremely detailed in the composer’s guidance, yet leave welcoming space for interpretation.

Valentin Silvestrov, Composer (b. 1937)

Valentin Silvestrov is one of the most prominent and prolific modern Ukrainian composers. He has published more than 100 works, including 28 for orchestra, 20 chamber works and song cycles, 320 cycles of solo piano works, as well as large-scale choral works. He was awarded the Koussevitzky Composition Prize (1967), First Prize at the competition of the Internationale Gaudeamus Muziekweek in Amsterdam (1970) and the Taras Shevchenko National Prize from the government of Ukraine (1995). Silvestrov studied composition with Boris Lyatoshinsky (1895–1968) and Levko Revutsky (1889–1977) at the Kyiv Conservatory from 1958 to 1964, later working

as a freelance composer in the Ukrainian capital until 2022, before taking refuge in Berlin at the onset of full-scale war in Ukraine. As the leading representative of the Kyiv avant-garde, Silvestrov’s music was rarely performed in Ukraine in the 1960s and ‘70s. In the ‘80s, Silvestrov’s music began a transformation that incorporated the melodic characteristics that we typically associate with his works today. These could be labelled as postmodern, or in the composer’s own words, as “metamusic,” which he explains as “a semantic overtone above music.” Commenting on his Symphony No. 5 (1982), Silvestrov remarked, “I do not write new music. My music is a response to and an echo of what already exists”. In a recent interview with Alexey Botvinov (June 2024), Silvestrov stated that the radical shift from experimental avant-garde to quiet, harmonious music symbolized the transition from the twentieth century to the twenty-first century for him. In another interview in 2022 for Deutsche Welle, Silvestrov also stated that, “In our time, music should go into the mode of silence, the mode of prayer and a quiet, peaceful day. Music should show how fragile our civilization is with all its power”.

Concert Fantasy on Cossack Beyond the Danube (2005)

Bezborodko's Concert Fantasy was written at the request of his friend, the famous Ukrainian violinist Dmytro Tkachenko. One of Tkachenko's favourite works is Waxman's *Carmen Fantasia*, and he desired a piece with a similar approach for the Ukrainian repertoire. Thus, he asked Bezborodko to compose a virtuoso fantasy for violin after the famous Ukrainian opera by Semen Hulak-Artemovsky *Zaporozhets' za Dunayem* (Cossack Beyond the Danube). In the words of Bezborodko, "I tried to preserve the spirit of the original score, without overshadowing the purity and beauty of Hulak-Artemovsky's melodies, but to enrich them with modern harmonies and orchestral colours and build on their basis a single and coherent line of development, as well as to give the soloist the opportunity to demonstrate brilliant virtuosity and mastery of violin playing technique".

Several versions of this Concert Fantasy exist: one with symphony orchestra accompaniment, another accompanied by a chamber orchestra, and a third with piano accompaniment. The work was performed with a symphony orchestra at the Stars of the Planet festival (Yalta, Crimean Autonomous Republic Symphony Orchestra, conductor Volodymyr Sirenko), at the Gala I Will Return to Ukraine (Kyiv, National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine, conductor Mykola Diadiura), at the IV World Forum of Ukrainians (National Opera Orchestra of Ukraine, conductor Kirill Karabits), and at the IV International Kyiv Music Festival - 2007 (Column Hall of the National Philharmonic of Ukraine).

Oleg Bezborodko, Composer (b. 1973)

Oleg Bezborodko is a Ukrainian pianist, composer, musicologist and educator whose works have been performed in over 25 countries. Born in Kyiv, he graduated with distinction from the Ukrainian National Academy of Music, piano class of Iya Pavlova. Bezborodko subsequently attended the Conservatoire de Neuchâtel in Switzerland, class of Sylviane Deferne, where he obtained the Prix de virtuosité avec distinction in piano performance. In 2010, he received the Ph.D. from the Ukrainian National Academy of Music, where he currently holds the position of Chair of the Piano Department. A prizewinner of national and international piano competitions and scholarships, Bezborodko is in high demand as an interpreter of contemporary music and as a chamber musician. Oleg Bezborodko was awarded the Ukrainian State Revutsky and Lysenko prizes. He has served as Artistic Director of the Kyiv Music Premieres festival since 2023.



From left to right: Roger Admiral (piano), Viktoria Grynenko (violin).

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1 Through Closed Doors

Zoltan Almashi

2 Duo for Two Violins, No. 1

Boris Loginov

3 sleep during insomnia

Valentin Silvestrov

Melodies of the Moment, Cycle I

5 I. Elegy

6 II. Serenade

7 III. Intermezzo

8 IV. Barcarole

9 V. Nocturne

Oleg Bezborodko

10 Concert Fantasy on Cossack Beyond
the Danube