

Industry Reviews

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MOONLIGHT IN EMPTY ROOMS -2018

RJ LANNAN on 3/6/2018

Listening to pianist Heidi Breyer's newest album, [Moonlight in Empty Rooms](#) I have come upon a happenstance where an old adage must be changed. I would now say it like this; "A picture is worth a thousand notes." Breyer's work is contemporary piano at its best with twelve intoxicating instrumentals of light ensemble and solo piano works inspired by the muse of her dreams and the works of her husband realistic painter, Alexander Volkov. Let's talk about Volkov first. Alex is an extraordinary painter whose heart and eyes transform everyday scenes into art that has to be seen to be believed. That being said, Breyer seems to have the same kind of magic. She sees with the eyes of her heart and transmutes that emotion of a visual into a glorious tune. All of the tracks on 'Moonlight in Empty Rooms' are written in response to a Volkov work. There is a bonus gift in the album package, a DVD that shows you melodically, the correlations that are possible when the two mediums are matched up. This is a review written for two.

The album opens with the Unfinished Conversation. A candle hastily blown out and the remnants of wine in the bottom of a duplet of glasses are all the fragments of a promise. There is more to come. Heidi's crescendo is a display of emotion that claims nothing is yet finished. The tune then settles into an idyllic flow accompanied by violinist Charlie Bisharat. The colors in this one are muted, the quality poignant and polished.

Autumn in Bruges is music for lovers. As it played I could picture a couple as they sit by the canal. They order up sweet wine and they laugh at each other's corny jokes. He reaches for her hand just as the sun utters goodnight. Volkov captures the moment in shadows and reflections. Heidi's music, like Alexander's light, splashes onto everything giving it more life. Heidi's tune is soft and sweet, and almost introspective at times.

The title tune Moonlight in Empty Rooms begins with a brief, but haunting violin intro. Heidi's theme takes over and it is lush and expansive, yet thought provoking. Volkov's painting in subdued grays and whites offers stripes of moonlight that fall across the floor in an unoccupied space. The moonlight is so bright that you can imagine the motes floating in the air. The scene and the music invites you in to make your own scenario. Place the characters, open the windows, and arrange the furniture. Make it your own. It is music of opportunity, a pas de deux of unseen souls. It is the best cut on the album in my mind and one that I played over and over.


I have always been a pluviophile, a lover of rainy weather so Rainy Day also became a favorite. Volkov offers a bunch of cornflowers in an old Mason jar positioned in front of a window. Rivulets run down the glass. But the sun may be ready to come out any minute. Breyer

musically captures the scene just as the clouds begin to part. Her rich, memorable score is a bit melancholy, but it brightens quickly.

Half Hour Before Spring, the painting, is what Volkov does best. He freezes a moment in time and we become witnesses to the instance. The pastel colors of dawn invites us in and we can feel the warmth as it softens the air. Heidi uses that subtle change in morning light to draw us to the music. Counterbalanced with the violin, she uses hopefulness in the notes to beckon us into the changing of the seasons. In the picture, there is still an icy glaze on much, but the music portends the first green any second now. There is a sense of sadness to see winter saying goodbye.

A white church on a hillside of fall grass is the subject of Faith. The background features storm clouds, but the church is bathed in a pure, white light. That is faith. This complex, harmonically rich refrain is balanced by the violin that plays the part of the questioner and the piano which eventually offers grace. There is a sweet sadness to it all. It suggests the feeling of saudade, the sense that one's soul is searching for something it does not understand. Bisharat's finale will give you chills.

Violinist Charlie Bisharat was the perfect accompanist to Heidi Breyer's music. He has a method that is complimentary, more that obtrusive, like a friend who always knows just what to say. Breyer, herself wields alchemy on this album, confirming the ongoing partnership with more than a kindred spirit in Alex Volkov. The simpatico is phenomenal. Breyer is at the present at an apex in her composition skills, but I feel there is more to come. There is a notable intricacy from her previous releases, which makes you want to hear more. Despite what John Keats once said, we have heard the melodies and they are far sweeter. Mr. Keats, let me introduce you to HeidiBreyer, the composer.

Rating: Excellent 

KATHY PARSONS 2018

There are a lot of new albums released every year, but once in awhile, one comes along that is truly an artistic event. Heidi Breyer's *Moonlight in Empty Rooms* is one of those. Subtitled "A Musical Study of the Art of Alexander Volkov," the set includes a CD of the music, a DVD that includes all of the music plus visual images of the paintings that inspired the music (plus other images), and a 28-page booklet that includes photos of the paintings and thoughts about the artwork written by both Volkov and Breyer. (The music is available to download by itself, but the experience is so much richer with the visuals!) The music was produced by Breyer, Will Ackerman and Tom Eaton, and was engineered, mixed and mastered by Eaton. The twelve tracks are a combination of solo piano (Breyer) and piano with violin (the always-brilliant Charlie Bisharat). The video was designed and produced by Breyer and Volkov.

Heidi Breyer was born in Great Britain and was conservatory-trained at the Trinity College of Music in London. Her albums have been among my favorites for several years, but this one is truly amazing. A true artist herself, Breyer's composing and playing styles are elegant and graceful, with strong classical influences. The twelve pieces on the album are warm and peaceful, but there is a depth of emotion that expresses the beauty and simplicity of the paintings in a way that words could never match. Breyer has been composing music in response to Volkov's paintings for almost ten years. As husband and wife, they live with each other's artistry, creativity and passion for their work as no one else can. I'm thrilled to read that they plan this as Volume One of a series of collaborations that will evolve over the years. The paintings that are included express feelings of quiet peacefulness, as does Breyer's music, bringing with it deep insight.

Alexander Volkov emigrated to the US from St. Petersburg, Russia more than twenty-five years ago. His realistic paintings appear to be somewhat influenced by Andrew Wyeth's work in that he takes everyday scenes and makes them extraordinary in their simplicity and beauty. Volkov's paintings often make wonderful use of light - through windows, cracks or holes in walls, in nature, etc. - and makes that light a vibrant part of the subject. One of my favorites is "Eastertide," which shows a toy stuffed rabbit on a comfortable chair, bathed in light. A simple vase of yellow flowers is also shadowed on the back of the chair. Such a simple idea that expresses so much. "Unfinished Conversation" is two wine glasses, neither of which is completely empty. Between them is a candle that was very recently extinguished because there is smoke rising from the wick. A window with sheer curtains is on the left side, but on the right is darkness. The only color in the otherwise black, gray and white painting is the red wine in the glasses and a tiny spark at the end of the candle wick. It's a peaceful but very powerful image.

Moonlight in Empty Rooms is nothing short of a masterpiece and I give it my highest recommendation. The music CD/download is 61 minutes, and so is the DVD. They are available from Amazon, iTunes and CD Baby.

BILL BINKELMAN on 1/14/2018

Pianist Heidi Breyer's husband, Alexander Volkov, is a wonderful painter of exquisite beauty in a style that blends intense neo-realism with a palpable sense of nostalgia. She is immersed in the artistic setting, i.e. surrounded by beautiful paintings from conception to conclusion, so that this environment has not just seeped into her musical persona, but one might say, symbiotically joined with it. It's easy to see why this relationship between his art and her music has evolved since she is in his studio and helps run the business on a daily basis. In Heidi's own words, while watching him paint..." I see what evolves and if it speaks to me, I'll know it by the middle stages of the painting process. I don't necessarily write something there and then, but when I get a window, if the painting is still haunting me, I will go to my studio and be gone for an intense amount of time and will write the piece until I'm satisfied with the concept." Heidi has

been composing music inspired by Alexander's paintings for ten years now. Finally, the time has come for her to share this special relationship she has with her husband's artwork on *Moonlight In Empty Rooms*, an amazing achievement in music reflecting images and the emotional impact of both.

Breyer singled out twelve compositions and the paintings associated with them, each song titled after that piece of art. Packaging of the album is fantastic, presented as a gorgeous digipack with extremely voluminous and insightful liner notes (including Volkov's artwork) about each painting's and each song's origin and interpretation, as well as an overview of the why and wherefore of the project itself (including a little snippet from Volkov about his artwork). Besides the CD, the digipack features a DVD which directly marries Breyer's music to Volkov's artwork (created with Adobe Premier software). So, you get the added emotional impact of listening to these exquisite neo-classical duets while watching the artwork to which it is linked unfold – a truly immersive experience.

Joining Breyer on each of the twelve selections is session violinist extraordinaire, Charlie Bisharat. However, if all you have heard from him is his great work in support of the many Imaginary Road Studio recordings produced by Will Ackerman and Tom Eaton, prepare to hear a whole other side of his violin artistry. Bisharat displays true classical chops and a playing style that will be a revelation to many of his fans, I'd wager.

While there is unmistakable classical crossover theme present on the album, I was also (more than once) reminded of classic pop music of the '40s, perhaps of the jazz/torch song era. The melodies seemed to evoke that sensation for me. More than once I envisioned a chanteuse singing in an after-hours club, the kind of tragic romantic music that typified that style of music. On the other hand, perhaps that is just my personal evocation. Regardless, even if one does slot the album into the neo-classical genre, it is most certainly romantic music at its core, with only a few moments that elevate into power and drama.

Breyer's control of nuance and shading is a marvel throughout the disc, no matter what tempo, volume, or mood she is playing. Yet, what is just as striking is the sense of intimacy, the immediateness of her performance, especially on the more reflective, pensive tunes. This is when it becomes obvious how deeply felt these compositions are to her and how intermeshed they are in her appreciation and affinity for her husband's artistic talents. In an email exchange with her, I compared her piano music with Alex's paintings as two strands of DNA, intertwined to yield a single trait.

Singling out specific tracks is akin to singling out one of Volkov's paintings, i.e. it would be more a matter of how one song struck you and less of an evaluative process. Yes, some tracks here touch me more deeply, such as pensive and gently melancholic "Autumn Snowfall," but I believe *Moonlight In Empty Rooms* plays best as a whole, not as the sum of its admittedly beautiful parts. The opening playfulness on "Autumn in Bruges" leads way to a more wistful and even sad main melody, albeit one with energy and a fast tempo at times. The title track is ushered in by Bisharat's initial violin solo which gives way to a reflective piano tone poem by Breyer, and soon

the two artists pirouette together, dancers in a song that combines a forceful sense of passion with a tangible but subtle feeling of loneliness. As one might expect, "The Sound And The Fury" brims with power and drama, interspersed with brief moments of respite. "Faith" (which unless I am deaf or clueless, features Bisharat multi-tracked) carries distinct hymn-like qualities during his opening solo segment, segueing to Breyer incorporating what sounds like elements of "Praise God of Whom All Blessing Flow;" not really riffing on it or extrapolating from it, but more using the opening note progression as a jumping off point. It is the longest track on the album and both Breyer and Bisharat play it out as an ode to the power of the titular word. The album closes with the sublime "End Of Summer," and again, I hear echoes of classic torch songs, but here meshed with a tone poem aesthetic. There is sadness and remembrance at work here, but also fondness of memory.

I haven't even begun to attempt to describe Alexander Volkov's paintings in this review, but truly, they are an essential aspect of appreciating Heidi Breyer's music and playing. Again, in her own words, "This is a phenomenon to us and we are quite surprised by its evolution and the fact that it seems to be a living breathing thing that is not going away. It is why we do everything together, suffocating though it might be at times, we breath very much the same inspiration and it goes around in circles between us..."

Easily the best work Heidi Breyer has yet recorded, Moonlight In Empty Rooms is as deeply felt and masterfully recorded (piano recorded at Imaginary Road Studios and mixing and mastering by Tom Eaton) an album as I've heard this past year. Special seems wholly inadequate in describing this work from a truly gifted artist.

CONTEMPORARY FUSION REVIEWS Rotcod Zzaj

Heidi Breyer with Charlie Bisharat totally stunning piano portraits Heidi Breyer with Charlie Bisharat – MOONLIGHT IN EMPTY ROOMS: The thing that (most) sets Heidi's lovely piano work apart from all the other gifted artists is her total control of the instrument... and, not in the sense of "rigidity"... it's just that her playing feels so natural and free because of her pacing... her work with Charlie on violin, especially on the amazing opener, "[Unfinished Conversation](#)", is beyond compare... on this composition, she also demonstrates that she has the POWER to communicate in full glory... check out the wonderfully strong chords she uses at the :41 second mark to talk with Charlie... again – AMAZING!

The album is actually an intimate and emotional musical study of the work of her husband, Alexander Volkov, a highly talented visual artist... and the package includes a wonderful DVD that illustrates her ability to reach deep into her soul and paint wonderful portraits with her piano that will stay fixed in your mind eternally... just listen to the composition that moved me to memories of long-ago days in the wintry climes of Northwestern Pennsylvania (where I grew up)... "[Autumn Snowfall](#)" is one of the pieces highlighted on the DVD, and you'll find yourself

watching it over and over again, as I did. Heidi's work has always been a favorite experience; I've reviewed several of her albums, most recently in [issue # 165](#), but this new release is absolutely the best work I've ever heard from her.

One of the strongest piano/violin works I've heard (yet) in 2018 is the 4:17 "[The Sound and The Fury](#)"... she and Charlie move and play together perfectly to sonically illustrate one of Alexander's most powerful visuals... flawless recording and the deep involvement of both players makes this a piece that I believe will be nominated for (**and win**) awards!

The piece that (**hands-down**) won my vote for personal favorite is the marvelously intricate movement on "[Faith](#)", which features a painting Alexander did of a small church in (**of all places**) Vermont, where my mother's parents lived for decades – so, this song has special meaning to me... simple, but beautiful!

I give Heidi and Charlie a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for this excellent hour of creativity, with a (perfect) "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 5.00... meaning that it also gets my "PICK" for "best piano/violin album".

NEW AGE MUSIC REVIEWS

5/5 Stars Keith "MuzikMan" Hannaleck March 9, 2018 Founder of: MuzikMan Productions

Moonlight In Empty Rooms is Heidi Breyer's fifth proper album. She worked exclusively with Charlie Bisharat, a superb violinist. The combination of piano and violins are not strange bedfellows. They both complement each other exquisitely, just like it was meant to be. It most certainly sounds that way to me when I hear that combination, which is often in the new age genre.

The album is a musical tribute to her husband Alexander Volkav's artwork. I saw a few of the pictures of his work and they are absolutely stunning. They are so lifelike and crystal clear, that you will find it hard to believe that a human being actually painted them.

Moonlight In Empty Rooms is like a river of songs moving along as nature would have it. When you see the water from far away it does not look like its moving too fast, as you get closer you can see what is really happening. This music is comparative to that. It is calm and engaging as it gently invites you in. Once you step through that door of complete envelopment in the tracks, you are now moving right along with it, up close and personal.

Like the art that Alexander creates, it is placed on a canvas of different shades and colors. Each track is a separate work of art just like her husband's paintings. I often describe music in this fashion and honestly think the comparison is relative. Art comes in all forms and colors and so does music. You, the listener, are the open canvas ready for the music to create something

within your heart, mind, and soul. I think Heidi accomplishes that with this gorgeous music. It comes presented with strong musicianship and accomplished production values.

Moonlight In Empty Rooms sets the standard at a high level for instrumental new age and classical recordings. This is as good as it gets.

DYAN GARRIS for New Age CD.com 2018

This is an undeniably exquisite Neo-classical piano and violin album by award winning composer and pianist, Heidi Breyer. Her 5th album, "Moonlight in Empty Rooms" is twelve tracks, each inspired by the original paintings of her husband, Russian-American oil painter, Alexander Volkov. The violin performances on the album are by Charlie Bisharat, an American Grammy® Award-winning violinist. Bisharat has performed with Yanni, John Tesh, Elton John, The Rolling Stones, and many other notables. The album was produced at Imaginary Road Studios, home to Grammy® winning guitarist, producer, and founder of Windham Hill Records, Will Ackerman.

Volkov describes his fine art as ". . .always a story of light traveling through darkness."

"Moonlight in Empty Rooms" is a superb reflection and interpretation of that story, and like rich icing on a luscious cake, it's the perfect counterpart.

A booklet and a DVD both come along with the physical album. The booklet contains images of the artwork with inspirational snippets. The DVD is comprised of 12 videos; footage of Volkov's artwork set to Breyer's exceptional music.

Track 1, "An Unfinished Conversation," opens the album brilliantly and sets the stage for the promise of much more to come. Passionate, emotional, and tender, this feels like the story of a meaningful soul relationship that lasts not only throughout this lifetime, but through eternity, with always more to learn and experience no matter where the road of life leads.

Track 3 is the charming, "Autumn in Bruges." Bruges is a picturesque town in Belgium with a rich medieval history. "Autumn in Bruges" is captivating with its cascading nuances conjuring up images of cobblestone streets, romantic canals, and bell towers.

"Moonlight in Empty Rooms" the title track, is full of graceful movement and ambiance, the piano layered sumptuously throughout with the violin. Each nuance and subtlety is carefully coaxed out of hiding and brought forth to blend together in perfect harmony, like expert brushstrokes on a canvas begin to form a masterpiece. You can feel the resultant light right in your heart.

The composition, "Rainy Day," on track 7, is exquisitely beautiful and hauntingly so. It's a favorite of mine on the album. The violin performance is exceptional, forming a lush tapestry with Breyer's gentle, evocative, and expressive piano performance. There is something that really speaks to the depths of the soul here. This is peace. Deep and satisfying peace.

"End of Summer" winds up the album and reminds us, similarly as in track 1, that even as the light of summer fades, there is always more to come. There is always the story.

We love it. Highly and most definitely recommended.

JONATHAN WIDRAN April 24th 2018

In an overwhelmingly positive review I wrote about Heidi Breyer's *Beyond The Turning* – rightfully chosen ZMR's Best Instrumental Piano Album 2012 – I mentioned that she had been on an extraordinary journey of self-discovery that culminated in this work, which I described as “a heartfelt and evocative, introspective and ultimately universal look at humanity and the sometimes joyous, often embattled path we take to ultimately find our path home.” Listening now, six years later, to **Moonlight in Empty Rooms**, an epic 12 song new age/neo-classical collection of artful and transcendent, alternately poignant and whimsical pieces driven by her impressions of works by her realist painter husband Alexander Volkov, I realize more than ever what “home” means to this multi-talented artist.

Just as we can't imagine watching films without a score, there's something emotionally powerful about that place between artistic worlds where music helps our hearts better understand what our eyes may have missed. This album, produced by Heidi with Windham Hill legend Will Ackerman and engineer/mixer extraordinaire Tom Eaton, gives us a rare opportunity to contemplate each work and perhaps dream for several minutes as Heidi takes us on a whirlwind journey with the exquisite harmonies and counterpoint voice of the masterful veteran violinist Charlie Bisharat. Listening to a loving wife envelop her passions around places her husband calls “a space where there's no tomorrow or yesterday, where there are no projections for the future and no excuses for the past,” I am reminded of something a dear writer friend of mine wrote about his in-laws who were married for 60 years: “They'd grown together like intertwined roots that were never meant to survive a severing.”

Heidi's eloquent liner notes next to each of Alexander's images serve as something of a guided tour of where the muse takes her and how – but even without those detailed explanations, her pure piano poetry speaks volumes about the meanings of love and life. It might be an interesting experiment to listen to *Moonlight in Empty Rooms* first, reading along and studying the artwork – and then just hearing the music by itself and going on your own excursion of self-discovery.

The set begins with two and a half minutes of beautiful hypnotic ivory meditation before Bisharat's voice enters the moment, hoping to create a dialogue on a higher level. Heidi responds by alternating tempos as if in search of the perfect way to connect. Alexander finds beauty in the dying of trees amidst a stark winter landscape on “Autumn Snowfall,” which inspires Heidi to create interesting contrasts between moody, shadowy contemplation and a few hopeful high notes as Bisharat swirls about like gently falling snow.

“Autumn in Bruges” reflects on that same season but in a whole different way, amidst the many images competing for our attention in Alexander's late in the day empty street in the famed Belgian city – bicycles, lit and shadowed trees, brick pavement, a distant steeple and inky sky.

Heidi captures the lighthearted whimsy of possibility, then eases into a bright waltz-like dance with Bisharat, which rolls like a pleasurable stroll, ripe for new adventures, down the street. As for the heartfelt, gracefully inviting “Christian’s Workshop,” we may not know who Christian was, but Alexander’s painting of a long ago abandoned woodshop, looking out streaked windows into the light, allows us to create a character of our own choosing. Heidi and Alexander work that way, drawing us in to fill out the characters and places they shed cracks of light on.

As it flows on, *Moonlight in Empty Rooms* continues to expand our collective heart’s possibilities, with Heidi creating a lovely, swaying sense of camaraderie with Bisharat, dancing in empty room where lit by distant moonlight on the title track; celebrating a beloved pet’s peaceful transition from slumber to being awake at “Eastertide”; letting a gentle rain spark moments of sorrow and wistful nostalgia on a quiet “Rainy Day”; and, on “The Sound and the Fury,” tackling the deeper roars of nature with passion, power and intensity via intense chords jamming with Bisharat’s hard to pin down flights of fancy. The last third of the album takes us through the seasons, with the gentle unfolding sweetness of a “Winter Rose” giving way to hope for a season of rebirth a “Half Hour before Spring” and concluding with a simply stated reminiscence at the “End of Summer.” Bridging those last two tracks is “Faith,” presented as a deeply lived, internal mood swinging struggle to believe in and understand God, set against the simple image of a country church in a yellow field with storm clouds gathering in rural Vermont.

Heidi’s quote about her music is as relevant to her mastery on *Moonlight in Empty Rooms* as it was when she said it earlier in her career: “I bring to my music, and to everything I do in my life, all that I am and all that I have experienced -- and I’m finding in music that approach leads to success more often than in life. I bring every emotion, including those I share as a student, parent and teacher, those I give when I love and those private alone times, which if it weren’t for the music, might be forgotten. I feel completely privileged and honored to be on this journey and feel the adrenaline and excitement of it all when I’m at the piano composing.”

The *Moonlight in Empty Rooms* Package includes a DVD with videos that delve deeper into the album's theme and official subtitle, "A Musical Study of the Art of Alexander Volkov."

LETTERS FROM FAR AWAY 2015

MICHAEL DIAMOND– Music and Media Focus. 10/30/15

Just before beginning to write this feature article on pianist/ composer Heidi Breyer’s new release, *Letters From Far Away*, I went back and revisited the one I wrote about her excellent 2012 album *Beyond The Turning*. It concluded with a quote from Heidi that makes an excellent segue to this release. In her words: “Our creations are an affirmation of life...whatever form they take, they are the legacy we leave, reflecting the most poignant moments of our short time here. All I know is that the only thing we can share, and the only thing we own, is that split second of time that slips between our fingers, that breathtaking moment of life called now.”

The liner notes for *Letters From Far Away* begin with these thoughts from Heidi that echo similar sentiment: “Like grains of sand that form the dunes, it is the multitude of seemingly insignificant events that comprise our life and being. At any given time, we have no way of knowing how important that moment may be, until perhaps much later. And therefore, they are all equally important. It is love, however, that connects everything through time and space... love is the wind that shapes the dunes.”

These are inspiring thoughts, and part of the reason I am focusing on them is because there is a lot of deep thought and intention that has gone into this recording project overall. For one, it is a “concept album,” in which all the songs revolve around a central theme. In this case, the theme is Heidi’s musical interpretation of a handful of experiences in the story of one couple who met in post-WWII Europe, came from two different countries and at that time, against all odds, they walked the rest of their lives together. And in the larger picture, it is about love in all forms as a common denominator and unifying principle. Each song on the album relates to a facet of this theme and tells a chapter of the story, lending somewhat of a literary dimension to the album as well as a musical one.

Before delving into the music and the story, there is another interesting and intriguing aspect to share about this release. That has to do with the fact that *Letters From Far Away* is a double CD – but not just a double album in the usual sense. One disc is an ensemble recording that not only features Heidi on piano, but also includes a host of world-class accompanists from the studio of Grammy winning Windham Hill Records founder Will Ackerman, who co-produced the album along with Heidi and Tom Eaton, who also engineered, mixed, and mastered the album. The second disc contains solo piano versions of the same songs in the same order. According to Heidi: “The initial concept for this project was to release my first piano solo album where each track would stand in its own right specifically as a solo piece.” But as it evolved, she began to imagine a violin here, a cello there, and so on. What developed eventually in the course of Heidi’s creative process was a complete ensemble album. Hence, she decided to release both incarnations of the same story in one double album, which incidentally is the same price as a single album. As well as being a great value for the listener, this project also marks Heidi’s entrance into the solo piano genre, as well as the continuation of her work as an ensemble composer.

For the purpose of this feature article, I’ll be focusing primarily on the ensemble pieces, since a detailed description of both versions would be exceedingly lengthy. So let’s open the first chapter of this musical story, which, for the record, is not fictional, but is based on the actual lives of two real people. The curtain rises on a track called “All The Good Things.” This piece is like a prequel that sets the scene and portrays life in those times as being “uncomplicated – when it was about doing simple things and doing them well.” The music, which begins, of course, with Heidi’s piano is peaceful and easy going. As the piece progresses, she is joined by long-time Will Ackerman collaborator Jill Haley on English horn, who enters softly with serene and simple accompaniment. Also adding to the mix with his soulful strings is GRAMMY winning cellist Eugene Friesen, who is best known for his work with The Paul Winter Consort. As on most projects recorded at Will Ackerman’s Imaginary Road Studios, the accompaniment is generally understated and supportive, without drawing attention away from the primary artist.

The next song, "Small Café" describes the meeting place of the two soon-to-be lovers; he, a young English R.A.F. recruit stationed in Germany, and she, the daughter of the local high school Deputy Head. The piece, which features the clarinet and sax of Billy Novick, has wonderful dynamics, which rise and fall gracefully. I also appreciated Heidi's exquisite use of space in her playing. Another excellent example of this is on "First Impressions," of which Heidi says: "First impressions may form some of our deepest memories. They are the first grains of sand that form the dunes." In addition to her alternately powerful and subtle piano work, Heidi adds ethereal wordless vocals that seem to drift in from far away. Vocalist Noah Wilding is also featured in a similar way on the album. A stately waltz entitled "Old Photograph," also highlights the talents of one of my favorite violinists, Charlie Bisharat, who has played with Yanni, John Tesh, and many others.

The album's title track has a more melancholy ambience, which is appropriate considering that it is a musical interpretation of a five-year period that the lovers were separated and communicated by writing letters. The depth of emotion that Heidi brings to this piece is heart wrenching and its poignancy is further accentuated by the song's sonorous string accompaniment. A real surprise, and a most pleasant one at that on this album of primarily original material is a unique instrumental version of Simon and Garfunkel's classic "Scarborough Fair." It would be an understatement to say that Heidi has taken great liberty and artistic license in her radically reworked rendition. But I must say that I was impressed with Heidi's bold interpretation of this iconic composition, which also features one of the album's largest ensembles accompanying her. The recording ends like it began, in simplicity and serenity with a reflective piece called "Starry Pond."

I will comment briefly, that listening to the solo piano versions made for an interesting contrast in some ways. As mentioned, the accompaniment on the ensemble tracks is often sparse and lightly supports the piano, so that it is not necessarily a night and day difference between them and the solo piano. However, with the piano on its own in the spotlight, various elements of Heidi's playing and composing were more in focus. Having listened first to the ensemble CD, and then to the solo CD, I felt that all the songs stood exceptionally well on their own, and I didn't have a sense that anything was missing without the accompaniment. Part of Heidi's goal with this double album was to expand on her notoriety as an ensemble player/composer, and establish herself in the solo piano genre. To this end, I believe she has perfectly achieved what she set out to do. Each disc is perfect in its own right, and gives the listener great insight into the creative process of this talented artist.

When I asked Heidi in an interview, why she is a musician. Her reply was: "I am a musician because I can't not be one. Music is a part of the fabric of who I am." While this double album is an expansion of Heidi's formats, another facet of her creative spectrum may be on the horizon. As she explains: "Most of my music is written in response to a visual or emotional stimulus. I find it incredibly easy to translate the visual to music...and I believe, naive or not, that my true gift lies in writing music for TV and film." As she prepares to take classes in film scoring, the music of Heidi Breyer may be coming to a theater near you in the not too distant future. But in the meantime, Heidi has provided us with a treasure trove of beautiful recorded music, as well as an upcoming fifth CD to look forward to. Heidi Breyer is a truly remarkable instrumentalist

and composer whose expressive and melodic range is impressive, as is her emotionally evocative touch on the keyboard. *Letters From Far Away* is musical storytelling at its best and illuminates the talents of a rising star in the piano world.

PRESS RELEASE 2015 For “Letters From Far Away”

Press inquiries: Glass Onyon PR, PH: 828-350-8158, glassonyonpr@gmail.com

Pianist and Composer Heidi Breyer Releases A Breathtaking New Album “Letters From Far Away” Featuring Legendary Will Ackerman

“The music is at once technically breathtaking and emotionally intimate. A rare and wonderful combination.” – Will Ackerman

Frenchtown, NJ – Pianist and composer Heidi Breyer has released a breathtaking new album of unparalleled beauty titled “Letters From Far Away.” The new release is a double solo and piano instrumental album and Heidi’s debut production alongside legendary Will Ackerman (Founder Windham Hill Records) and Tom Eaton. The album was recorded, mixed and mastered at Imaginary Road Studios in Vermont and Studio Sound in LA.

Says Heidi, “ ‘Letters From Far Away’ is my musical interpretation of a handful of experiences in the story of one couple, each from different countries, who met in 1960 and after 5 years apart, against all odds, walked the rest of their lives together. It is also about love in all it’s forms, how love is the common denominator that transcends time and links the generations over the course of decades. It is the one thing that connects us.

Winner of ZMR Best Instrumental piano Album 2012, Nominated ZMR Best Holiday Album 2011, Winner of ZMR Best Instrumental Piano Album 2010 and Best New Artist 2010, Heidi Breyer has four albums to her credit – Winter Light 2009, Another Place and Time 2010, Beyond The Turning 2012, Letters From Far Away 2015. She has performed on stages worldwide and opened the first ever live ZMR Awards show performing with Premik Russell-

(Sting), Jill Haley and Michael Ronstadt. Her music has been featured on many compilations including the Grammy Nominated Album for Best Spoken Word, “The Storm King” an Auto Biographical Narration by the late Pete Seeger, Produced by Jeff Haynes, also The Gathering (West River Records), Many Miles Music (Seattle based label) and Sounds of The Circle by Suzanne Doucet. British born and conservatory educated at Trinity College of Music in London, Heidi Breyer now resides in the artistic community of Frenchtown, NJ, an inspiring setting where she composes her music, prepares for her multi-media concerts, teaches and manages the business of world-renowned Russian painter, Alexander Volkov.

“Heidi Breyer continues to amaze with her evolution as a composer and as a performer. The range of styles represented in Letters From Far Away is considerable, but like the outer planets in our solar system, these are held together by the gravity and persuasion of Breyer’s Artistic

Voice.” – Will Ackerman, Grammy winning Guitarist, Producer, Imaginary Road Studios and founder of Windham Hill Records.

And now, in 2015, Heidi has released her most stunning achievement to date, the new album “Letters From Far Away”! Says Heidi, “I wrote the entire collection with the intention of releasing my first piano solo project. But in the very first session the opportunity for some major counter-melody from other specific instruments was revealing itself to me. The main instrumental voices that I was imagining were cello, violin, guitar and English Horn, mostly because I have worked with these sounds before and have an understanding of their capacity for expression within my music. Clarinet was non-negotiable on Small Cafe. Every time I hear that instrument it propels me back in time and for that piece as with all others, it was the only option. Then saxophone, french horn and bass guitar...all came very naturally...

“Will Ackerman has amazing perceptual awareness. He has mentored me for several years now, both in regard to my music and helping me to further discover and push my own development as an artist. He knows when to step back and when to guide. As this project progressed he was clearly observing my need for specifics...not just instrumentally but also melodically, harmonically and rhythmically and yet he also knew when to bring forth his knowledge and experience for the better. Along with Tom Eaton’s own depth of production experience, I think we made a pretty good team! All the session players I work with are in their own right top-shelf artists. Many of them are on all of my albums. They really listened, understood and interpreted accurately and delivered, in my opinion, flawlessly. The list of players I worked with (and hope to again) include but are not limited to Eugene Friesen, Jill Haley, Charlie Bisharat, Gus Sebring, Mark Schulman, Will Ackerman.”

Here’s what’s being said about Heidi Breyer’s “Letters From Far Away”:

“ ‘Letters From Far Away’ is a love story that began more than five decades ago across the briny Atlantic. For the world, it was a time of new beginnings. For the lovers it was the birth of something so inexplicable that neither poets with their rhymes, nor philosophers with their thoughts could define it. Until now. It would take extraordinary music to explain it. Enter pianist Heidi Breyer. She takes on the monumental task of telling a story that does not appear in known fairytales, but in the chronicles of the heart. Using her incredible composition skills, she offers not one, but two eleven-track disks of solo piano and its companion instrumental pieces. She takes on the role of bard, storyteller, musician, and singer – a modern day Scheherazade. The contemporary music is twenty-two glimpses into the history of lovers that came from two different worlds and whose devotion was strong enough and endured long enough to build a single world of love. Let us meet the lovers.” – RJ Lannen, Zone Music Reporter

“A new release by Heidi Breyer is always worth waiting for, but this time she has out done herself and her deeply meaningful creation of Letters from far Away, will be regarded by her fans and the followers of piano based music, as real raising of the musical bar, her many listeners, of which I urge you to be one of, will be deeply moved for an eternity by this incredible release.” – Steve Sheppard, OWMR

“Heidi Breyer’s ‘Letters From Far Away’ is an amazing collection of lovely piano based music. I particularly loved the idea of having a double CD set- One with Solo Piano versions and the other with subtle arrangements. Being a musician I could see the tremendous amount of attention to detail that has gone into the writing and performance. As a pure listener, I loved the option to chose which CD to listen to based on my mood. Overall a fantastic musical experience and I wish Heidi all the best for this wonderful work.” – Ricky Kej, Grammy Winner Producer, 2015 of New Age Album of the year, (Winds of Samsara)

“Heidi has provided us with a treasure trove of beautiful recorded music, as well as an upcoming fifth CD to look forward to. Heidi Breyer is a truly remarkable instrumentalist and composer whose expressive and melodic range is impressive, as is her emotionally evocative touch on the keyboard. Letters From Far Away is musical storytelling at its best and illuminates the talents of a rising star in the piano world. – Michael Diamond, Music and Media Focus.”

“Heidi’s music is the perfect synthesis of academia and passion. This is music informed by years of study and a rich life. The music is at once technically breathtaking and emotionally intimate. A rare and wonderful combination.” – Will Ackerman

In closing Heidi has this to impart, “Music is an elixir for life, love, catharsism and general well being. Always has been and always will be... My music is written to nourish and combat the impact of today’s crazy, restless world, but it is not music for meditation relaxation...I do not strive to help empty the mind through musical meditation. There is a lot of great New Age Music that already does this successfully. I present an alternative perspective, deliver a brief but thoughtful departure to another life imagined through the music, and bring the listener back through the same escape route to reality, feeling a refreshed and grounded in their real lives. I believe the New Age music genre is breaking through to a new era at the very moment it is needed. We know that certain types of music are a part of most peoples daily balancing act. But in addition, we are observing that our human psyche is evolving and we are using our core (our soul, our intuition) to guide us more and more and not just our 5 known senses (that tell us the immediate things)...I believe our instinctive leaning toward New Age music contributes to that ‘beacon’. It is music for our lifestyles. It is one of the facets of the balancing act that we will become more and more reliant upon, almost medicinally. I for one, know that I am someone who can help in that regard. So the message is...check out New Age Music. Check out all of my music and see how it can truly help you.”

BEYOND THE TURNING 2012

HOT INDIE NEWS KEITH CHACHKES – 8/5/14

Epic. Somber. Introspective. Deep. Enigmatic. Whimsical. These are a few of the terms I might use to describe the piano stylings of HEIDI BREYER. However, simply trying to boil down all of her talents as a thoughtful player and songwriter down to the bare essence may not quite do justice to the masterpiece that is her third album, *Beyond the Turning*...read more

Culling together her many influences from Classical, Jazz, New Age and Progressive Rock (channeling the late Richard Wright of PINK FLOYD at times), Heidi truly does “paint in sound” as her biography suggests. Using the emotional framework of the events in the world the last few years as a sonic allegory of sorts, *Beyond the Turning* takes your soul on a journey of discovery. The heartfelt opener “Farewell” has a sense of calming dismay to it and sets the mood for the majority of the album. “World Without End” continues the trek inward, slowly uncovering feelings of peace and resolve in its musical DNA.

Breyer has a jazz master’s touch when it comes to song craft and certainly her romantic side comes through in place like the soothing “Rive Droite”. Other tracks such as “The Long Way Home (Passage 1)”, “My Peace Piece” and “Eight Steps Free” have a nice laid back, soulful quality that tie the album together nicely. Not only does Heidi have a splendid voice, she augments her performance with the heavenly sounds of Samite. She has an all-star team of talents pitching in to help, who take many excellent songs to the next level like cellist Eugene Friesen, violinist Charlie Bisharat, superstar bassist Michael Manring (solo bass on “Joy of The Road”), Jill Haley’s horn playing and David Cullen’s immense guitar work among others.

Among the top tracks of the album “Tea and Sympathy”, “Moondancing”, “Adungu Inspiration” and the title track wind down the album in top notch fashion. These songs are full of little stories, each measure further revealing memories and feelings that will surely stir in the coldest souls out there.

ANOTHER PLACE AND TIME 2010

BILL BINKELMAN - ZMR

Even when compared to the unbelievably high quality of music evidenced on most of the recordings that issue forth from Imaginary Road studios and the production team of Will Ackerman and Corin Nelsen, pianist **Heidi Anne Breyer**’s *Another Place and Time*... is a superlative album. This one of those CDs that, as soon as I made it through the first three cuts, I knew it was going to land a special place on “permanently playable” shelf.

Similar in mood and style to Tim Story’s “tragic beauty trilogy” (*Beguiled*, *The Perfect Flaw*, and *Shadowplay*), yet also more diverse (owing to the presence of more accompanists than Story’s

CDs featured), *Another Place and Time...* is a highly introspective album, absolutely perfect for the seasons of late autumn and early winter, when many of us retreat into ourselves and our dwellings, to pause, reflect, remember, and (for some of us) regret. There is a distinctly discernible melancholic mood which permeates the music, although not in such a way that will bring the listener down as much as invite the listener "in." In addition to the somberness of the music (one of the traits Breyer shares with Story) another is the minimalism of the piano itself. While there are no electronic keyboards (which Story uses), Ackerman enlisted many of his usual suspects as guest artists, among them **Jill Haley** on English horn, **Jeff Oster** on trumpet and flugelhorn, **Eugene Friesen** on cello, **Noah Wilding** on vocals, and the estimable **Charlie Bisharat** on violin. It goes without saying that everyone here performs at their characteristic high level (there must be something in the water at *Imaginary Roads*). There is one solo piano track and one which is solo but on which Breyer also sings and plays recorder (two songs with lyrics are on the album, but the vocals are submerged enough that instrumental music lovers should not be deterred).

I couldn't pick a favorite track on this CD for the life of me. *All Souls Lullaby* opens the album and the piano/English horn (Haley) duet is heartbreakingly beautiful and flows with genuine sadness. *On His Wings* features Oster and Bisharat and is actually even more somber (Bisharat, who usually swirls and flits with abandon, distinguishes himself here with his grace and subtlety). The two vocal numbers are *Conversation* and *And Winter Came* (the tune on which Breyer goes solo but also sings and plays recorder). I do have a complaint with these two tracks, and it's that the vocals are submerged too deeply in the mix. There are lyrics and when you bury the singing this deep in the mix, what's the point? Wise up, Ackerman and Nelsen—if you're going to include vocal songs, let the listener hear what the lyrics are saying.

Oster shines on *American Gothic* and *Winter Light* (he usually plays more of a background role on *Imaginary Road* releases) which I was glad to hear, since he is so damn talented. Ackerman's *In A Region Of Clouds* has the composer himself sitting in on guitar and joining Breyer who perfectly complements him. There's even a track without any piano at all, i.e. *So It Was* (penned by Breyer), a restrained, sparse, late night serenade played by guitarist David Cullen.

I could go on praising *Another Place and Time...* but all you need to know is that, despite my nit about how the vocals are mixed, I still think this CD is damn near perfect. If I could have only this one album to play while staying for a weekend at a North Shore (Minnesota) cabin on Lake Superior in late October, it would be more than enough. Breyer's playing is the perfect juxtaposition of subtle nuance and deep emotion—there is not one wasted note. *Another Place and Time...* is a rare gem, a gift from the artist to souls like me who hunger for the quieter, more introspective side of music which leads us into our own places and times, filled with memories and wishes.

SHEILA MARIE, YAHOO CONTRIBUTOR NETWORK . **Sept. 14, 2011**

Heidi explores the New Age ambiances and subtleties of the piano — and other instruments and performers — to near perfection on her most recent release, *Another Place and Time*...

Heidi Anne Breyer is a classically-trained instrumentalist who creates New Age compositions and original, entrancing melodies. Based in the US and born in the UK, Heidi takes an international approach to music composition with influences stemming from Chopin, Bach, and Rachmaninoff to modern performers, whether intentional or not, including Bill Evans, Keith Jarrett and George Winston. Heidi's classical training is paramount for her success, though it is not always in the forefront. At times, her music crosses and parallels New Age, classical, neo-classical, instrumental, neo-jazz, and experimental lines without losing the warmth, charm, and inspirational moods of the compositions.

Heidi explores the New Age ambiances and subtleties of the piano — and other instruments and performers — to near perfection on her most recent release, *Another Place and Time*. Grammy® Award-winning producer, musician, and Windham Hill Records founder, William Ackerman, lends his talents to this production, and also performs a poignant guitar piece, with Heidi on piano. Released by Winterhall Records in 2010, *Another Place and Time* hearkens back to a time of classical simplicity and sweetness seldom heard in contemporary New Age music. Notably, the Zone Music Reporter (ZMR) voted Heidi as the Best New Artist for 2010, while her album garnered Best Instrumental Album: Piano. A review by Bill Binkelman calls it, "a rare gem, a gift from the artist to souls...who hunger for the quieter, more introspective side of music which leads us into our own places and times, filled with memories and wishes." Furthermore, *Another Place and Time* contains an award-winning ensemble that adds depth, texture, and tonality to the already breath-taking piano compositions. Heidi's piano (and vocals) are also joined by David Cullen on guitar; Eugene Friesen on cello; Jeff Oster on flugelhorn; Jill Haley on English horn; Noah Wilding on vocals, and Charlie Bisharat on violin. The cover artwork of a piano and Heidi with her eyes down reflect a humble, classy, and professional character that clearly matches her music on all accords.

Another Place and Time is largely contemporary in tone with noticeable filmic qualities that could easily be included in the latest dramatic film soundtrack or score. In fact, Corin Nelsen says, "Heidi's music is contemplative and very cinematic...you can feel within it that crucial moment when the lens pulls back and the lead character realizes a huge emotional change and redirects the course of the rest of the film." Interestingly, Heidi cites Alexander Volkov, a Russian Realist, as inspiration for five of the tracks. Volkov's paintings of nostalgia, longing, and emptiness, draw comparisons to the musical 'colors' inherent in Heidi's work from an annotative perspective. Corin adds, "Hints of Jazz and Blues add new colors to her already breathtaking soundscapes."

Heidi's early formative years were linked through music, dance, and drama at the Arts Educational School in Hertfordshire, UK and later at Trinity College of Music in London. As an adult, Heidi's music career largely involved teaching piano, performing recitals, accompanying chamber and choral groups, and playing the church organ; she also teaches violin, voice, and music lessons. Importantly, the transformative effects of music can occur at any age, and several years ago, Heidi experienced the explosion of creativity that led to her composing and recording career. Prior to *Another Place and Time*, Heidi recorded a debut, holiday album titled *Winter Light* in 2009 that featured traditional and original compositions touching on the Christmas season.

Heidi contemplates, "Our creations are an affirmation of life...whatever form they take, they are the legacy we leave, reflecting the most poignant moments of our short time here." Heidi believes, "As children we perceive music very physically and allow it to carry us away to a different place..." Perhaps a 'different place' conjures up images of another place and time: a place where the sound of Heidi's piano satisfies a deep yearning for reflective jubilation in everyone's lives.

Currently, Heidi is recording a new album with Grammy® Award-winning producer and recording engineer Corin Nelsen, and is also producing a DVD collection of her music set to Alexander Volkov's paintings.

Another Place and Time and *Winter Light* are available on the artist's website at www.heidibreyer.com, on Amazon, iTunes, CDBaby, and via New Leaf Distributing (<http://newleaf-dist.com/>) for specialty retailers; she also has a Music/Band page on Facebook under Heidi Anne Breyer.