

Svetlana Belsky, pianist

Critically acclaimed as "a passionate pianist and scholar," Svetlana Belsky is a highly regarded recitalist, chamber pianist, and recording artist, noted for her remarkable rapport with audiences and stylistic versatility. Her latest CD, *Into Darkness: Music of 1910-1920* (Sheridan, 1921), featuring music written before, during, and after World War I, was hailed as "one of the most satisfying piano recitals of the year, unique in its imaginative conception" (*Fanfare Magazine*) and "some of the best pianism to come my way in the past few years" (*American Record Guide*). The album was selected as one of Spotify's Best New Classical Releases.

Belsky's earlier CD, *Busoni: The Late Works* (Ravello, 2019), became the culmination of her life-long passion for the music, writings and pedagogical legacy of Ferruccio Busoni. This album of rarely-heard and fascinating works is described as "ravishing" (*Hyde Park Herald*), "an important document" (*The Whole Note*) and "a stunning solo recital that should go a long way toward getting her mentioned more widely in the same breath as other contemporary piano masters" (*Midwest Record*).

Belsky's interest in Busoni began with her Doctoral Thesis (an annotated translation of *Busoni as Pianist* by the renowned Russian musicologist Grigori Kogan), later published by the University of Rochester Press in January of 2010, to great reviews, and nominated for the prestigious Claude V. Palisca Award (for Outstanding Translation) by the American Musicological Society. Svetlana has presented numerous lecture-recitals of Busoni's music, and talks on Busoni's legacy to wide audiences and pedagogy groups throughout the US and China. In 2016 Belsky was invited by BBC as the pre-eminent English-speaking scholar to participate in their radio program commemorating Busoni's 150th birthday. Her first recording of Ferruccio Busoni's works: *Busoni's Piano Transcriptions* (2011), (along with her other recordings) has been heard on radio stations around the world. According to a recent review, Belsky "has some claim to call herself Ms. Bach-Busoni".

Another one of Belsky's recordings of note also showcases the turbulent but creatively unrivaled early 20th century. The *Rite of Spring* (Centaur, 2013) features the only transcription of the work for solo piano approved by Stravinsky himself (by Vladimir Leyetchkiss) along with selections from Prokofiev's ballet *Cinderella*. Described as "an extraordinary performance" (*American Record Guide*), it "transforms piano playing into timbral and instrumental effects necessary to communicate this piece" (*American Prize*). In 2019, the revised version of the album became the recipient of the coveted American Prize in Piano Performance.

Svetlana's love for a wide variety of music has led her to play early music with original instrument ensembles, and receive awards for her interpretation of new American music. In recent years, she has introduced, in world and local premieres, compositions by no fewer than a dozen living composers. During the months of the Pandemic Quarantine, she

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recorded *Lux Internum*, a group of Nocturnes by Polish-American composer Al Kryszak along with those of Ignaz Paderewski and Maria Szymanowska.

Dr. Belsky has toured internationally in the Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Italy, Canada, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and throughout the United States. Her performance credits include Carnegie Recital Hall, Kiev Philharmonic Hall, Dame Myra Hess Series, Music in the Loft, Chicago's Cultural Center and Harris Theater, countless university concert series, live recitals on Chicago's WFMT and New York's WQXR, and guest appearances with the University of Chicago Symphony, Southern Illinois Symphony, Chicago Chamber Orchestra, Tutti Chamber Orchestra, North Shore Chamber Orchestra and the Lake County Symphony Orchestra.

In commemoration of Women's History Month 2019, Dr. Belsky was awarded the Outstanding Woman Award for Excellence in Music and Theater Arts from the Clerk of Cook County District Court.

Svetlana is an active and enthusiastic chamber musician. Her 2019 release of *Myth and Romance CD*, featuring works by Polish composers, recorded with distinguished violinist Marta Szlubowska, has received plaudits for outstanding artistry, creativity and virtuoso technique by the duo.

Together with Elena Doubovitskaya, Svetlana Belsky is half of the EStrella Piano Duo, which is about to celebrate its 10th anniversary. The duo has performed all over the United States, China and Canada, received prizes from the Global Awards Competition and the American Prize Competition, fantastic reviews for its performances and recordings, and, most recently, became the recipient of the 2022 Grant from the Musicians Club of Women to record a new album of works for piano 4-hands by Women Composers of the Romantic Era.

A dedicated educator, Dr. Belsky enjoys imparting her passion for music and her broad pianistic experience to students. Dr. Belsky's has served as the Director of the Piano Program at the University of Chicago for fifteen years, teaching students from four continents, guiding numerous students to victories in competitions for professionals and amateurs alike. She has served as Guest Artist Faculty in Russia (*Musical Bridges Festival*, 2010), China (*Beijing Conservatory High School for the Arts*, 2011 and *Peking University*, 2016), and Italy (*Terre d'Arezzo Piano Festival*, 2018 and *Piano Sicily International Festival*, 2020). Currently Belsky is the Artistic Director of the Belsky Piano Studio.

Every year Svetlana presents pedagogy lectures on various subjects, from teaching the works of J. S. Bach to Busoni's legacy to preparing students for competitions. Many of these lectures, as well as masterclasses, are available in video format and are viewed and commented on around the English-speaking world.

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As an in-demand adjudicator, Dr. Belsky has been on the juries of countless local, national and international competitions, including the *George Gershwin International Competition* (NY), *Taiwan-Asia Piano Open Competition* (Taiwan), *Chicago Amateur Piano Competition*, *Konkurs Pianistyczny im. Ludwika Stafanskiego (L. Stefanski International Piano Competition)* (Poland), and the *Berliner International Competition*. Since the start of the Pandemic, she has joined the juries of the Singapore International Piano Competition, Odin International Music Competition, US New Star Music Competitions, Universal Stars Music Competition, as well as The American Prize Competition.

Born in Kiyv, Ukraine, in the former Soviet Union, Svetlana Belsky was trained mostly in the United States. After immigrating to America, Belsky studied with Emilio Del Rosario at the Music Institute of Chicago. She received her Bachelor of Music Summa cum Laude and Master Degrees from the Peabody Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Ann Schein, a student of the legendary Arthur Rubinstein. Later, she earned her Doctorate in Performance at the Manhattan School of Music, while working under Mme. Nina Svetlanova, an heir to the tradition of Heinrich Neuhaus. She has also been privileged to coach with Leon Fleisher, Menahem Pressler, Phil Levin (harpsichord) and other great artists.