

Recording, Performing and Presenting the Piano Sonatas of Viktor Ullmann

Viktor Ullmann (1898-1944) was a leading composer of his generation who, at the peak of his creativity, perished at Auschwitz -Birkenau. Prominent as both composer and conductor throughout Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, he collaborated with such 20th century giants as Arnold Schoenberg and Richard Strauss. In 1942, he and his family were taken to the "model" camp of Theresienstadt, or Terezin, which was designed to deceive the Allied Forces into thinking that those captive in labor camps were treated well. Soon after their arrival, his wife died. Two years later, he was deported to Auschwitz where he and his son were executed.

Ullmann wrote seven piano sonatas that span his life as a composer. The last three were written while interned at Terezin right up until the month before his deportation to Auschwitz. The Sonatas are intensely autobiographical in nature; accessible musically and drawing from a collage of styles, they speak of Ullmann's unquenchable exuberance for life.

As a patriotic young man, Ullmann, who had been born into an assimilated Jewish family that had been ennobled, served as an officer in the Austrian army in World War I. Given his background, finding himself at Terezin 25 years later was a tremendous upset. Yet once there, his vigor and capabilities as a musical leader - where he served as a producer, performer, composer and even critic - were deeply appreciated by the inmates and resulted in numerous rich and stimulating concert experiences for audiences hungry for some semblance of normalcy and artistic expression. He summed up his determination to produce new works in the following statement:

'Goethe's maxim, "Live within the moment, live in eternity," has always revealed to me the enigmatic meaning of art... Theresienstadt has served to enhance, not impede, my musical activities... by no means did we sit weeping on the banks of the waters of Babylon, and our endeavor with respect to Arts was commensurate with our will to live.'

Ullmann's final gift to the world was the saving of his musical scores, which is nothing short of a miracle. Upon learning that he was to be deported to the East, he packed up his scores to take with him. However, at the last minute, his doubts about his fate upon leaving Terezin made him reconsider. Instead, he arranged for his compositions to be left behind and given to a good friend should he not survive. This took place in the chaos of the Nazis killing 18,500 Terezin inmates before the Allied forces could break through. After the war, his friend H. G. Adler took possession of the scores. Adler was fortunate enough to make his way to London, bringing the scores with him, even as many believed them to have been destroyed at Auschwitz.

Ullmann's Piano Sonatas should have a hearing in the 21st century as a comprehensive set. I plan to provide just that, having recorded them in their entirety and begun to present them in concert and symposia in educational and cultural venues throughout the United States and beyond. Ullmann's music and story, a triumph of the human spirit, deserves to be heard in today's world. -Jeanne Golan

James Conlon, in endorsing this project, writes:

" This excellent and important recording by Jeanne Golan will do much to generate greater appreciation for Ullmann's music among musicians and music lovers everywhere. "

About the Performer:

Pianist Jeanne Golan continues to offer fresh perspectives on combining standard and contemporary works in innovative ways. Her insightful programming has been noted in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, which also describes her "gift and ability to clarify the core of music" and "her trademark lyricism and admirable sense of pace." The *New York Times* has found her playing to be "technically polished and superbly expressive."

Ms. Golan has performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe. As a soloist, she has appeared with the American Symphony Chamber Orchestra under Leon Botstein, the Greenwich Symphony Orchestra and the Hunter Symphony. As a chamber musician, she has performed with the Lark and Cavani Quartets, and with members of the Boston Symphony and Metropolitan Opera Orchestras. Her extensive work with singers includes the CD, *Songs of Henry Cowell*, which was hailed by Michael Tilson Thomas in the *New York Times*. Ms. Golan has worked with the Philip Glass Ensemble on *Einstein on the Beach*, and with the contemporary music groups MATA, Theodore Wiprud/New Music Productions and the Friends & Enemies of New Music.

Actively involved in the fostering of works by new composers and discovering relatively unknown musical treasures, Ms. Golan has an impressive assortment of pieces written for her and that she has premiered. Her collaboration with mezzo Mary Nessinger has led to multiple commissions of vocal/piano music inspired by classic repertoire. Currently, Ms. Golan is recording the complete solo Piano Sonatas of Viktor Ullmann, a leading composer of the 1930's and '40's who was interned by the Nazis in Theresienstadt and later executed at Auschwitz. She made her debut at the Ravinia Festival this summer performing this repertoire in a program hosted by James Conlon.

Ms. Golan earned her Masters and Doctorate of Musical Arts degrees from the Eastman School of Music. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University graduating with Distinction in Music. She is a Professor of Music at SUNY/Nassau, where she has received the Faculty Distinguished Achievement Award and the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Artistry and Scholarship on multiple occasions.

Ms. Golan has made several solo and collaborative recordings under the Albany, Arsis, Capstone and Newport Classic labels. Her solo CD *Time Tracks* was described by Stereo Review as "an imaginative collection (that is) one of the nicest surprises of the season." American Record Guide found *American Tonal* to be an "attractive program... vividly recorded and sensitively played." *Schumann Piano Music: The Poet Speaks*, is described by American Record Guide as "very beautiful...her command of color make them a pleasure to hear" while Fanfare finds it "an often-extravagant celebration of Schumann's mercurial daring." The *Philadelphia Inquirer* has found her disk, *STEPS: Piano Music of Claude Debussy and Jorge Martin*, to have "assured technique and marvelous interpretive insights." Last season, Ms. Golan released two recordings, *Innocence Lost* and *American Handstands*, eliciting the following commentary from Fanfare, "Golan, aside from being a formidable pianist, is one with a deep intellectual and aesthetic curiosity. She is an imaginative and tasteful curator of the programs she presents."

Jeanne Golan is on the web at jeannegolan.com. She is a member of The Field, a non-for-profit, tax-exempt organization serving the New York City performing arts community and can be found there at <https://www.thefield.org/Profile.aspx?SAID=2548>

