

Livia TEODORESCU-CIOCĂNEA

MUSIC FOR PIANO DUO, PIANO DUET AND PIANO SOLO

NOCTURNIANA: FANTASY ON CHOPIN'S NOCTURNE, OP. 27, NO. 2

SONATINA BUFFA: HOMAGE TO CHARLIE CHAPLIN

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2, LEBENSKRAFT

ENDEAVOUR BELLS: FANTASY

CALYPSO: FANTASY

SONATINA

Tamara Smolyar
Livia Teodorescu-Ciocănea

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

THE PIANO MUSIC OF LIVIA TEODORESCU-CIOCĂNEA

by Joel Crotty

Livia Teodorescu-Ciocănea was born in Galați, a town in the eastern Romania, on 4 February 1959. She studied piano at the Music and Arts College in Galați between 1965 and 1977, where one of her piano teachers was Charlotte Marcovici, who had studied in Vienna in the 1940s. Teodorescu-Ciocănea entered the Ciprian Porumbescu Conservatoire (now the National University of Music) in Bucharest in 1977 and graduated in 1981 with a Bachelor degree in Composition. Her teachers there included Myriam Marbe for composition, Ștefan Niculescu for form and analysis, and Ioana Minei and Ana Pitiș for piano.

She turned to PhD studies after the 1989 Romanian revolution, when the system changed and allowed more people to enrol in higher-degree work. She was admitted to a PhD candidature in musicology at the National University of Music in Bucharest in 1996, studying with the composer Anatol Vieru and, later, Octavian Nemescu. In 1998 and 1999 she obtained a Grant for Excellence from the Romanian government, which allowed her to transfer her PhD studies to the University of Huddersfield in the UK for two consecutive years. There she undertook the composition part of her doctorate, studying with Margaret Lucy Wilkins. The result was a doctorate in both musicology and composition. In 1995 she was appointed assistant professor at the National University of Music in Bucharest, teaching form and analysis and orchestration. In 1997 she became a lecturer, and between 2004 and 2015 she worked as an Associate Professor in composition, form and analysis. In 2015 she was appointed Professor of Composition at the same institution.

Teodorescu-Ciocănea has been a member of the Union of Composers and Musicologists in Romania since 1987, and her music has been performed in the USA, Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan and across Europe, as well, of course,

by leading orchestras in Romania, among them the George Enescu Philharmonic, National Radio and Chamber Radio Orchestras and the orchestra of Bucharest National Opera. In 2008 she won an Australian Federal Government grant, the Endeavour Award Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, which was undertaken at Monash University in Melbourne.

Teodorescu-Ciocănea has been awarded a variety of prestigious prizes for her work as a composer, including that of the Union of Composers and Musicologists in Romania in 2001, 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2016. In 2006 she was awarded the 'George Enescu' Romanian Academy Award for *Romulus and Remus* (a trio for two violins and piano), and in 2008 the National Order 'Cultural Merit' (Knight Grade) was bestowed upon her by the Romanian Presidency.

Teodorescu-Ciocănea's sources of inspiration include folklore and religious music, songs and traditional classical and theatrical forms, as well as the fields of multilayered spectralism.¹ She follows in the footsteps of other Romanian composers such as Horațiu Rădulescu and Ștefan Niculescu, who both explored the spectral approach to composition. Accordingly, she has written pieces with these characteristics for contemporary-music festivals; on the other hand, she has also written music with post-Romantic or Impressionistic features.

Music for piano fills an important part in Teodorescu-Ciocănea's creative life, since she has been engaged with the instrument since the age of four. As a pianist, she has played numerous solo recitals and concerts with Romanian orchestras; she has also performed as a soloist in radio broadcasts and has appeared as pianist on several commercial recordings of standard classics from the Classical and Romantic periods, with particular focus on the works of Chopin.

She has developed an enduring collaboration with the Australian pianist Tamara Smolyar, the results including a concerto and numerous solo-piano and chamber works. This collaboration is featured on this album with *Endeavour Bells: Fantasy for Piano Solo* (2008), the revised version of *Nocturniana: Fantasy for Two Pianos* based on Chopin's

¹ 'Spectral music', which focuses on the acoustic properties of timbre, was developed at IRCAM in Paris in the 1970s and '80s, but it also has a long history among Romanian composers, with its origins in Romanian folk instruments.



Photograph: Andra Aron

Livia Teodorescu-Ciocănea

Nocturne No. 8 in D flat major, Op. 27, No. 2 (2013), *Calypso* (2013), *Lebenskraft*, Piano Concerto No. 2 (2008, revised 2011) and the subsequent version for two pianos (2013). Smolyar gave these works their first performances (along with the composer in the case of *Nocturniana* and the two-piano version of *Lebenskraft*) in Bucharest and Melbourne.

Endeavour Bells [1] was written while Teodorescu-Ciocănea was undertaking her Endeavour Research Fellowship at Monash University in 2008. The work is the result of a free association between the name of the grant and the area of spectral-music research with which she was involved at that time. Teodorescu-Ciocănea wrote this programme note for Smolyar:

The starting point of this piece was the sonic and symbolic variety of bells across cultures and times. Bells are resonating bodies that are always calling for people's emotional or practical response: religious feelings, prayer, sorrow, heroic and glorious feelings, warrior attitude, etc. They almost set a universal language. I have tried to combine features of bells sonorities from Orthodox to Catholic Churches and also to give a flavour of bells ringing on James Cook's *Endeavour* ship while circumnavigating the globe and discovering the east coast of Australia.

The timbral contrasts on which this piece is based range from striking to very subtle; collectively, it is the colours that create the focus of this work. Teodorescu-Ciocănea uses a variety of chordal configurations, from dyadic to dense chords, although never dense enough to be considered clusters.

Teodorescu-Ciocănea has remarked in conversation that *Nocturniana* [2] embraces poetic images of a timeless night, following the example set by Chopin in his *Nocturnes*. Teodorescu-Ciocănea originally wrote *Nocturniana* for three pianos in 2010, to a commission from the Polish Cultural Institute in Bucharest to mark the bicentenary of Chopin's birth, and the piece was duly premiered during the Chopin 200 International Festival as part of a recital for three pianos that featured pianist-composers organised at the George Enescu Hall at the National University of Music in Bucharest. In February 2013 Teodorescu-Ciocănea arranged a new version for two pianos, which was premiered three months later in the same venue. While she was writing the three-piano version in

2010, Teodorescu-Ciocănea was also preparing for a series of Chopin piano recitals, and since the D flat major *Nocturne*, Op. 27, No. 2, was in her mind, she used this particular piece, which she loves, as the basis for her own composition, paraphrasing it and adding her own ideas. In her inner aural imagination, the D flat major tonality reflects a dark but at the same time velvety timbral quality that is well suited to the depiction of images of night.

The piece is in ternary form, with a thematically contrasted B section and a varied restatement of the A part. Each section contains several subsections and elaborates on different elements of the original Chopin *Nocturne*. The tender swing of the accompaniment and the sublime melodic line floating calmly above it in the original *Nocturne* suggested to Teodorescu-Ciocănea a famous Romanian poem, Mihai Eminescu's 'Somnoroase păsărele' ('Sleeping Birds'), written in 1883 as a 'goodnight' to the poet's lover. Teodorescu-Ciocănea associates the atmosphere of this poem with the first and third sections of her paraphrase. Like many Romanians, she has a passion for Eminescu's poetry that has remained unabated since her teenage years. She also introduced brief suggestions of Messiaen's nocturnal 'oiseaux' in the middle section.

Teodorescu-Ciocănea composed her **Sonatina** in 1985. Although seeming light and joyful at first acquaintance, on further inspection it reveals initially unsuspected depths in its range of expression. It has two movements, the first, *Lento* [3], in sonata form and the second, *Con moto* [4], in varied virtuosic sections, with many changes in tempo. The composer allows, at times, for the performer's interpretative input with improvisatory cells. The first movement has two contrasting themes that complete the exposition. The first theme is based on the same motive as the introduction, played *giusto*, whereas the simple and playful second theme (bars 41–46) is in *rubato* style, *senza misura*. The quasi-improvisatory character of the second theme demonstrates Teodorescu-Ciocănea's interest in folk-music: it is written in the Romanian *doina* style, with a *parlando rubato* type of rhythm. The development (bars 47–65) combines both themes in a process of fragmentation that occurs over a semi-continuous improvisatory pedal. The recapitulation recalls the themes very concisely, and the coda restates the introduction in a varied manner, using different registers and repeated notes in free

rhythm. A coda based on the material of the first movement links the two parts of the *Sonatina* in a larger frame.

The *Sonatina buffa: Homage to Charlie Chaplin* for piano duet/four hands was written in 1986. The central idea of the piece is to suggest music for a silent film in the style of Charlie Chaplin. It evokes various aspects of the Chaplin character: his famous walk with a cane, for which Teodorescu-Ciocănea uses a ragtime theme; states of extreme joy and extreme sadness, with rapidly changing moods; and slapstick cream-pie fights and various comical actions, performed in a quasi-improvisational approach. The *Sonatina buffa* has three movements played *attacca*. The first movement, a *Larghetto* followed by an *Allegro semplice* [5], and the second, *Lento rubato* [6], present the thematic material which is energetically and joyfully developed in the *Più mosso* last movement [7]. The piece finishes with clusters in the extreme registers to evoke loud laughter from the film-goers.

Whereas *Nocturniana* finds its inspiration in poetry and Chopin's *Nocturnes*, *Calypso* (2013) [8] encompasses the worlds of mythology, magic and beauty and is appropriately described as a fantasy for piano solo. Teodorescu-Ciocănea's programme note reads as follows:

Calypso is a mythological nymph that embodies a very strong idea: beauty beyond reason. The absolute power of beauty and the miraculous effect that it produces on our spirit is the central point of this piece, with references to Homer's story of Ulysses and Calypso. Waves, island, sirens, the enchanting singing of Calypso and Ulysses' struggle to escape from the magic power of her beauty, these are the key images depicted in this short piano piece.

Calypso uses large, fluent musical surfaces (figural surfaces, sound groupings, sound surfaces – one could label them in various ways) to create waves, aquatic murmur and rage. The work does not undergo development; rather, it has a modular, mosaic-like structure. Complex chords, either *ppp* or *fff*, suggest rocks and stones in the sea or on the island – the programmatic idea behind the music associates rocks and stones with the fate, the struggle, the drama of the characters. Melodic and harmonic figurations correspond to the element of water, which can be either peaceful or stormy; 'water'

occupies a good deal of the piece as a framework for the whole story. Rapidly repeated notes and chords suggest sighs, trembling, excitement or the shimmering of water.

Teodorescu-Ciocănea's **Piano Concerto No. 2, *Lebenskraft***, has undergone two revisions. The original version, premiered by Tamara Smolyar with the Romanian Chamber Radio Orchestra in Bucharest in May 2008, was followed by a revision in 2011, which involved an expansion of the orchestration (adding wind and brass instruments, from chamber orchestra to full orchestra) and a shortening of the work by around six minutes (from 32 to 26). On 16 and 17 June 2017 the composer played this revised version in a concert with the George Enescu Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Paul Nadler at the Athenaeum in Bucharest. In the interim, in 2013, she made an arrangement for two pianos that she premiered with Smolyar in Bucharest.

Teodorescu-Ciocănea's programme note for the premiere of the first version, in 2008, explains:

The word *Lebenskraft* translates as 'life strength' and could be understood as the vital energy, the explosion of the regenerating power of nature or the 'wave' which crosses through the Universe. In music, Hugo Riemann speaks about energies found in the contour of the phrases, in the dynamic gradation, tempo fluctuation, and micro-agogics – all these represent the expression of the vital force (*Lebenskraft*). Of a special importance is the *Auftakt* (the upbeat), which is the equivalent of inhaling in the respiration process; respectively it is the element that propels (or projects) the music energy.

This background detail is pertinent to all three versions of the work, as the energetic and even frenetic music that *Lebenskraft* contains is meant to recover the lost use of the power of the gesture of *Auftakt* or *anacrusis* in contemporary music. The composer contends that the concept of *Auftakt* propels the energy in music and directs its tensions, and she furthermore maintains that, in the non-thematic modern textures of contemporary music, this fundamental rhythmic element has almost disappeared. In this piano concerto, she intended to recover it in an original manner.

The entire concerto follows the traditional structure of three distinct movements that have different architectural structures. The sonata form of the *Vivo* first movement [9]

presents a contrast between an energetic theme made of small rhythmical clusters and a 'mechanical' theme, recalling musical boxes or music played by mechanical piano. The *Adagio* middle movement, in ternary form [10], has multiple dramatic contrasts, from transparent and meditative moments to heavy charged and climatic ones. And the *Con spirito* finale [11] has a rondo schema with a ragtime-like theme as a refrain.

Joel Crotty is a musicologist affiliated to the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music at Monash University in Melbourne.

Tamara Smolyar comes from a musical family, one which spans more than four generations. Born in Kiev, Ukraine, she began her formal piano lessons at the age of four and gave her first public performance at seven. By seventeen she had won several national competitions and selections for prestigious gala concerts for the Soviet government. In the former USSR, she studied with a series of renowned Russian pianists and pedagogues, among them Olga Orlova (herself a pupil of Konstantin Mikhailov), Igor Ryabov (a pupil of Yakov Zak), Eugeniý Rzhánov (a pupil of Yakov Flier) and Yuri Lotakov (a pupil of Vsevolod Topilin). She graduated from the Kiev State College of Music and the Kiev State Conservatorium of Music with first-class honours. She was a winner of the National Chamber Music Competition and was awarded the title of Best Accompanist and Chamber Musician of Ukraine and the USSR. She has



since participated in master-classes with a number of world-famous pianists, among them Lazar Berman, Tatiana Kravchenko, Eugene List, Eugeniý Malinin, Aleksey Nasedkin, Vladimir Neilson, Tatiana Nikolaeva, Vyacheslav Sechkin and Vsevolod Topilin. Having emigrated to Australia in 1990, in 1994 she gained her Master in Music (Performance) from the University of Melbourne, where she studied with Alexander Semetsky (a pupil of Emil Gilels) and Ronald

Farren-Price (a pupil of Claudio Arrau). In 2019, she was awarded a PhD in Music Performance from Monash University, Melbourne.

She has made numerous radio and TV recordings for national and international broadcasters, commercial recordings on labels which include Cantor Productions, Move, Schimmel International Artists Collection and Vox Australis. Her solo recitals, concerto and chamber-music performances, as well as her activities in master-classes and on competition juries, have taken her to many prominent venues across three continents, in the former USSR, in Italy, Romania, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and New Zealand and Australia. She has played with internationally renowned musicians and conductors from Australia, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, the UK and the USA. A number of composers – Iulia Cibișescu-Duran, Anatoly Dokumentov, Noel Fidge, Kenji Fujimura, Tony Gould, Anthony Halliday, Jane Hammond, Alla Pavlova, Jaya Suprana, Thomas Reiner and Livia Teodorescu-Ciocănea – have written music for her as a soloist and a chamber-music performer. In 1999 she founded the Duo *Mélange* with the violinist Ivana Tomaskova.

From 1994 to 2018, Tamara Smolyar was a Senior Lecturer in Music Performance, Coordinator of Piano, at the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music at Monash University, Melbourne. She is currently a member of the piano staff at the Australian Guild of Music, Mentone Girls Grammar School and the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne. As a respected pedagogue, she has been fostering and developing the talents of the musicians under her tutelage to a high standard of performance. The success of her approach is evidenced by the fact that a number of her former students have become winners of national and international competitions and now hold positions as pianists and teachers, both in Australia and further afield.



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LIVIA TEODORESCU-CIOCĂNEA Piano Music

[1] <i>Endeavour Bells: Fantasy for Piano Solo</i> (2008)*	9:30
[2] <i>Nocturniana: Fantasy for Two Pianos on Chopin's Nocturne, Op. 27, No. 2</i> (2013)	10:37
Sonatina for solo piano (1985)	7:05
[3] I <i>Lento</i>	4:12
[4] II <i>Con moto</i>	2:53
Sonatina buffa: Homage to Charlie Chaplin for piano duet (1986)	8:28
[5] I <i>Larghetto. Allegro semplice</i>	3:31
[6] II <i>Lento rubato</i>	1:57
[7] III <i>Più mosso</i>	3:00
[8] <i>Calypso: Fantasy for Piano Solo</i> (2013)	8:15
Piano Concerto No. 2, <i>Lebenskraft</i>, arranged for two pianos (2013)	27:04
[9] I <i>Vivo</i>	10:43
[10] II <i>Adagio</i>	9:01
[11] III <i>Con spirito</i>	7:20

TT **71:03**

ALL EXCEPT * FIRST RECORDINGS

Tamara Smolyar, piano solo [1] [3]–[4] [8] and piano primo [2] [5]–[7] [9]–[11]

Livia Teodorescu-Ciocănea, piano secondo [2] [5]–[7] [9]–[11]