

IMAGIQUE

a different history of music

KAROLINA MIKOŁAJCZYK *violin*

IWO JEDYNECKI *classical accordion*



crd



IMAGIQUE

a different history of music



Phot. Cristian Dascalau

Emma Pouncefort writes...

There is a palpable joy of rediscovery when you find yourself at the head of a label you grew up under. This is what happened when, as a sibling team, we came to the helm of CRD at the end of 2021. We had a treasury of music to rediscover, having long associated catalogue numbers and artwork with the boxes of CDs

and LPs we spent our childhood gazing at. Most importantly, we had world-class artists, such as the fine timpanist Jonathan Haas, to reconnect with. Finally face-to-face in prevernal New York, Jonathan and I excitedly discussed a new project before he generously connected me with other impressive artists in his midst. Hence how, amongst others, we first connected with the awesome accordionist Iwo (whose name I mispronounced for 6 months - it is 'ee-vo') and his duo partner, the superb violinist Karolina.

A few days later and sat in front of another slice of New York cheesecake, the three of us met and explored how we could work together. The rest is history, as they say.

In Iwo and Karolina, I felt we had stumbled upon something extraordinarily precious: passionate musicians pairing scholarship - their research into repertoire, composition

and performance - with imagination to give renewed vigour to well-known classical works whilst shedding light on the yet-to-be-discovered. And, if this weren't enough, I found myself in front of artists who seek to speak to the 'classically-initiated' and 'initiated' alike; head to their social media profiles to see how.

And so, to the present album -

In a world in which our attention is constantly being split and demanded, this is a carefully curated journey that warrants full focus.

I highly recommend you start from the beginning, where you'll meet an C18th violin sonata like you have never heard it, and that you commit to join Iwo and Karolina on their alternative journey through classical music. This is an imagined world magically mapped - and hence 'imagique'! - with stops at classical greats and punctuated with forays into the lesser-known.

It promises to enchant and - for me, at least - promises to leave you feeling refreshed to take on whatever bookends your classical music listening. Be prepared to (re)discover classical music.

*Emma Pouncefort
Tom Pouncefort
CRD Directors*



Hello!

We are Karolina and Iwo, and we are thrilled to have you with us on a journey through *A Different History of Music* which we feel is *Imagique* – a little word play that we came up with by combining ‘imagine’ and ‘magic’. This intriguing word *Imagique* best captures, we think, the emotions behind our album and what we are aiming to do as modern classical musicians.

In 2013 we decided to create a duo combining two classical instruments from vastly different worlds: one of the oldest and most oft-used by composers throughout history – the violin – and one of the youngest – the classical accordion. This combination soon turned out to have a lot to offer for us as performers, and for our growing global audience. We are overjoyed that, to date, our approach has gained us invitations to perform the pieces on this album many times

and right across the world – the US, Mexico and Chile, to the Far East, including Malaysia and Brunei, as well as throughout Europe, including our native Poland.

All the pieces here have been arranged by ourselves and worked and reworked to achieve a specific kind of amalgamated sound deriving from a combination of instruments that can blend surprisingly well when put together. This is due to their sound similarities; the violin as a bowed string instrument and the accordion as a wind instrument share the possibility of shaping the sound dynamically after the note has been played, unlike percussive instruments where the sound abruptly or more gradually fades after the note has been struck. By moving beyond percussive keyboard instruments such as the piano or harpsichord, the violin’s original partner for all the pieces on this album, our versions give the opportunity

to present this music from a completely new perspective.

This brings us to an interesting outcome: a sneak peek of how the history of music could have unfolded if these great composers had had at their disposal the accordion in its current concert form. There is nothing that this combination of instruments is incapable of doing, and, who knows, maybe Mozart would have been as fond of pairing the violin with the accordion as he was with piano; perhaps Ravel would have taken impressionism to yet another level with this portable orchestra of a duo?

We are so excited to share an important part of us with you on this album and so hope you will enjoy *Imagique*!



Karolina & Iwo write...

To kickstart our personal take on music from the Baroque greats, we pick George Frideric Handel and his beloved **Sonata in D Major for violin and continuo**, which is usually performed on harpsichord. The sonata consists of four contrasting movements, with a beautiful *Affettuoso* ('with affection'), two exciting *Allegros* and a *Larghetto* which is calm yet filled with dense harmonical suspense. In the slow movements, the violin leads the melodic lines, and in the *Allegros* the themes interchange between both instruments. For our newer listeners, we'd like to highlight that, in Handel's time, the composers' common process for the accompanying instruments was to write only the bass line, leaving the desired chords to the discretion of the performers through numbered indications called the basso continuo. So, from the version presented here on accordion,

only the left-hand manual part was written by Handel, with the right-hand material 'de-coded' and put into a performable score by 19th-century composers and theoreticians (in this version, Carl Friedberg) since, by this time, reading continuo was no longer required from keyboard players. This is where we will tease out our dialogue - between the violin part and the lowest voice of the accordion. Performing music from the Baroque period is very different from approaching music from later eras. Adding specific performance indications beyond the initial tempo and the odd dynamic markings wasn't, as our friends in the field are aware, common practice, with articulation and colouristic markings only starting to become a norm later in the Classical period and then flourishing in the Romantic era. This suggests that, as performers, we would have more freedom when it comes to interpret

music by Vivaldi, Bach and Handel. But, in fact, the opposite is true: the paucity of performance indications means that the non-historical musician falls prey to missing the beautiful, different 'core Baroque sound' if they fail to dive deeper into the realms of historical performance. Having studied with European specialists with vast expertise in Baroque performance, we are now much better prepared to take on Handel's music, drawing on our knowledge about the common features of Baroque performance on different period instruments to bring that to bear on our interpretations. But we didn't stop there: we also went back to look at the score through the lens of our personalities, as we do with every piece we perform. We will never know what Handel would have to say about our version, but we certainly love performing this Sonata, and we hope you will enjoy listening to it!

Then we come to Frédéric Chopin. But music by Chopin that is not played on the piano? Bold, you might say, given this is a composer who dedicated 99% of his music to eighty-eight black and white keys and who is rarely performed on different instruments, with each attempt prone to sparking an outrage from die-hard defenders of our country's national treasure. But, if the violin and piano version of his most popular nocturne by Pablo Sarasate - a superstar violinist of the 19th Century - does not give us a sign that the accordion-violin arrangement is worth trying, then what does? Especially when we take into consideration that, in Chopin's day, free-reed keyboard instruments like harmoniums - nothing less than the classical accordion's sound ancestors - were taking over the French salons. Our version of the **Nocturne in E Flat Major** is not, therefore, merely an audacious attempt to break pianists' monopoly on

Chopin's music and spark new life into one of the most popular tunes in the world; it is a recreation of how the piece could have sounded in the salons of 19th-century Paris, where creating on-the-go transcriptions for instruments as they were available was a routine activity for musicians.

From Chopin we head to further piano works. If, in the hands of another classical great, a pianist can create one of the most beautiful melodic lines in history, which instrument could give it a more romantic sound than the violin?

Written in 1778 - merely two years after Karolina's violin was built! - this **Sonata in G Major, K. 301** is one of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's most regularly performed pieces for violin and piano. There are two movements, both *Allegro*, with a slightly slower middle section in the second movement. Both bear the characteristics now so well associated with the

Salzburg-born maestro. We have opera-like contrasting motifs, evident at the very beginning of the piece, where, after the subtle main theme, both instruments exclaim in jolly unison. We also see minor key sections that appear dramatically serious but are to be taken with a pinch of salt. Above all, we see the kind of required virtuosity that could challenge any performer: how to make those quick passages sound effortless whilst sparking life into each little note? In our arrangement, we create, we humbly suggest, a more cohesive sound than that of the original version, which is largely down to the performance possibilities of our instruments. One tactic we adopt is to create a dialogue out of the material characteristic to the sonata - the themes and counterpoints - and exchange these between the violin and accordion with the use of bow and bellows respectively.

The result? A fresh view of Mozart's music, with the duo being able to 'sound like one instrument', to lean on Maxim Vengerov's response to our arrangement back in 2021. The warm reception of our arrangement in fact confirmed our career pathway. Completed early on in our career as an ensemble, this arrangement showed us that, with this original combination of instruments, it is possible to amass an audience larger than we could have expected. Our video recording has hitherto amassed more than a million views across social media platforms, largely thanks to support from Classic FM, a British radio station and a popular online source of news from the classical music world.

And so, we felt emboldened to forge onwards to the dawn of the 20th Century and beyond, as we have continued our musical journey of (re)discovery -

Pavane pour une infante défunte ('**Pavane for a Dead Princess**'), written by a 24-year-old Maurice Ravel in 1899 and later orchestrated by him in 1910, is an embodiment of subtle beauty. Ravel stated that he just adored the sound of the words that he used in the title. Yet, one can still imagine either a little princess dancing at a Spanish court back in history (Ravel's own description), or an unusually ethereal and soft funeral march. Whatever picture the piece paints for the listener, **Pavane** showcases French impressionism at the turn of the 20th Century.

This piece has also been an important milestone in our career trajectory: it was one of the first pieces that we ever played together as a duo. The opportunity to perform one of our favourite pieces together was, we think, a sign that a duo of violin and classical accordion carries enormous potential to grow as it takes on the

most beautiful, yet unorthodox repertoire choices. Rarely approached by accordionists, music from this cultural movement of Impressionism presents unusual challenges in arrangement, especially if one looks to mimic the piano's right-pedal mechanism. With a bird's-eye view on the piece, however, and through drawing inspiration from the sound of the orchestra, the violin-accordion version is - perhaps surprisingly - superlatively capable of capturing the true essence of Impressionism. As such, this track has become our personal highlight of this album. We will leave it to you to decide if you agree!

Finally, we reach the works of two composers which have played their own critical part in building out the classical genre.

Written in 1915 as a set of six piano miniatures and later arranged by Béla Bartók for a small ensemble in 1917, the **Romanian Folk Dances** are

one of the Hungarian master's all-time classics. Performed across the globe in a variety of ensembles and instrument settings, a version for violin and piano by Zoltan Szekely gained particular popularity. In our arrangement, substituting piano for classical accordion brings a sound more resemblant of the ensemble and orchestral versions, with violin leading the melodic lines encompassing the folk instruments (fiddle, flute) that Bartók depicted. In the seven dances (two in the last movement) included in the miniatures, we hear echoes of different folk tunes originating from Transylvania, which, back in 1915, was a region of Hungary, before becoming part of Romania in 1920.

From Hungary back to our native Poland -

The first **Violin Sonata** is one of Krzysztof Penderecki's earliest compositions, written in 1953 and consisting

of three short movements. The opening *Allegro* is very 'classical' in its form, with violin and accordion equally sharing the melodic responsibilities, somehow corresponding to the same Mozart sonata we have included on this album. The middle *Andante*, with violin leading the eerie singing and accordion serving as the 'walking' (italian 'andare' - 'to walk') accompaniment, carries a very different timbre to the original version, with the use of different registers that bring out completely new sound sensations and colours. We end with a lively *Vivace* movement. Here, we catch a glimpse of Eastern European dance inspirations, bringing this piece closer to Bartók or Bacewicz. As such, it is an exciting miniature underlining the composer's brilliance at an early stage of his career. Every note, every articulation mark and every tempo change are perfectly placed; the trademark of a true genius.

This piece is of especial importance to us. We decided to arrange the **Sonata** to finally connect with the music of one of our greatest Polish composers. This was a quite different undertaking to transcribing Chopin, Paderewski or Szymanowski - we still had a chance to confront our version with the original, with the composer being there with us. After sending our impromptu recording to Kraków, we were amazed to receive a positive response from the maestro himself; he not only congratulated us on our performance but also granted us official permission to perform the piece in our version. Six months later, we had the opportunity to play the piece in Krzysztof Penderecki's presence at the European Centre for Music in Luśawice. This was one of the last concerts that he ever attended, ten weeks before his passing on 29th March, 2020.

© Karolina & Iwo,
New York/Warsaw, 2024

Duo Karolina Mikołajczyk & Iwo Jedynecki is one of the most vibrant and innovative chamber ensembles of the current generation of classical musicians. Awarded Poland's most prestigious prize for classical music, the 'Polityka Passport', in 2024, the Duo was praised for its 'versatility and the ability to navigate through diverse musical realms'. The selection panel additionally celebrated the Duo's demonstration of 'virtuosity, unbridled imagination, and ingenuity in selecting and creating new repertoire for the distinctive combination of violin and accordion'. This accolade follows a long line of Grand Prix and First Prizes at international music competitions in addition to performances at prestigious international venues, including Carnegie Hall and Guangzhou Opera House and a sell-out debut performance at the Warsaw Philharmonic. The Duo has meanwhile thrilled audiences with recitals in 24 countries across four continents.

Thanks to Iwo Jedynecki's accordion transcriptions, both well-loved and little-known repertoire gain bold, new interpretations and original sounds, all the while boasting delightfully diverse colouring.

The ensemble is proud to collaborate with leading Polish composers. In 2016, Marcin Błażewicz composed the first ever double concerto for violin, accordion and symphonic orchestra, dedicating it to Karolina and Iwo. In 2019, the Duo collaborated with Krzysztof Penderecki, arranging his Violin Sonata (1953) for a duo of violin and accordion with an official approval from the Master.

Karolina Mikołajczyk studied under Zakhar Bron in Cologne as well as Andrzej Gębski, Maria Machowska, Agata Szymczewska and Janusz Wawrowski in Warsaw. Iwo Jedynecki holds performance degrees from Germany (Detmold), Poland (Warsaw & Bydgoszcz) and, most recently,

the United States (New York University) as the first accordionist recipient of the Fulbright scholarship. Both musicians received their doctorate degrees in 2021-2022.

Visit our website:



on winning the prestigious Polish award, the Polityka Passport in the Classical Music category, 2024:

'We like to break down the wall between the audience and the performer.'



Karolina's instrument is a violin from the workshop of English violin maker Richard Duke (London, 1776)



Ivo's classical accordion is Pignini Fisarmoniche's Sirius Millennium model

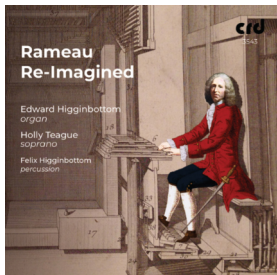
'A duo that sounds like one instrument'

Maxim Vengerov

'simply-inspired playing, satisfying on so many levels'

Philip R Buttall, MusicWeb International

Other Reimagined Classics from CRD



Acclaimed choral conductor and organist, Edward Higginbottom takes Rameau's most theatrical compositions into the organ loft to 'reimagine' their performance. Transforming this repertoire into something more obviously theatrical and dramatic, Higginbottom takes us on a journey through exotic landscapes, pastoral scenes and inner anguish. He asks what if Rameau had written organ music and what if it had survived?



British LA-based violinist Maya Magub is joined by string players spread across 3 continents to offer fresh performances of Telemann's Canonic Sonatas and Mozart's often overlooked and very little performed contributions to the form, heard here in recording firsts for strings.

For full details of these recordings and the complete CRD catalogue, visit: www.crdrecords.com



George Frideric Handel, Violin Sonata in D Major, HWV 371 (Arr. for Violin & Accordion by Iwo Jedynecki)	
1	I. Affettuoso 3:17
2	II. Allegro 3:00
3	III. Larghetto 2:52
4	IV. Allegro 3:08
5 Frédéric Chopin, Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op. 9 No. 2 (Arr. for Violin & Accordion by Iwo Jedynecki) 4:33	
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Violin Sonata in G Major, K. 301 (Arr. for Violin & Accordion by Iwo Jedynecki)	
6	I. Allegro con spirito 8:43
7	II. Allegro 5:44
Béla Bartók, Romanian Folk Dances, Sz. 56, No. 1 (Arr. for Violin & Accordion by Iwo Jedynecki)	
8	No. 1 Joc cu bata 1:22
9	No. 2 Braul 0:30
10	No. 3 Pe-loc 1:20
11	No. 4 Buciumeana 1:27
12	No. 5 Poarga romaneasca 0:30
13	No. 6 Maruntel 0:53
14 Maurice Ravel, Pavane pour une infante défunte, M. 19 (Arr. for Violin & Accordion by Iwo Jedynecki) 5:36	
Krzysztof Penderecki, Violin Sonata No. 1 (Arr. for Violin & Accordion by Iwo Jedynecki)	
15	I. Allegro 3:23
16	II. Andante 2:35
17	III. Allegro vivace 2:44
	51:37

Recorded at The Krzysztof Penderecki European Centre for Music (August, 2020)
 & Concert Hall of the State Music School in Jastrzębie-Zdrój (August, 2023)

Photographs: Anita Wasik

Cover design & page layout: Maciej Klejdysz

Executive Producers: Emma Pauncefort, Tom Pauncefort

Producer, engineer: Justyna Popiel

Dolby Atmos engineer: Mateusz Banasiuk

© and © CRD Records, 2024. Made in the EU

Media Partners

RMF
CLASSIC

PORTAL ... D.X
PRESTO

COMPACT
disc
 DIGITAL AUDIO

DDD

crd

CRD 3547