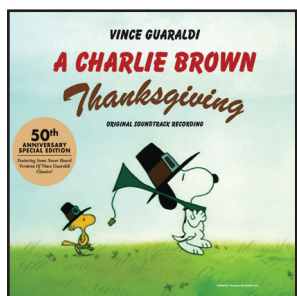


bustling train station with its arrivals and departures. “Winter in Odesa”, gorgeous and poetic, conveys the stillness of winter. “Acacia Trees” allows us to take a contemplative, slow walk under the shady trees of an Odesa boulevard. “Waltz of Odesa Conservatory”, based on Neselovskyi’s memory of being accepted to the famed institution, is buoyant and playful, as is “My First Rock Concert”.

The pulse changes with “Potemkin Stairs”, full of drama, intensity and sharp tempo changes. Neselovskyi, who is Jewish, explores the horrors, fear and violence of the Holocaust in “Odesa 1941” and “Jewish Dance”. The former recalls the massacres of the city’s Jewish population and evokes the devastation of war. The mood is tense and terrifying, ending suddenly in profound stillness as if the world has ended.

All proceeds from the album’s sales and the pianist’s live performances will be donated to Ukrainian relief organizations. So far more than \$200,000 has been raised. That’s just one more reason to purchase this magnificent and heartfelt album.

For more info visit sunnysiderecords.com. Neselovskyi performs at The Stone Nov. 8-11. See Calendar.



A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving (Original Soundtrack)
Vince Guaraldi (Lee Mendelson Film Productions)
by Marilyn Lester

Jazz pianist Vince Guaraldi may be best remembered for his work on *Peanuts* animated films, but his signature sound was developed and lauded well before, especially after the 1962 release of his Grammy-winning hit composition, “Cast Your Fate to the Wind”. Guaraldi’s unique chord progressions in that piece, suffused with joyous uplift, are indicators of why he was tapped to compose several *Charlie Brown* soundtracks. The 50th anniversary release (timely for this month’s family gatherings) of *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* is all about that piano, especially the thematic motifs that define and unify the music (which was pretty much wall-to-wall during the 25-minute run time). *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* originally aired on the CBS network on November 20, 1973, the third *Peanuts* holiday special after *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. The album features the original music plus previously unreleased bonus material, which includes a window into the recording sessions with Guaraldi heard working out the piano voicings. The music has been remastered from the original 16-track source tapes, and instruments previously buried in the mix now pop. Compared to previous releases of the more straight-ahead *Charlie Brown* soundtracks, this one is funkier and groove-oriented. The musicians are: Guaraldi (piano, keyboards, guitar, vocals), Tom Harrell (trumpet and brass arrangements), Chuck Bennett (trombone), Seward McCain (electric bass) and Mike Clark (drums).

The first three tracks, “Charlie Brown Blues”, “Thanksgiving Theme” and “Thanksgiving Theme (Reprise)”, are short but swiftly set the joyous mood of the entire soundtrack. With the uptempo “Peppermint Patty”, various instruments come forward, including the surprising introduction of a flute. Brass leads a counterpoint on a sprightly “Linus and Lucy”, featuring a new four-chord climb at the end of each verse’s fourth measure. On the funky blues “Little Bird”, with its echoes of bird-speak and tuba voicings in the background, Guaraldi sings (the only vocal

on the album). The “Fife & Drums Theme” delivers exactly that, a sweet, short echo of the Pilgrim-era past. Reprises and alternate takes introduce even more new subtleties to the music: finger-snaps arrive in “Charlie Brown Blues”, for instance; the electric keyboard is more prominent on “Peppermint Patty”, while “Thanksgiving Interlude” becomes very much more bass-driven across multiple takes. Guaraldi well understood his end-goal when soundtracking the *Charlie Brown* features: to capture the mood and action of the story while remaining upbeat, even when there was tension in the plot points. He succeeded brilliantly in this task. You don’t have to know or have seen the cartoon to love this music. Tragically, Guaraldi died at age 47 from a heart attack. Happily, he left behind a musical legacy that’s as joyful as it is innovative.

For more info visit mvdaudio.com



Preludes
Adam Birnbaum (Chelsea Music Festival)
by Elliott Simon

Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier* is a set of preludes and fugues in all 24 major and minor keys, and was composed to illustrate the potential of well-tempered tuning systems. The preludes vary: some are relatively short, with a freer structure, and others more substantial and intricate. They offer a rich and fertile setting, with plenty of room for improvisation. Pianist Adam Birnbaum’s *Preludes* invites listeners to rediscover this music from his jazz-inspired perspective.

Long a source of inspiration for musicians, these pieces have also stirred controversy, as many classical musicians have downplayed or eliminated their improvisatory aspects. This is exemplified by a famous comment from harpsichordist Wanda Landowska to cellist Pablo Casals: “You play Bach your way, and I will play it his way.” Birnbaum’s way is characterized by clever alterations in rhythm and meter. This transformation is clearly evident in “Prelude in C Major”, as the original 4/4 meter is changed to 7/8, infusing it with a fresh and invigorating pulse. Similarly, in “Prelude in D minor”, Birnbaum shifts from a slow, introspective beginning to a breakneck tempo, filling the space with spontaneity and urgency and culminating with an impassioned climax.

Birnbaum’s trio (Matt Clohesy, bass; Keita Ogawa, percussion) shines on “Prelude in E Major”, where the original 12/8 melody is skillfully reimaged as an enthralling ballad. Gradual transitions not only reveal Birnbaum’s versatility but also highlight the group’s exquisite interplay. A Latin beat invigorates “Prelude in D-flat Major”, while “Prelude in B-flat minor” uses Bach’s original bass-line as the foundation for new melodies that pay homage to the original while birthing a gorgeous jazz structure. “Prelude in C minor” undergoes a powerful reconstruction, taking the listener on a melodic rollercoaster.

Although *Preludes* is a jazz interpretation, it reflects Birnbaum’s profound respect for Bach. This music—marked by moments of frenzy, reflection and melancholy—allows Bach to leap across three centuries into a modern jazz setting, with wonderful results.

For more info visit chelseamusicfestival.org/records. Birnbaum is at Village Vanguard with Vanguard Jazz Orchestra every Monday. See Calendar.

CHRIS BOTTI

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