

Caroline Oltmanns next up in Tri-C Classical Piano Series

by Mike Telin



If there was a day and time made for piano recitals, it might be Sunday afternoon. “I like Horowitz’s idea of 4:00 pm Sunday recitals,” pianist Caroline Oltmanns said during a telephone conversation. “3:00 is great, 2:00 is great — those are like the golden hours.”

On Sunday, March 21 at 2:00 pm, Oltmanns will present a free, pre-recorded online recital as part of the Tri-C Classical Piano Series. The program will include works by Debussy, Gulda, Wilding, and

Beethoven. Click [here](#) at start time.

When asked about the music, the pianist said she wanted to play pieces that were “festive, colorful, and sunny.” She also wanted the program to have a minimal amount of fuss. “There will be very short introductions before each part of the recital — I don’t want to say a lot unless I actually have something to say.”

Oltmanns will open her program with five of Debussy’s *Preludes*. “I wanted this set to have a crescendo,” she said. “‘Bruyeres’ is so gentle and one of my favorites.”

In addition to being beautiful pieces, “*Le Vent dans la Plaine*,” “*Ce qu’a vu le vent d’ouest*,” and “*Voiles*” are part of Oltmanns’ current recording project. “I’m in the final stages of my next album, which is all about wind,” she said. The set will conclude with “*Feux d’Artifices*” (‘Fireworks’).

Another prelude follows: James Wilding's *Tears of Joy*. "I love this piece," she said. "It has a simple idea with a gentle motion of scintillating darkness. I wanted something joyful but also with the understanding that this is not an easy time for everybody, and I think the title encapsulates this moment."

Next up will be the *Übungsstück Nr. 9* by [Friedrich Gulda](#), a name with which I was not familiar. After hearing some of his music, I needed to know more about the Viennese composer/pianist.

"I first knew him as a classical pianist," Oltmanns said. "He was close with Alfred Brendel, who is into Dadaism, and Gulda has this crazy side to him as well, so I think the two saw eye-to-eye on that level."

Gulda was also an accomplished jazz pianist and frequent collaborator with the late Chick Corea. I told Oltmanns that I watched Gulda's performance of his [Light My Fire Variations](#). "Isn't that cool," she said. "The score is hard to get, but I bought it at a jazz festival ages ago — when Berlin was still separated — and I haven't let the score out of my hands. But I just knew him from his Mozart interpretations. He was a fantastic classical pianist — crazy talented. But he could switch between classical and jazz — and you can't hear the two styles permeate each other."

I asked Oltmanns about the [video](#) that shows her taking off from LAX accompanied by James Wilding's arrangement of Gulda's *Übungsstück Nr. 9*. "I had to return a rental car — it was pouring rain and the sky was dark," she recalled. "Suddenly the skies cleared for as far as the eye could see. It was LA at its best."

The program will conclude with Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata, a piece she has returned to many times. But after recently listening to herself play the piece, she thought that her interpretation was not "spiritual enough" for her taste. "I thought I'd come back to it one more time and try to not add anything to it. I always feel that the better the piece, the better it is to leave it alone — there's no need to do any overly excessive things."

Wrapping things up, I asked Oltmanns if she were to give this program a title, what would it be? "It would have to be something to do with sunshine and positivity, but not only that — maybe *Tears of Joy*. I like program titles that basically repeat the title of one of the pieces — I think it's a nice thing. And it would make Jamie's work the centerpiece, which it is, and it's a piece that is capable of tying the two halves together."

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