



Winner of Chorus America/ASCAP Alice Parker Award
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For immediate release.

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HOMMAGE À WANDA LANDOWSKA KENNETH WEISS, HARPSICHORD

A Concert in Tribute of a Trailblazing, World Famous Woman from Lakeville, CT: Wanda Landowska

Kenneth Weiss, Paris, France, Recreates Landowska's "A Treasury of Harpsichord Music" of 1957

Crescendo, Lakeville's award winning music program, presents its first concert of their 21st season: a harpsichord solo recital performed by Kenneth Weiss, professor at the Paris Conservatoire, France in honor of the legendary harpsichord virtuoso and scholar Wanda Landowska. Weiss plays works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Domenico Scarlatti, Jacques Champion de Chambonnières, Jean-Philippe Rameau, Francois Couperin, Henry Purcell, George Frederick Handel, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The selection is the recreation of the landmark 1957 "A Treasury of Harpsichord Music" recording of Wanda Landowska.

Kenneth Weiss writes about Landowska's trajectory: As a ten year old child prodigy, Wanda Landowska visited the 1889 World Exhibition in Paris where she likely saw her first harpsichord. The leading French piano builders Erard and Pleyel specially built harpsichords for an event that marked the 100th year anniversary of the storming of the Bastille. It is perhaps at this moment that her very early interest in the music of J.S. Bach, and the discovery of the instrument for which he wrote his music,

came together to take her on a decisive and trailblazing path: reviving the harpsichord and its repertoire of unknown treasures.

Landowska is clear in her writings and interviews that she needed to fight tirelessly for the acceptance of the instrument, and the quality of its repertoire. Although it seems impossible to imagine today, she was up against the early 20th century view that music, like science, progressed, and its quality improved throughout each era. She questioned established thought, and proved that the qualitative nature of music—and art—has nothing to do with progress. What she achieved was remarkable, and her influence on the worldwide renaissance of interest in Early Music is staggering. As a teacher and musicologist she advised her students and famed collaborators on the pertinent stylistic knowledge necessary to access this repertoire that was totally unknown at the time. As a player, she was perhaps the most widely celebrated soloist of the first half of the 20th century, entrancing devoted audiences through her fearless, decisive, and electrifying musical personality.

Weiss talks about his debut in Lakeville: "When Leszek Wojcik, famed Carnegie Hall recording engineer and Lakeville resident, offered me the opportunity to play a recital in homage to the great Wanda Landowska I was thrilled. I had been to Lakeville before, in the late 1980's, making a pilgrimage to Landowska's home with fellow harpsichordist Skip Sempé, and Jacques Merlet, the French organist who came to interview Denise Restout for his influential early music show on Radio France. Madame Restout, Landowska's student and longtime companion, received us in the kitchen of the home she shared with Landowska. From the two Pleyel harpsichords to Landowska's concert gowns on display it felt as if Landowska had just stepped out. Decades after Landowska's passing, Denise Restout had a warm and engaging manner and was hard at work organizing the writings of her cherished mentor and friend. I remember she cut the interview short to give a harpsichord lesson to a local, gum chewing adolescent who showed up at the front porch. I wondered at the time if this young person had any idea of whose hands were on the same keyboard as theirs.

For this tribute, I've chosen to revisit the set of pieces she chose for her landmark 1957 recording entitled "A Treasury of Harpsichord Music". Free from chronological or thematic hurdles, she crafted a brilliant collection of true treasures chosen from the harpsichords vast solo repertoire. It has been a joy preparing for this event, and I eagerly await playing in Lakeville—a town Landowska chose to make her home."

The only performance will take place on Saturday, September 14, 2024 at 6:00 PM at the Lakeville United Methodist Church (319 Main Street, Lakeville, CT). Tickets are available online at www.crescendomusic.org, or on a first come, first served basis at the door, 45 minutes prior to the concert. The concert counts with special support by Leszek Wojcik. Support for the concerts has also been provided to Crescendo also by the Connecticut State Department of Economic and Community Development/Connecticut Office of the Arts (COA) from the Connecticut State Legislature, and NBT Bank.

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