



AMERICAN CLASSICS



# JUDITH LANG ZAIMONT

**Sonata • A Calendar Set**

**Nocturne: La fin de siècle**

**Christopher Atzinger, Piano**



## Judith Lang Zaimont (b. 1945)

<b>Sonata</b> (1999–2000)	<b>29:37</b>	<b>9</b> May: 'As full of spirit as the month of May and gorgeous.' (William Shakespeare)	1:31
<b>1</b> I. Ricerca	9:57	<b>10</b> June: 'Then, if ever, come perfect days.' (James Russell Lowell)	2:21
<b>2</b> II. Canto	11:31	<b>11</b> July: The Glorious Fourth!	1:51
<b>3</b> III. Impronta digitale	8:05	<b>12</b> August: 'Dry August and warm.' (Thomas Tusser)	2:27
<b>4</b> <b>Nocturne: La fin de siècle</b> (1979)	<b>6:34</b>	<b>13</b> September: 'Where blue is darkened on blueness Down the way Persephone goes just now In first-frosted September.' (D. H. Lawrence)	2:18
<b>A Calendar Set – 12 Virtuoso Preludes</b> (1978)	<b>29:32</b>	<b>14</b> October: 'The wind is rising, and the air is wild with leaves.' (Humbert Wolfe)	2:14
<b>5</b> January: 'Whose morning drumbeat, following the sun, and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth.' (Daniel Webster)	2:40	<b>15</b> November: 'November's sky is chill and drear.' (Sir Walter Scott)	3:13
<b>6</b> February: Palace of Ice.	2:13	<b>16</b> December: The Carols	5:27
<b>7</b> March: 'The braggart March.' (Robert Burns Wilson)	1:49		
<b>8</b> April: 'You know how it is with an April day.' (Robert Frost)	1:24		

Despite early success as a concert pianist, Judith Lang Zaimont quickly discovered a passion for composition and has since written over one hundred works for the solo, chamber, and orchestral mediums. Widely praised for having a distinctive and unique artistic voice, she has won over 25 awards including a Copland Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship, and her music is the subject of a dozen doctoral dissertations. In addition to having taught at the Peabody Conservatory, the University of Minnesota, Queens College and Adelphi University, she remains active as a composer, clinician, adjudicator, and presenter.

Dating from 1999–2000, the *Sonata* is one of Zaimont's most extensive and demanding works. Given its première in 2000 by Bradford Gowen, the piece focuses on creating diverse musical atmospheres through variances of keyboard touch. Although the piece is decisively tonal throughout, Zaimont explores numerous textures over its course. Contrapuntal first movement material is balanced by a mixture of chorale style writing and French impressionism in the second movement. Yet perhaps the most dramatic writing of all comes in the third movement, as frequent strands of single-line material epitomize the virtuosic *Toccata* entitled, *Impronta digitale*. Motivated by past *Toccatas* of Schumann, Ravel, and Prokofiev, Zaimont offers her own

challenging tour de force, full of thorny passagework, frequent meter changes, numerous hand crossings and sudden phrase endings, all of which are to be taken at breakneck speed. *Impronta digitale* was the featured work at the 2001 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and remains a popular choice among pianists today.

Another of Zaimont's most frequently performed works is also one of her earliest, the *Nocturne: fin de siècle*, dating from 1979. As Zaimont states, the work is a "personal valentine to the great pianist-composers of the Romantic Era". The piece is constructed in a traditional three-part form, with a middle section that combines sudden starts and stops of motivic fragments with technical bravura and extreme dynamic contrasts. Marked as "impetuous" and "fleeting", this interior material also offers a stark contrast to the tranquil and sublime outer sections that couple long soaring melodic lines with subtle yet poignant twists of harmony.

Fascinated by nature, the seasons, and the outdoors, Zaimont has written several compositions that make musical connections to the environment around her. One such piece is *A Calendar Set*, dating from 1972–1978. As the title implies, the collection is a musical commentary on the months of the year, with each prelude being written during the month it depicts. While Zaimont wrote the collection

initially for her own personal use, critical acclaim and publication came in 2005 when the piece was selected as the winner of the Jabez Press Composition Invitational Competition.

The piece places a high priority on contrasts of mood, temperament, and character. For example, the stern and relentless frigid nature of January, reflected in the combination of drum-like mordent figures and stark vertical chords, comes in contrast to the docile unfolding of charming lyricism that permeates June. As scholar and pianist Elizabeth Moak points out, transitional seasons of

fall and spring feature more virtuosic material, highlighted by September which is filled with the winds of change, and May which musically depicts the exuberance of life and rebirth. There are also instances of *quodlibet*, a form of musical quotation, as Zaimont offers her own unique slant on familiar songs and carols that appear in the July and December preludes. While Zaimont states that individual preludes can be effectively programmed separately, the collective benefits of the work champion the cyclical nature of the world in which we live.

Christopher Atzinger

Photo: Gary Zaimont



### Judith Lang Zaimont

Judith Lang Zaimont's music is internationally acclaimed for its drama and expressiveness and has been programmed around the globe by major ensembles such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, Baltimore and Mississippi Symphonies, Berlin Radio Orchestra, Czech Radio Orchestra, Kremlin Chamber Orchestra, Women's Philharmonic, Connecticut Opera, New York Virtuosi, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestras (New York and Boston), American Guild of Organists, Harlem String Quartet, International Double Reed Society, World Viola Congress, Norway's Bergen Wind Quintet, Zagreb Saxophone Quartet and others. Her 100+ works cover almost every genre: three symphonies, chamber opera, music for wind ensemble, works for solo voice and choral ensembles, and solo instrumental and chamber pieces. Zaimont has been widely honored through composer prizes (including the Gottschalk International Competition First Prize: Gold Medal and International McCollin Competition First Prize), and awards (including a Guggenheim Fellowship, 2003 Aaron Copland Award, and 2005 Bush Foundation Fellowship). Two of her works were named to Century Lists: *Doubles* – 1993 (oboe and piano: Chamber Music America), and *Sonata* – 1999 (*Piano & Keyboard* magazine); and her pieces have been selected as required repertoire for international performance competitions in voice, piano and conducting. Her music is widely recorded (Naxos, Koch Classical, Harmonia Mundi, MSR, Albany, Leonarda, Arkiv Music, and 4-Tay) and her principal publisher is Subito Music Corp. After a teenage career as a concert pianist,

Judith Zaimont completed college and graduate study in composition (City University of New York; Columbia University), and post-graduate study in orchestration in Paris with André Jolivet (as a Debussy Fellow of the Alliance Française de New York). This led to a distinguished musical career as educator (Peabody Conservatory, CUNY, Adelphi University and the University of Minnesota) and parallel contributions as writer and editor. Her books include the three-volume Greenwood Press series, *The Musical Woman: An International Perspective*, and her essays on music appear online in *NewMusicBox* (American Music Center's magazine) and in various professional print journals. [www.jzaimont.com](http://www.jzaimont.com)



### Christopher Atzinger

Christopher Atzinger has performed in Germany, Austria, Italy, England, France, Spain, and Canada in addition to performances throughout the United States highlighted by concerts at New York's Carnegie Hall (Weill) and the Phillips Collection in Washington. He is a medalist of the New Orleans, San Antonio, Cincinnati, Shreveport, and Seattle International Piano Competitions, and has performed at the Brevard Music Festival, Banff International Keyboard Festival, and the Chautauqua Institution. He has recorded for Centaur Records and MSR Classics, lectured at The Juilliard School and Berklee College of Music, and conducted masterclasses across the United States. In addition to degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Michigan, Atzinger earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University. Among his principal teachers he counts Julian Martin, Robert McDonald, Anton Nel, David Renner, and Carolyn Lipp. He is an Associate Professor of Piano at St Olaf College in Minnesota.

Photo: Ali Hohn

## Judith Lang ZAIMONT (b.1945)

- 1–3 Sonata (1999–2000) 29:37**  
**4 Nocturne: La fin de siècle (1979) 6:34**  
**5–16 A Calendar Set – 12 Virtuoso Preludes (1978) 29:32**

Full track details will be found in the booklet

### Christopher Atzinger, Piano

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American flag, folk artist, 1880s



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Judith Lang Zaimont's acclaimed music embraces a wide variety of forms. One of her earliest works is *Nocturne: La fin de siècle*, written as a 'personal valentine to the great pianist-composers of the Romantic Era'. Rich in contrast, perfect in form, it provides a deeply enriching listening experience. *A Calendar Set* (1978) charts the months of the year with imagination and precision, whilst the introduction of carols and familiar songs adds to the setting's lyricism. *Sonata* was completed in 2000 and is one of her most challenging works – atmospheric, quite impressionistic in places, and ending with a brilliantly virtuosic finale.

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