

Polonaise-Fantaisie: The Story of a Pianist

Artist's Statement

Six years ago, when I was pregnant with my son Nathaniel, I started writing down vivid memories of my childhood in Odessa, the former Soviet Union, and of immigration to the US. Gradually, these started to take the shape of a book about a life in music. At that time, I was living in NYC, performing, and curating my series, Music/Words, where poets read between musical performances. Poetry inspired me for as long as I can remember, and influenced my first CD (Sound of Verse, MSR Classics.) I hadn't written in years. It was profoundly satisfying to be writing once again.

A few years later, after I had moved to Los Angeles to head the piano department at UCLA, the chapters of the book found their way into the hands of one Cynthia Comsky, an incredible producer and magnificent lady. She insisted that I use them to create a recital-monologue. Many memories described in the book had musical pieces inexorably connected to them. I chose pieces that had been with me since childhood, as well as those that found their way into my repertoire, along my path, to connect and illuminate the narrative. The format, play-read-play-read, echoes the format of my long-running Music/Words programs, where the poems and the music create an arch that is, hopefully, emotionally resonant. Cameron Watson, a brilliant director, directed me and wonderful actress Rebecca Mozo, in a performance of the work at the Ebell of Los Angeles, in 2015, just a few months after my daughter Frida was born.

I know that I am the artist that I am partially because of growing up in the Odessa of the past – seven people in a three-room apartment, surrounded by books, music, ideas and friends (one of whom is Misha. You will meet him in the story. He is my husband and the father of my two children).

Recording this story, and this music, is the most personal project I have ever done.

I dedicated the recording to my family: my parents, Irene and Simon Faliks, who were brave enough to leave when they did. My husband and best friend, then and now, Misha Shpigelmacher. My two children, Nathaniel and Frida Shpigelmacher, as well as to anyone who has ever left a place in search of a better life.

I am thrilled to be bringing this story to you.