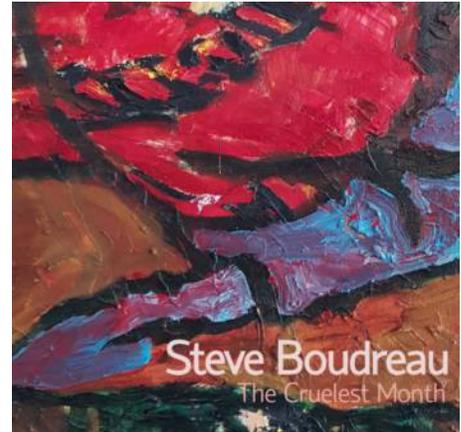


The Cruellest Month (Home Tapes Vol. 1)

Steve Boudreau - piano

- 01 Falling 4:40 (M. Essoudry)
- 02 Misterioso 3:48 (T. Monk)
- 03 Fur Denyse 4:17 (G. Elliott)
- 04 20 Words or Less 4:06 (S. Boudreau)
- 05 Celestial 5:00 (S. Boudreau)
- 06 Infant Eyes 3:41 (W. Shorter)
- 07 Inch Worm 3:27 (F. Loesser)
- 08 Prelude XVII 3:08 (W. Duckworth)



Recorded in Ottawa, Canada on April 20, 2020 by Steve Boudreau.
Mixed and Mastered by Philip Shaw Bova at Bova Lab Studio
Released May 2020.

I recorded my first solo album ten years ago when I was feeling particularly uplifted by recent events in my life. I'd just finished two incredible years immersed in music in Boston, and was returning home to Ottawa with a new perspective on my music and wide open life plans. This record was not planned as meticulously. In this past March, we all had to drastically alter our lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I found myself erasing project after project from my calendar and practice list as all live performances were cancelled one by one.

I had always planned to do some recording on the piano in my home, a 1908 Steinway parlour grand given to me just over five years ago by Jennifer Giles, an incredible gesture that I think about every day, especially since her passing a few years later. I spoke with specialists about what I would need, microphones, computer software, and in the end I never put the time and money into the things I needed. I decided to try a very low-budget recording, in hopes that the music, how I felt as I played and the sound of the piano itself would give my friend, gifted sound engineer Phil Bova, enough to work with. I think the result captures what it would be like to sit in our dining room next to the piano as I play. I'm happy to share this music with you, the direction it has given me during this difficult time feels less like an imposition and more like what I always wanted to do but never had the courage. I hope you enjoy your time spent in my home as I work stuff out.

Falling is a piece by Ottawa drummer and composer Mike Essoudry. I was playing with an original music sextet of his at the National Arts Centre 4th Stage when Jennifer Giles approached me at the intermission. She asked what kind of piano I had, and when I described my measly spinet, she asked if I would like to have her incredible piano. It moves me to this day to think of that gesture and I only hope I can pay it forward myself someday.

Misterioso is a piece by Thelonious Monk. One of my teachers said to me two things about Monk- we can always dig deeper into any of his pieces, and when you play his music, it's all about feeling good and having fun. I usually play this piece pretty cautiously so I decided to go the other way this time.

Fur Denyse is a piece by Garry Elliott. Garry and I have played together for over twenty years now, we first met when I was in high school and took some guitar lessons from him. This piece was one that

he gave me back then, in the late nineties. Since then we have recorded two albums of both of our original music. He's an inspiration to me, and a good friend.

20 Words or Less is a very recent piece I wrote about saying a lot with a little. A lot of my favourite music has something simple at its core, even when it goes to crazy places.

Celestial is a piece I wrote loosely based on Hindustani Raag Bageshri. The title refers to the sky, in this piece, specifically, at night when you can see the constellations. When I was young we had a giant National Geographic Atlas under the couch that I would pore over. As interesting as the maps of the continents and countries were, the maps of the stars were the most mysterious. As fixed as they appeared in the atlas, the stars appeared differently depending on both when and where you are when you look up.

Infant Eyes is a piece by Wayne Shorter. While it may not have happened intentionally at first, I think a lot of the harmonic language I favour in my music can be found in his compositions. When I would re-arrange a standard with my own harmonies I often would think, did I just try to turn this into a Wayne Shorter tune? Since this is already a Wayne Shorter tune the goal was to turn it into something of my own. I think the result is subtle, but the experiment was fun.

Inch Worm is a piece by Frank Loesser first made famous by Danny Kaye. Of all of the media I consumed in my childhood I think it's fair to say that his movie "The Court Jester" is probably the most timeless. Danny Kaye's version of this piece couldn't be more different from the famous jazz version by John Coltrane's quartet. Jazz musicians use this short tune as a launchpad for improvising, and I wanted to do that in my own way.

Prelude XVII by William Duckworth is a piece from his "Time Curve Preludes", a series of 24 pieces for piano that involve silently resting weights on low bass keys so that there is a drone created by resonant frequencies. Technically I cheated and used the middle pedal to sustain the low B's and F# here, but the effect can be heard subtly throughout the piece and at the end. I play this piece essentially as written. I don't consider myself to be a polished classical pianist, but I felt that I should push myself and present a picture of the music I play at home.

I hope to continue recording new piano music monthly until I can return to a more balanced life and start playing with others once more. Thanks for listening.

This project is dedicated to Jennifer Giles, who I met while studying at Carleton University in 1999. I think of her every day whether I'm playing or teaching.