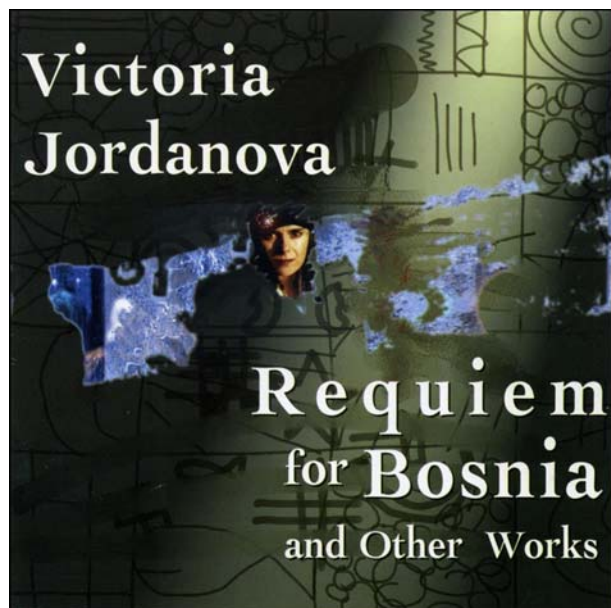


NWCR673

Victoria Jordanova

Requiem for Bosnia and Other Works



<i>Requiem for Bosnia</i> (1993)	(20:16)
(An Improvisation for Broken Piano, Harp, and Child's Voice)	
1. Requiem	(7:35)
2. Recall	(6:03)
3. Broken Piano II	(6:38)
Four Preludes for Harp (1993)	(15:05)
4. On a Sunday Afternoon	(4:11)
5. À l'Espagnol	(2:51)
6. By the Seashore	(4:39)
7. In The Wind	(3:24)
<i>Once upon a Time</i> (1993)	(8:38)
8. Ballade	(4:19)
9. Danse	(4:19)
10. Variations for Harp (1993)	(17:06)

Total playing time: 61:21

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Notes

Imagine a three-story stairwell in a school. A piano is being moved. It is dropped, crashes down the stairs and lands at the bottom level, three stories below. A woman who teaches music at the school takes note. She approaches the piano carcass and begins to play. She comes back. She plays again. The wounded instrument is changing with time. It may be removed. She decides to record the sounds of the fallen piano, using only the keys. While she is doing so, a child named Olivia sings at the top of the stairs.

The woman has a story. She is a harpist and pianist. Seventeen years ago she performed with the Sarajevo Radio and Television Orchestra, with the Belgrade Radio and Television Orchestra. She is highly schooled and has an active performing and teaching career. Still, she is not happy. She has not voiced herself since she was a child and was punished for not studying hard enough (she was improvising). She is not a child any longer. She decides to improvise. She moves to America's west coast. She begins to improvise in public, performing live over prerecorded tapes of herself. She is successful. People respond. They urge her to capture her work.

She starts with the broken piano and the child's voice singing. She constructs, with her harp layered over the improbable sounds of the fallen instrument, a soundscape of the unimaginable: the splitting savagery of war. The limbs of extremity rip, bullet-like, through the flesh of organic center. No one is responsible. All are implicated. The body writhes within itself. It has been split so many times, its integral form is completely obscured. The harpist/composer, who holds within herself many spoken and sung languages, gives voice to the anguish of division. She names her piece *Requiem for Bosnia*.

Victoria Jordanova comes from the former Yugoslavia, where her family and friends still live. Her mother is a Serb, her

father Macedonian, her best friend is a Muslim; in her family there are Croats and Montenegrins. She has degrees from important conservatories in Europe and the U.S. She has a musical heritage that includes Bartók and Haydn; Debussy and Ravel; Stockhausen and Cage. She put herself in California because there she found "a musical world where the most disparate stylistic and cultural elements coexisted; an atmosphere of openness and innovation; a place where sincerity of expression is valued far more than adherence to traditional standards."

Jordanova has the blood of folk music in her veins; she carries Bartók's awareness, his conscious use of this arterial material. She is a child not only of a split country, but of the split consciousness of the last half-century: caught between the isolation of existentialism and the claustrophobia of fundamentalism, between complete relativity and the urgent need for meaning. Like all her sentient fellow composers, she inherited both systems and systematic thought and, later, the equally rigorous and systematic dismantling of systems. Rules are repressive; labels are repressive and nothing positive is gained by repression. On the other hand, chaos is intolerable; anarchy is destructive. Not to have an identity is to be voiceless.

Victoria Jordanova is finding her voice and it is documented here in an intimate way. She is a performer/composer who composes in real time. More accurately, she composes faster than real time and plays what she is hearing so that the listener experiences the external sound-world at the same birthing moment as the composer. She conceives; we hear the delivery.

This can be discomfiting. Paradoxically, it is most so in the works following the title cut. *Requiem for Bosnia* the work is profoundly pleasurable. The listener is grateful to have voice

given, musically, to tragedy. Through the composer's intercession, we are given access to our fellow beings and—by extension—to our own split selves. The *Requiem* slips eerily in and out between the temporality and specificity of its subject on the one hand, and elemental forces that have no name on the other. *Four Preludes*, *Once upon a Time*, and *Variations for Harp* do not address demons—inner or outer. They are light (not to be confused with “lite”). They make easy listening. Precisely for this reason, they can make one uneasy—as with the child's voice that appears far back in the cratered and splintered soundscape of the *Requiem*'s final movement. It comes out of nowhere; it is utterly, poignantly, there.

So are the works that follow the title cut on this disc. They do not pretend to the emotional trajectory of the *Requiem*. They speak in an almost child-like voice—except that Jordanova is a gypsy. She conjures, in the *Preludes*, landscapes, seascapes, the sound of wind blowing through her harp. She tells stories, in *Once upon a Time*, using simple, and piercing, means. She reveals, in *Variations*, a sonic terrain not bounded by the harp's pretty past. If *Requiem* is timely, it is also timeless. The other works, in their guileless honesty, are fresh and vulnerable, like the fallen piano, to the decay and change of time.

In these end-of-the-century times, all levels are important. It is possible, within the space of this one listening experience, to travel dimensionally from the weighty to the weightless, from the darkness of tragic soundscapes to the smallest delight of a tactile detail. Bombs drop, bells toll, the wind

ruffles harp strings, a child sings a silly song. The music of Victoria Jordanova comes out of nowhere; it lands, with uncommon precision, in the heart's ear.

—Ruth Dreier, *March 1994*

Victoria Jordanova (b 1962) was born in Belgrade in the former Yugoslavia. Her education and her career as a performer have made her a truly international artist. She received her early musical training at the Belgrade Conservatory, where at age 17 she earned a diploma in harp and piano. She also received a B.A. from Michigan State University. This was followed by studies at the Paris Conservatory on a fellowship from the French government. Also in France she was an artist in residence at the Cité Internationale des Arts. After special studies at the Moscow Conservatory, she returned to the United States on a Langley Fellowship to New York University, where she received her M.A. in musicology. Most recently she held a residency at Mills College in California. As a harp soloist, Jordanova has concertized throughout Europe and the United States. Seeking to recapture the spontaneity of expression that characterized her early music making, Jordanova recently relocated to San Francisco, where she is pursuing a career as a composer/improviser.

“I cry for all the people who have been killed. The *Requiem* is for my people and they are Croats, Muslims, and Serbs. It is a personal statement. It is the Requiem for the world in which I grew up. The world which was ethnically harmonious.”

Production Notes

Produced by Victoria Jordanova

Executive Producer: Joseph R. Dalton

Digital assembly and mixing: Aaron Keane, Dave Greenberg.

Mastering: Robert Wolff, engineer at Sony Classical Productions.

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