

Mp3 Mary Louise Griffith - The Parlor Piano

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From lightly lyrical to playfully percussive, Mary Louise Griffith's contemporary classical piano compositions both enliven and soothe the listener. These translucent songs without words bring a rainbow into the parlor, pleasing various artistic tastes. 20 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Contemporary, EASY LISTENING: Background Music Details: REVIEW "The appeal of these pieces lies in their simplicity -- their unpretentious rendering of an image, a story, a feeling, or a joke. They range in subject from a toy soldier to proud princes; from a dancing fool to meandering waters, drawn from a Northern European musical vocabulary. Though usually subtle, an audacious wit sometimes sneaks into this imagistic poetry. "Throughout this recording, a broad spectrum of tones plays through its music, from elegaic to elfish; its careful touch transitions smoothly from playfully percussive to lightly lyrical in the varying textures. Unusual pairing of notes and unpredictable modulations hold the music lover's interest. Eschewing all redundancy, the composer insists that every note count. Though properly pianistic, her songs without words lend themselves to chamber instrumentation. As the next Parlor Piano recording promises, Mary Louise Griffith will again leave us wanting MORE." -- Marlene Loisdotter Professor of Women's Studies specializing in music About NAOMI LaVIOLETTE, Pianist: Naomi LaViolette, performer, arranger, composer and professor, has built a solid reputation as a versatile musician in Portland, Oregon. She began piano instruction at the age of four, which culminated in both a bachelors and masters degree in classical piano performance. LaViolette credits Dr. Tanya Stambuk, Harold Gray, Florence Chino, and Jill Gambill for her classical piano training. Her jazz piano piano teacher, Randy Porter, greatly enhanced her understanding of improvisation and jazz theory. She joined the faculty at Clackamas Community College in Oregon City in 2002. As a professor in the music department, she has taught Keyboard Skills, Chamber Ensemble, Music Appreciation, Music Literature, and Performance Repertoire. LaViolette brings professional, highly-trained expression to her musical performances. She has studied and performed in all genres of advanced classical piano repertoire. As an accompanist, conductors have considered her "unflappable" -- meaning, put a piece of music in front of her, and she'll play it -- no qualms. She easily transitions among classical, jazz, funk, folk, acoustic, gospel and pop. She

has performed with many great Northwest musicians including Wendy Goodwin, Randy Porter, Hamilton Cheifitz, Georgene Rice, Tom Wakeling, Ron Steen, Renato Carranto, and the Oregon Repertory Singers. About THE PIANO: Victor Borge told me the same thing, I said to my friend, Dana Carlile, and it was the only serious thing Ive ever heard him say! It was the fall of 1997, and Dana had just played part of a jazz tune on my piano, which was being stored in the living room of my nephew, Tim. I had finally purchased a condominium with an entryway that I could actually move a piano through, so Dana and I went to Tims to size up the situation. This is a very fine piano, Dana said, as had Victor Borge after HE played it. But thats a story for another day. Its good to hear people say nice things about something one cares about. Especially Dana about my piano. Why? Because I respect his opinion, to be sure, but more because he is the person who invited me back into the world of music making. About MARY LOUISE GRIFFITH, Composer: I was born into a musical family. I must have assumed from birth that if you could talk, you could sing; if you could walk, you could dance; and if you had hands, you could play a musical instrument. Thats what I saw around me, especially at our grandparents' bustling home at the foot of Mt. Hood in rural Oregon. Close-knit family members were always singing in harmony, and Grandmas piano enjoyed repeated workouts. When I was quite small, I would sit on the laps of my mother and my aunts as they played one of the family pianos. I quickly caught on that higher was righter, and lower was lefter. I dont recall when I started playing on my own, but I do remember struggling to climb up onto the piano stool so that I COULD play. In addition to classical music, a sizeable collection of popular sheet music from 1906 through the 40s had found its destination next to Grandmas piano. Most of this treasured dog-eared collection had been mail ordered over the years by the young cousins of my mothers generation. I could not yet read music, so I would carefully place a copy of sheet music on the pianos music stand with the pretty picture on its cover facing me. I knew which melody to play by ear when I saw its picture. Official lessons started at St. Marys Academy in The Dalles when I was 8 years old. I was an eager student, and the lessons were moderately challenging. My teachers advanced me quickly through levels of difficulty. Then after only four years of lessons, our family moved to a small Eastern Oregon town where the nearby music teachers were performing at about my level. My formal training ended then. And, sadly, it was also the beginning of my separation from music making. For most of my adult life there was a piano in my home, but with parenting, attending college, parenting again 20 years later, and running a business (in that order), my interest in playing the piano virtually vanished. It simply became easier and

more pleasing to listen to music on the radio played by world-class performers. That is -- until I met Dana. We met at a ballroom dance. At the end of the evening, he gave me his business card. I pursed it but didn't look at it for a couple of weeks. When I did look at it, I noticed a magic, in-your-face word on it: PIANO. Apparently Dana was not only a capable ballroom dancer, he was also a pianist! The next time we met, I grilled him about his piano experience and learned that he also composed music. I told him that I played as a child and that my piano was at Tims house. So, long story short, I spent the next few months practicing on Danas piano when he worked evenings until I was reunited with my own piano at my new place. After more than 40 years of being away from the instrument, it was good to be back. Then one day in 2001, Dana said something I did not expect to hear: You know, Mary Lou, I would love to hear what kind of music would come out of you if you were to compose. I remember thinking, How odd. Compose. Me. Shortly thereafter I found myself searching for manuscript sheets that were somewhere in a box of old music books. Sure enough, melodies and harmonies started coming out of me, and notes started filling those empty pages. Dana saw me working with a pencil and promptly gave me some music software. After a few years of pestering from my family and friends, this music has finally reached the recorded stage. I had known from the start, however, that I did not want to be the one to play for the recording. I was fortunate to meet Naomi LaViolette who consented to perform. Naomi is a talented music educator at Clackamas Community College who regularly performs here in the Northwest and records for other composers, too. We were able to contract a recording session at the colleges state-of-the-art studio using their Yamaha nine-foot concert grand piano. Mat Binggeli conscientiously engineered the process and mastered the sound. I am so very pleased with the result. I have chosen a modest-sized collection of some of my shorter pieces for this CD. (Total time is 40:00.) My preference for the classical style is obvious. Melody lines were undoubtedly influenced by the singing I heard in my family all of my life. I rather enjoy creating music that is playful, although minor keys predominate throughout this recording. Ive completed more than 100 compositions to date, and there is a stack deeper than that of pieces waiting to be finished. People say that my music reminds them of Satie, Faure, and Chopin. In fact, the first two measures of "Meandering Cloche" (track #10) are a shameless ripoff of Ravels Valley of the Bells. I was playing his piece one day when my right hand abandoned the keyboard and reached for the composing pencil -- a Dr. Strangelove kind of curse that I have learned to accept with this composer role. Within the hour, my new piece with Ravels motif was penciled and remains exactly as written that day. I decided at

the last minute to do the cover artwork myself. Making art is another one of those things I haven't done for a long, long time, but I thought I'd give it a shot. The image on the cover shows a caricature of me as a child with a generic female relative playing the piano that I had for many years, an 1860s Stedman seven-foot square grand. I miniaturized its proportion to fit the CD cover. My next two CDs are in the works. Their titles will probably be the Parlor Piano Meets Strings and the Parlor Piano Plays Haiku. I plan to publish books of my music, too, for early-intermediate and intermediate level piano players. As for Victor Borge, may he rest in peace; he was a one-of-a-kind entertainer. If he were living in my neighborhood today, he would always be welcome to drop by and play my very fine piano. I wonder what he would say about my music? Mary Louise Griffith December, 2006

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