

Orphée aux enfers - Overture

Jacques Offenbach

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Recordings > New Release

America/Beautiful

Min Kwon, piano

by **Frances Wilson** | May 28th, 2026

America/Beautiful, devised and performed by American-Korean pianist Min Kwon, is a five-volume collection comprising 76 new piano works by American composers inspired by the iconic patriotic song 'America the Beautiful', Samuel Ward's setting of a poem by Katharine Bates.



The American flag

Conceived during the pandemic and released in the year of the 250th anniversary of America's founding, the album celebrates the United States as a cultural melting pot, bringing together as many voices as possible. It aims to encourage better listening to and understanding of others' voices, posing the question: What is America? Is it beautiful? Was it ever? Will it ever be? The individual pieces vary in tone, texture, and mood, yet ultimately form a united whole, much like



Diabelli that inspired Beethoven's 33 variations, 'America the Beautiful' features a simple melody and harmony rich in possibilities, making it perfectly suited to variation.

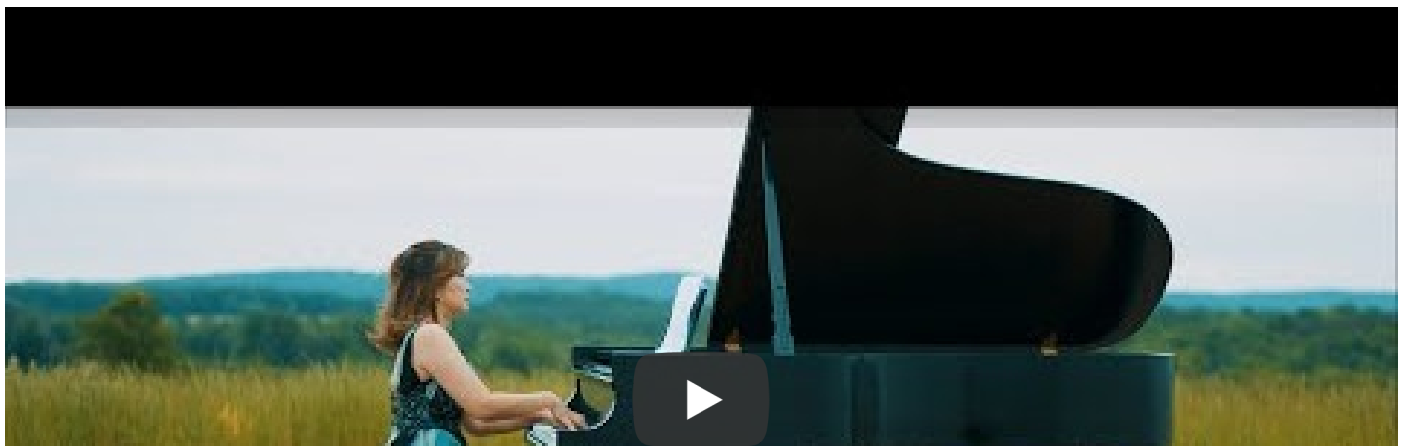
Min Kwon commissioned 76 American composers, both renowned and rising, born between 1928 and 2000, to contribute a variation to the project. Like the country itself, these composers represent an enormous diversity of musical aesthetics, backgrounds, ethnicities, and genders, and include celebrated contemporary composers such as Nico Muhly, Timo Andres, Stewart Copeland, Terry Riley, Vijay Iyer, and Augusta Read Thomas.



Min Kwon © Andrej Grilc

*"The challenge for these very highly sophisticated musicians who studied Beethoven and **Mahler** was to look at this very simple melody and do something new,"* says Kwon.

Min Kwon: Selections from America/Beautiful | Lunar New Year 2022





The result is a 5-hour suite of miniatures of extraordinary range (both artistic and pianistic), invention, imagination, and expression, exploring themes of mourning, reflection, and patriotism. With so many pieces, I have selected a handful to illustrate the breadth and variety of this album:

Leila Adu-Gilmore's *United Underdog*, a fiercely dissonant anthem of crashing chords and forearm clusters.

Timo Andres' hymnlike, somewhat poignant *American Coda*.



American Coda

Preview Timo Andres, Min Kwon

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Jed Distler's dramatic *Ameritango*, the main theme embellished with sweeping Lisztian gestures and tango rhythms.



Ameritango

Preview Jed Distler, Min Kwon

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Fred Hersch's baroque-esque *Four Windows into America*

Vijay Iyer's haunting *Crown Thy Good*



Crown Thy Good

Preview Vijay Iyer, Min Kwon



Nico Muhly's sparkling, uplifting *Refine*

It's a great credit to Min Kwon's musical sensitivity and technical and artistic assuredness that she is able to switch seamlessly between the myriad styles and moods of these short works, bringing each piece to life with colour, nuance, freshness and clarity.

Min Kwon

"I wanted to leave something lasting for other pianists, a body of work that they could continue to share for years to come, representing what 'American' music can be." – Min Kwon

This album certainly achieves that, combining an important new collection of contemporary piano music with a celebration of the diversity and creative spirit of the USA, home to Min Kwon since the age of 14.

‘**America/Beautiful**’ is available on CD on the Delos label and on streaming.

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