

ALBUM “Der Tod, die Muse”

With their new album, “Der Tod, die Muse” (“Death, the Muse”), the art-song duo Cornelia Sonnleithner (contralto) and Clara Sophia Murnig (piano) invite listeners on a compelling journey through central themes of the Romantic song repertoire.

The album brings together outstanding works by Johannes Brahms, Gustav Mahler and Modest Mussorgski, offering different perspectives on transience, memory and transformation. “Der Tod, die Muse” approaches farewell and death not as external events, but as inner experiences in which loss, consolation and new beginnings converge. The combination of these distinctive compositional voices creates a multifaceted panorama of existential reflection, in which emotional intensity and musical clarity are equally present.

Voice and piano engage in a dialogue of equals, combining intimacy with profound expressive power. The duo presents art song as a direct and timeless form of artistic communication - concentrated and highly relevant to the present day. In this context, music becomes both a mirror of inner processes and a space for personal reflection.

The album will be released on **November 13th 2026** by the label

KEY:ARTRECORDS and will be available on CD and all major streaming platforms.

The artists see the recording as an emotional experience: “ This album is not a lament, but an expression of emotional intensity. Death, an end, is always also a new beginning.

The contrast between pain and redemption, loss and longing, the past and the future. Love, which reveals itself in all its facets through various twists of fate.”

Born in Vienna, Cornelia Sonnleithner is a contralto specialising in oratorio, art song and opera, and performs internationally. She has worked with conductors including Adam Fischer, Marco Armiliato and Beat Furrer, and has appeared at venues and festivals such as the Salzburg Festival, the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Alte Oper Frankfurt and the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Together with Clara Sophia Murnig, she forms an art-song duo renowned for its profound and sensitive interpretations of the Romantic Lied repertoire.

Clara Sophia Murnig is an internationally active pianist specialising as a Lied collaborative pianist and in contemporary piano music. She has performed at venues including the Vienna Konzerthaus, Sage Gateshead in the United Kingdom and the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna. She has participated in masterclasses with Malcolm Martineau, Elly Ameling and Charles Spencer and has taught at the Ludwig van Beethoven Department of Piano in Music Education at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna since 2013. Her collaboration with Sonnleithner is characterised by intensive musical communication and meticulous attention to detail.

“Der Tod, die Muse” combines artistic excellence with existential depth, bringing the full intensity of Romantic art song vividly to life. The album is essential listening for lovers of Lied repertoire and for anyone who experiences music as a reflection on life, transience and emotional depth.

SINGLE “Urlicht”

The **pre-release single “Urlicht”** will be released on **September 25th 2026**.

Composed by Gustav Mahler and taken from the collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, it is presented in its original form for voice and piano.

The song explores resurrection, the hope of redemption and the transition from earthly suffering to eternal life. As an art-song duo, Cornelia Sonnleithner (contralto) and Clara Sophia Murnig (piano) offer a movingly intimate interpretation in which the work’s emotional power and meditative tranquillity can be felt directly.

As a preview of the album “*Der Tod, die Muse*”, due for release on **November 13th 2026**, the single offers a concentrated, meditative moment—a pause for contemplation that anticipates the existential depth of the complete song programme.

“Urlicht” will be released by KEY:ARTRECORDS.

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Biography

CORNELIA SONNLEITHNER CONTRALTO

The Vienna-born contralto graduated with honors from the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. She also completed a course in classical operetta at the Music and Arts University of the City of Vienna. Masterclasses with KS Vesselina Kasarova, KS Robert Holl, Charles Spencer, and others enriched her training.

Her repertoire includes opera roles such as Eva (*La morte di Abel* by L. Leo), Angelo (“*La Decollazione di San Giovanni Battista*” by A. M. Bononcini), Storgè (“*Jephtha*” by G. F. Handel), Tetide (‘*Acide*’ by J. Haydn), Hänsel (“*Hänsel und Gretel*” by E. Humperdinck), Suzuki (“*Madama Butterfly*” by G. Puccini), Ulrica (*Un ballo in maschera* by G. Verdi),

Henri (Der Opernball by R. Heuberger), Fortunata (Satyricon by B. Maderna), as well as oratorios such as J. S. Bach's Mass in B minor, St. Matthew Passion, St. John Passion, and Christmas Oratorio, G. F. Handel's Messiah, W. A. Mozart's Requiem, F. Mendelssohn Bartholdy's "Elijah," the "Stabat Mater" by G. B. Pergolesi, G. Rossini and A. Dvorák, the Petite Messe solennelle by G. Rossini, and the 2nd Symphony by G. Mahler. She has sung at the Salzburg Festival, the Zurich Opera House, the Vienna Volksoper, the Vorarlberg State Theater, the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Musikverein Vienna, the Brucknerhaus Linz, the Festspielhaus St. Pölten, the Herbstgold Festival Eisenstadt, the Festival Retz, the Schubertiade, the Alte Oper Frankfurt, the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, the Azore Festival, at the Bach Festival Budapest, at the Mozart Festival Bratislava, at the Philharmonic Hall Lviv in Ukraine, at the Origen Festival Cultural in Switzerland. Further performances took her to Denmark, Belgium, Spain, South Korea, and Japan, among other places.

The contralto has worked with conductors such as Adam Fischer, Marco Armiliato, Heinz Ferlesch, Gerrit Prießnitz, Beat Furrer, Luca De Marchi, Ilya Ram, and directors such as Michael Sturminger, Carolin Pienkos, Cornelius Obonya, Otto Schenk, Sven Eric Bechtolf, Wolfgang Dosch, Stefan Otteni, Georg Zlabinger, Giovanni Netzer, Matija Ferlin, Sebastian Hirn, Tatjana Gürbaca, and Vivien Hohnholz.

She is also a member of the Austrian ensemble Cantando Admont, which specializes in early and contemporary music and collaborates with renowned composers. The contralto forms a Lied duo with pianist Clara Sophia Murnig.

Further information at:
www.corneliasonnleithner.com

CLARA SOPHIA MURNIG

PIANIST

Austrian pianist Clara Sophia Murnig is performing as a soloist, chamber musician and Lied collaborative pianist. She is specializing in contemporary piano music and a lecturer for piano at the Ludwig van Beethoven Department of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna since 2013.

As a pianist she was guest at Konzerthaus Vienna, at Sage Gateshead (UK), Schönberg Center Vienna, Kultur- & Kongresszentrum Liederhalle Stuttgart (DE), Bernhard Theater Zürich (CHE), Reaktor, Kunststation St. Peter Köln (DE), Bayrische Akademie of the fine arts Munich (DE), Edgar Elgar Room of the Royal Albert Hall (UK), Beethovenhaus Baden bei Wien, Brahmsmuseum Müzzzuschlag, Stift Heiligenkreuz, King Alexei's Place (RU), as well as at festivals such as Wien Modern, Gmundner Festwochen, classic.muerz, Styriarte and Cremona Musica 2017 (ITA).

She is working with the composers Nimrod Borenstein, Violeta Dinescu, Dominik Giesriegl, Nava Hemyari, Peter Jakober and Verena Zeiner and can be heard in duo with the singers Cornelia Sonnleithner, Zacharias Galaviz-Guerra, as well as with violinist Iris Ballot and percussionist Joachim Murnig.

Her pianistic education she received at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna with Ursula Kneihls and Anna Pfeiffer and at the Royal College of Music in London in Piano Accompaniment with Simon Lepper and Roger Vignoles. In 2024, she participated in the International Masterclasses at the Arnold Schönberg Center with KS Ildikó Raimondi and

Charles Spencer, as well as in the Lied class at Schloss vor Husum with Ulf Bästlein and Charles Spencer. There, she won the 1st Prize for Lied Duo and the Audience Award together with baritone Zacharias Galaviz-Guerra.

She worked as a Samling Artist with Malcolm Martineau, Stephen King and Sir Thomas Allen in 2014, 2012 at the Schubert Institut Baden with Elly Ameling, Helmut Deutsch, Julius Drake, Bernarda Fink, Robert Holl and Rudolf Jansen. She has been a student at the Viennese Days of Contemporary Piano Music with Helmut Lachenmann and Robert HP Platz, as well as part of the international summer academy of the mdw with Klangforum Wien.

In 2012 she received the STARTStipendium of the Austrian Ministry of Education, Art and Culture in the section Music and Performing Arts. She was a scholar of the Lucy Ann Jones Awards of the Royal College of Music and a scholar of the Josef-Krainer-Stipendienfonds of Styria in Austria.

Further information at:
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