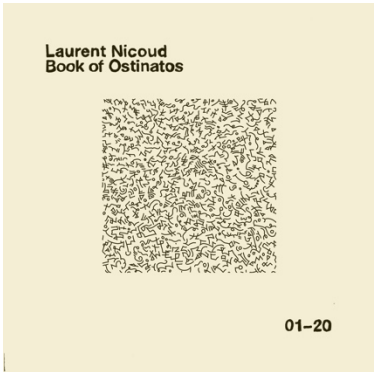
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Laurent Nicoud
«Book of Ostinatos 01-20»

Catalogue number
AS 386

Personnel

Laurent Nicoud, piano

Recorded April 20, 2025, @ KlavierWerkstatt René Waldhauser, on Steinway model C
Recorded, mixed and mastered by Sam Barnett
Cover and artwork by Mona Ruedin, Moritz Mader
All compositions by Laurent Nicoud

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Tracklist

1. Ostinato 1
2. Ostinato 2
3. Ostinato 3
4. Ostinato 4
5. Improvisation 1
6. Ostinato 5
7. Ostinato 6
8. Ostinato 7
9. Ostinato 8
10. The last of Moleskine 4
11. Ostinato 9
12. Ostinato 10
13. Ostinato 11
14. Improvisation 2
15. Ostinato 12
16. Ostinato 13
17. Patience
18. Ostinato 14
19. Ostinato 15
20. Ostinato 16
21. Ostinato 17
22. Choral
23. Ostinato 18
24. Ostinato 19
25. Ostinato 20

In 2017, before leaving for a year in New York, I began writing a series of pieces with the goal of creating a collection of piano études. Throughout my years of classical training, my musical world had been shaped by major cycles such as Bach's Well Tempered Clavier, Bartók's Mikrokosmos, and more recently, Chick Corea's Children's Songs. I now modestly wanted to create my own cycle of compositions.
The very first piece, which eventually became Ostinato 1, was symbolically composed in Neuchâtel, Switzerland—the town where I grew up—on my childhood piano at my family's home. At the time, I had no idea I would write twenty of them, or that they would form a complete cycle leading to this album. Then came the second, followed by the third, and I knew I had to keep going. As the project progressed, I set myself a specific constraint: never to use the sustain pedal when introducing the themes. This ensures that these pieces can be performed on any type of keyboard instrument, including the organ, the harpsichord, or modern synthesizers.
The core concept is to explore the idea of the ostinato and repetitive musical sequences, which can be found across so many different genres. My creative process has always been free; I allowed each ostinato to emerge naturally, without forcing or overthinking it. In that sense, it is purely improvised. I then refined the pieces to give them a clear thematic structure. All themes are strictly performed without the sustain pedal. However, during the development of certain pieces, the structure opens up to improvisation, as is often the case in jazz. Yet, a strictly classical pianist could easily play these themes without the developments and they would still stand on their own—which was also one of my goals as a composer.
Finally, in 2024, the moment came to perform the entire collection live for the first time in Basel, Switzerland. The idea of recording them followed naturally just a few months later. I chose René Waldhauser's KlavierWerkstatt in Liestal because it is an inspiring venue where I have had the pleasure of performing and attending several wonderful concerts over the past few years. The instrument there is also truly unique to me.
This project is constantly evolving, and I am already working on the next chapter (Book 2, pieces 21–40), which may take on other musical forms. Indeed, a key aspect of these ostinatos is their versatility; they can be arranged for various ensembles, an approach I have explored in recent years. For instance, I have performed them in a jazz duo, trio, quartet, and with a string orchestra. This first book of ostinatos is therefore only the beginning of a lifelong cycle. I do not yet know exactly what will come next, but I am ready to let it unfold.