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Ruth Slenczynska: 'When I play a piece of music I like to have it say something'

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International Piano

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Report from *Gramophone*

The American pianist Ruth Slenczynska has recorded a new album for Decca – nearly 60 years after her last for the company. *My Life in Music* will be released on 18 March and features pieces by Bach, Chopin, Grieg and Debussy, plus Slenczynska’s fellow student and friend Samuel Barber.

The album is released in association with Universal Music Australia, who oversaw the issue in 2021 of the 10-CD set *Ruth Slenczynska: Complete American Decca Recordings*. Reviewing this release for *International Piano*, [Bryce Morrison wrote](#): ‘Slenczynska’s mastery and proficiency are as consistent as they are awe-inspiring. And if there are moments when one misses the more subtle, inward-looking qualities of other pianists, there is nothing standardised or academically “correct” about her Chopin, the composer who features most in her recordings.’



Dominic Fyfe, label director of Decca Classics, said: ‘We are privileged to have Ruth record for Decca again, some 66 years since she first recorded for the label in New York. One of her earliest producers was Thomas Frost and we were delighted to unite her with Thomas’ son David, the multi Grammy Award-winning producer, for this new album. Decca has a long-cherished history of bringing great pianists back to the studio, from Shura Cherkassky to Jorge Bolet. Ruth was friends with them both and her pianism is one of the last living links to that golden era.’

Born in 1925 in Sacramento, California, to Polish parents, Slenczynska made her debut aged four, appeared on television for the first time the following year and, at six, gave her European debut in Berlin. As a child, Slenczynska was taught by some of the century’s piano legends, including Egon Petri, Alfred Cortot and Josef Hoffman. She holds the distinction of being Rachmaninov’s last surviving student.

Still an active performer, Slenczynska played at the 2021 International Chopin & Friends Festival in New York, and is set to celebrate her 97th birthday with a recital at Lebanon Valley College, Pennsylvania, on 6 February.

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