

Velvet Determination

*a musical journey about wrong notes, hard knocks,
and the keys to success...*

...AND mostly, a story of HOPE!

Written and Performed by Cynthia Shaw

Directed by Peter Michael Marino



(photo credit: [Michael Bernstein](#))

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About the Show...

In this autobiographical solo show with classical piano playing, Cynthia tells how she enjoyed her cheerful Colorado childhood of playing the piano and making music. All it took was picking up a random New Yorker magazine in her pediatrician's office to awaken her artistic soul leading her to New York City and its *esteemed* Manhattan School of Music.

This journey proves to be a bit more difficult than she innocently expected when she realizes New York City is very different from her tiny Colorado hometown. As the student who struggles with shaky memorization, insufficient technique and the fear that no one truly wants to listen to her, she ultimately masters determination and resilience and overcomes the obstacles that confront this naive, wide-eyed young classical pianist who tackles the Big Apple!

Cynthia relates the youthful determination of her younger self as she confronts her own personal demons while meeting idiosyncratic characters who either inspired, helped or hindered her journey. She thrills her audience with musical impersonations of world-famous classical pianists as she remembers hearing them at the legendary Carnegie Hall, and she beautifully demonstrates her formidable piano technique and musical sensitivity as she performs the live classical piano music of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin and Debussy. www.VelvetDetermination.com

About the Artist...

Cynthia Shaw, actor, pianist and singer, lives in Brooklyn, NY. She was born and raised in Colorado and moved to New York to attend the esteemed Manhattan School of Music. Since graduating, she has dedicated her life to music and acting. She has musical directed over 30 regional and off-Broadway shows and acted in New York City and regional theatres. ACTING HIGHLIGHTS: Mrs. Winemiller (*Summer & Smoke*, Terry Schreiber, director), Liz Fuller (*Me and Jezebel*, Kentucky Repertory Theatre), Arkadina and Ranevskaya (*Mr. Chekov and Mr. Porter*, Medicine Show Theatre) and many other Off-Broadway theatres in New York. MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS include: backup vocals for Paul McCartney (Carnegie Hall) and Björk (Riverside Church), singing with the New York Philharmonic when they won three Grammy Awards and playing piano for Garrison Keillor and *The Prairie Home Companion* at Town Hall and on NPR. Her film work has been presented at Cannes Festival Corner, The Film Society of Lincoln Center, The Soho International Film Festival and The Big Apple Film Festival, to name a few. Her one woman show, *Velvet Determination*, won 2018 "Best Festival Debut" at NYC's United Solo Festival and many other awards in the festival circuit. www.cynthiashaw.us

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Short Biography...

Cynthia Shaw, actor, pianist and singer, lives in Brooklyn, NY. She has acted and been musical director in many off-Broadway and regional theatres.

Her award-winning one woman show, *Velvet Determination*, won 2018 "Best Festival Debut" at NYC's United Solo Festival at Theatre Row and other awards in the festival circuit. www.cynthiashaw.us

One Hundred Word Program Description...

Cynthia grew up playing classical piano in a tiny Colorado town, but she was determined to achieve the keys to success by attending a prestigious New York City music school. In this autobiographical solo show, Cynthia shares tuneful tales of battling inner demons and nutty neighbours, hitting wrong notes, enduring hard knocks and meeting unique Manhattan characters who inspire, help and sometimes hinder her journey to Carnegie Hall, all illustrated by virtuoso live piano performance. "Best Festival Debut" NYC's Theatre Row United Solo Festival, "Best Solo Show" Pittsburgh Fringe, "...the biggest sell is Shaw's beautiful playing and whimsical storytelling."

www.allaboutsolo.com

Forty Word Program Description...

Cynthia grew up playing classical piano in a tiny Colorado town, but dreamed of attending a prestigious music school in New York. She shares tuneful tales of musical resilience, from battling inner demons to nutty neighbours, through live piano performance. A musical journey about wrong notes, hard knocks and the keys to success. Live classical piano. "Best Festival Debut"/United Solo, "Best Solo Show"/Pittsburgh Fringe.

Alternative for Social Media (Forty Word)....

A musical solo show about wrong notes, hard knocks and the keys to success. Pianist Cynthia endures music-hating neighbors, flamboyant teachers AND a falling piano with determination and resilience. "Best Festival Debut"/United Solo, "Best Solo Show"/Pittsburgh Fringe.

Thirty Word Show Description...

Musical solo show about wrong notes, hard knocks & keys to success. Cynthia's autobiographical show embodies youthful determination, idiosyncratic mentors and making it in NYC. Live classical piano. NYC United Solo "Best Festival Debut".

Ten Word Show Description...

Musical show about wrong notes, hard knocks, keys to success.

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2018 United Solo Festival “Best Festival Debut”
(photo credit: David Simonoff)

“Truly moving and inspiring.”



2019 Pittsburgh Fringe “Best Solo Show”
(photo credit: David Simonoff)

“Honest...expressive...humorous...”

Press

What the Press say about Velvet Determination...

"...Shaw's lovely performance...charismatic allure that keeps you smiling and wanting more...earnestness and passion...authenticity and honesty...youthful exuberance that keeps the work light yet sincere....excellent piano playing...beautiful playing and knack for whimsical storytelling...the play is a delight...if you're looking for an uplifting affirmation of the rewards of hard work, look no further than "Velvet Determination." James Bartholomew [All About Solo](#), September 30, 2018



"Every story Shaw tells rings with authenticity and honesty. That is a prerequisite for any autobiographical performance, to be sure, but Shaw has a beautiful way of recapturing her own youthful exuberance that keeps the work light yet sincere." Article in All About Solo "Believe Women: Female Voices in Solo Performance" by Alex Miller, October 29, 2018

"...earnestly tells her story, full of a quiet energy...she clearly knows her way around the keys, and she shows us what a little perseverance can accomplish." Cayleigh Boniger Pittsburgh in the Round, April 8, 2019



"During her journey, Shaw encountered a plethora of obstacles. Some of those obstacles were frightening. Some were humorous. All became the inspiration for 'Velvet Determination.'" Luke Lyons in the The Pueblo Chieftain December 16, 2018



"When Cynthia Shaw sits down at the piano and casually busts out Bach's Allegro from Italian Concerto, you know Velvet Determination isn't your average Fringe show.

Her story is compelling...[her] tenacity in moving forward after failure is inspiring...[and her] mastery of classical piano is impressive... The moments in which Shaw is most vulnerable are really impactful." Hilary Sutton in the [DC Metro Theater Arts](#) July 10, 2019

DC METRO
THEATER ARTS

Velvet Determination is the story of one woman's journey through her lifelong love of the piano. It's that classic tale of a small-town girl who moves to NYC, is plagued by demons of self-doubt, drops a piano in the living room, and succeeds despite all of it. Colorado local Cynthia Shaw, born in Pueblo, displays a sweet on-stage innocence as she spins her tale through piano, song, and storytelling. I left her show asking the question, Do we succeed because of our demons, or despite them?

Sara Sahara, Boulder Fringe Show reviewer
August 24, 2019



Winner "Best Personal Story" Boulder International Fringe Festival, 2019

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What Audiences say about Velvet Determination...

- “Truly moving and inspiring. You’re terrific.” Austin Pendleton, actor, writing, director
- “You radiate much passion and talent and humanity.”
- “You were so youthful and full of delightful energy.”
- “Cynthia puts her heart and soul into her own story of coming to NYC to study piano.”
- “You were fabulous - honest, expressive, humorous - your story took me in and I went on your journey along with you.”
- “The Debussy took me to heaven and back.”
- “You’re overall message was inspiring. Cynthia is SO talented”
- “Where else can you get a great story about determination, resilience and following your dream? Plus listening to Cynthia’s fabulous skills at the piano shows the rewards in her journey?”
- “Very enjoyable show about the trials, tribulations, and joy of getting started in the arts. If you have been told ‘you are not good enough’ you will really resonate with this show.”



2019 Pittsburgh Fringe (photo credit: JW Morar)

Performance History & Awards

“It was moving, inspiring, and funny. I related to so much of it. I didn’t want it to end.”

2018

The Philadelphian - September 21, 2018, Philadelphia, PA

United Solo Festival - Sold-out performances September 27, October 5 & 7, 2018

Winner **“Best Festival Debut”**

The Arts Center - November 23, 2018, Sandwich, NH

First United Methodist Church - December 22, 2018, Pueblo, CO

2019

Millibo Art Theater (four performances) - March 14-17, 2019, Colorado Springs, CO

The Pittsburgh Fringe Festival (four performances) - April 4-7, 2019, Pittsburgh, PA

Winner **“Best Solo Show”**

Capital Fringe Festival (five performances) - July 19-26, 2019, Washington, D.C.

Galway Fringe Festival (six performances) - July 22-28, 2019, Galway, Ireland

Winner **“Best Theatre Production”**

Boulder Fringe Festival (five performances) - August 14-25, 2019, Boulder, CO

Winner **“Best Personal Story”**

2020

New York Theatre Festival WinterFest (three performances) January 30 - February 2, 2020

2021

Gene Frankel Theatre (NYC) - July 17

The Chain Theatre (NYC) - July 29, 30, 31 and August 7



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Excerpts of piano music Cynthia plays and sings in the show...

- Allegro from Italian Concerto. J.S. Bach (1735)
- Country Gardens from "The Quaker's Opera" (1728)
- The Skater's Waltz Emile Waldteufel (1882)
- Cossack Dance Celia Aubert (1934)
- Tumbling Tumbleweeds Bob Nolan (1930)
- Minuet in 'G' J.S. Bach but attributed to Christian Petzold (1725)
- "I Don't Know How to Love Him" from Jesus Christ Superstar. . .Weber/Rice (1970)
- Solfeggietto C. P. E. Bach (1714-88)
- Arabesque Debussy (1888)
- "Do You Love Me?" from Fiddler on the Roof Bock/Harnick (1964)
- April is in my Mistress' Face Morley (1597)
- Whispering Hope Septimus Winner (1868)
- My Bonnie Lies Over the OceanTraditional Scottish Folksong (c. 1746)
- c# minor Nocturne Op. 27, No. 1 Chopin (1835)
- Chopin Ballade #3, Op. 47 Chopin (1841)
- Maestoso Piano Concerto No. 1 in d minorBrahms (1858)
- Fugue from Le Tombeau de CouperinRavel (1914-17)
- O Mio Babino caro (from opera Gianni Schicchi) Puccini (1918)
- Funeral March (Piano Sonata #2, Op. 35)Chopin (1840)
- Mr. Softee Theme, "The Whistler and his Dog" . . . William & James Conway (1956)
- "The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow" from Annie Strouse/Charnin (1977)
- Allegro con brio from Sonate Op. 2, No. 3 Beethoven (1795)
- Theme from New York, New YorkKander/Ebb (1977)
- Ballade Friedrich Burgmüller (1832)
- f# minor Rhapsodie Op. 79, No. 1Brahms (1880)
- Spinning Song Albert Ellmenreich (1836)
- Sinfonia from Partita No. 2 in c minor J. S. Bach (1726)
- Impromptu in Eb Schubert (1827)
- Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in c# minor F. Liszt (1847)
- Rondo alla Turca, Piano Sonata No. 11 in A majorMozart (1783)
- Molto moderato from Sonata in B-flat major Schubert (1828)
- Stars and Stripes Forever J.P. Sousa (1896)
- Take FivePaul Desmond (1959)
- g minor Rhapsodie Op. 79, No. 2 Brahms (1880)
- L'isle joyeuse Debussy (1904)

Press Release

(Current Date) - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VELVET DETERMINATION

a musical journey about wrong notes, hard knocks, and the keys to success

In her award-winning, autobiographical classical piano solo show, *Velvet Determination*, Cynthia Shaw puts her heart and soul into her own story of coming to NYC to study piano. After sold-out performances at New York's United Solo Festival at Theatre Row, WinterFest at Hudson Guild and The Chain Theatre, this hopeful show about determination, perseverance and resilience continues to inspire audiences. The show won United Solo's "Best Festival Debut" and "Best Solo Show" at The Pittsburgh Fringe Festival to name a few.

(Dates and times of performances)
(Location of performances)

In this autobiographical solo show with classical piano playing, Cynthia tells how she enjoyed her cheerful Colorado childhood of playing the piano and making music. All it took was picking up a random New Yorker magazine in her pediatrician's office to awaken her artistic soul leading her to New York City and its *esteemed* Manhattan School of Music.

This journey proves to be a bit more difficult than she innocently expected when she realizes New York City is very different from her tiny Colorado hometown. As a student who struggles with shaky memorization, insufficient technique and the fear that no one truly wants to listen to her, she ultimately masters determination and resilience and overcomes the obstacles that confront this naive, wide-eyed young classical pianist who tackles the Big Apple!

Cynthia relates the youthful determination of her younger self as she confronts her own personal demons while meeting idiosyncratic characters who either inspired, helped or hindered her journey. She thrills her audience with musical impersonations of world-famous classical pianists as she remembers hearing them at the legendary Carnegie Hall, and she beautifully demonstrates her formidable piano technique and musical sensitivity as she performs the live classical piano music of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin and Debussy.

www.VelvetDetermination.com

Cynthia Shaw, pianist, singer and actor, lives in Brooklyn, NY. She was born and raised in Pueblo, Colorado and moved to New York to attend the esteemed Manhattan School of Music. Since graduating, she has dedicated her life to music and performance. She has musical directed over 30 regional and off-Broadway shows and particularly specialized in accompanying singers, instrumentalists and choirs. CAREER HIGHLIGHTS include: backup vocals for Paul McCartney (Carnegie Hall) and Björk (Riverside Church). Singing with the New York Philharmonic when they won three Grammy Awards and playing piano for Garrison Keillor on *the Prairie Home Companion* at Town Hall & on NPR. Cynthia is also an accomplished actor. Favorite theatre roles: Mrs. Winemiller (*Summer & Smoke*, Terry Schreiber, director), Liz Fuller (*Me and Jezebel*, Kentucky Repertory Theatre), Arkadina and Ranevskaya (*Mr. Chekov and Mr. Porter*, Medicine Show Theatre) and many other Off-Broadway theatres in New York. Her film work has been presented at Cannes Festival Corner, The Film Society of Lincoln Center, The Soho International Film Festival and The Big Apple Film Festival, to name a few. Her one woman show, *Velvet Determination*, won 2018 "Best Festival Debut" at NYC's United Solo Festival and 2019 "Best Solo Show" at The Pittsburgh Fringe festival. www.cynthiashaw.us

Contact:

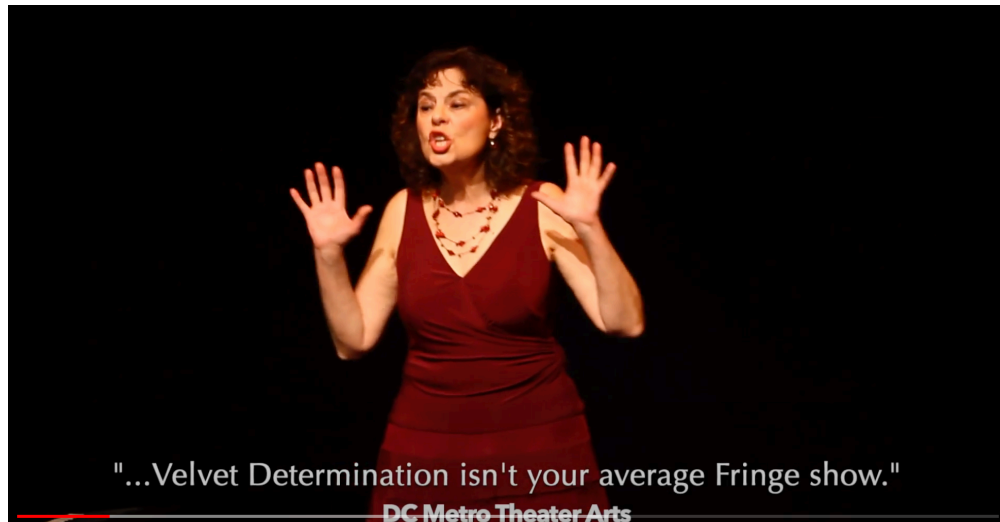
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Videos



Hudson Guild Theatre, New York, New York, 2020

[View Video on YouTube](#)



Millibo Arts Center, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 2019

[View Video on YouTube](#)

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Galway Fringe, 2019 [View Video on YouTube](#)

“...honest and engaging...draws you in...leads you to a moment of dramatic truth...”

United Solo performance audience member

“Cleverly, the myriad obstacles Shaw encounters feed into her fears of musical inadequacy. “I knew that no one truly wanted to listen to me,” Shaw confesses, “and that sabotaged me.”

James Bartholomew, [All About Solo](#) review

“If you’re looking for an uplifting affirmation of the rewards of hard work, look no further than “Velvet Determination.”

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(photo credit: [Michael Bernstein](#))

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