

# The New York Times

## A Pianist Who Changes Key From Liberace to Cardi B

Chloe Flower has performed at the Grammys, and went viral during the Golden Globes. Naturally, a Christmas album is on the way.



Chloe Flower, who developed a style of music called "Popsical," has a Liberace piano in her Manhattan living room. Yolanda Hoskey for The New York Times

By [Alex Vadukul](#)

Published March 17, 2023 Updated March 20, 2023

**Name:** Chloe Flower

**Age:** 37

**Hometown:** Mechanicsburg, Pa.

**Now Lives:** In a two-bedroom apartment in a Frank Gehry-designed tower in Lower Manhattan.

**Claim to Fame:** [Ms. Flower](#) is a classical pianist and composer known for her self-titled crossover genre, "[Popsical](#)," which merges classical music with pop and hip-hop. She performs on lavish pianos once played by [Liberace](#) and embraces couture onstage, favoring [Alexander McQueen](#) and [Azzedine Alaïa](#) pieces. She first went viral in 2019, when she performed "[Money](#)" with Cardi B during the Grammy Awards, and again in January when irate viewers mistook her for playing the [cut-off](#) music during the Golden Globes (she only played in and out of commercial breaks). "Trying something new is hard in a genre that has stayed the same for centuries," she said. "There's this idea that classical has to be a certain way and that's the elitism I'm trying to tackle."

**Big Break:** After studying at the Manhattan School of Music and the Royal Academy of Music, Ms. Flower [developed](#) her Popsical style, which implements pop song structures with trap beats and strings, but she struggled to find someone willing to take a chance on her work. Around 2008, a well-connected friend brought her to a Babyface [concert](#) in Atlantic City, and Ms. Flower met the artist backstage. She later emailed him a GarageBand demo of her music. “His manager wrote me back saying, ‘He likes what he heard,’” Ms. Flower said. “I flew to L.A. with my mom to meet him and he signed me the same day.”

**Latest project:** Last December, Ms. Flower played for President Biden at the Kennedy Center Honors in a performance that recognized the Cuban-born composer, [Tania León](#). In January, she performed with [Lil Baby](#) on “Saturday Night Live.”

**Next thing:** Ms. Flower is recording a radio-friendly Christmas album rendered in Popsical. It will be filled with holiday standards and, she hopes, cameos from Babyface and Lizzo, who she would like to invite for a flute solo.

**Viva Liberace:** When Ms. Flower was a student, one teacher grew irritated with her theatrical playing style, so he hit her hand with a pencil and chided, “Who do you think you are? Liberace?” Ms. Flower had never heard of Liberace. “At home I looked him up and thought, ‘Wow, I love him,’” she said. “He didn’t conform and he was able to crossover from classical into the pop world.” A few years ago, the [Liberace Foundation](#) lent her a mirrored-tiled piano. It now sits in her sky-high [living room](#) overlooking the city. “It took nine hours to finally get it up the elevator and into my apartment,” she said.

**Alex Vadukul** is a city correspondent for The New York Times. He writes for Styles and is a three-time winner of the New York Press Club award for city writing and a three-time winner of Silurians Press Club medallions for his feature writing. He was a longtime writer for Sunday Metropolitan and has been a reporter on the Obituaries desk. [More about Alex Vadukul](#)

A version of this article appears in print on March 26, 2023, Section ST, Page 9 of the New York edition with the headline: Eliminating Elitism Is Part of Her Plan. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)