PORTLAND PIANO INTERNATIONAL

SOLO

VIRTUAL PIANO EXTRAVAGANZA

FEATURED

ANDERSON & ROE

A LIVESTREAM EVENT

SATURDAY & SUNDAY
AUGUST 15 & 16 / 2020 / 4PM

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN / GUEST ARTISTIC CURATOR
PPI is happy to welcome new colleagues from the Civic Music Association of Des Moines, Iowa, as they join us for these concerts. Together with their executive director, Peter Stevenson, their board of directors, and their enthusiastic audience, we express gratitude to The Marjorie Spevak Endowment Fund for their support of CMA’s participation in this special program.
PORTLAND PIANO INTERNATIONAL

VIRTUAL PIANO EXTRAVAGANZA

FEATURING

ANDERSON & ROE

SATURDAY & SUNDAY / AUG 15 & 16 / 2020 / 4PM

WELCOME

to our first step into the brave new world of live-streamed concerts. We feel so fortunate to have our wonderful artist-partners, Greg Anderson and Liz Roe, whose witty creativity and, frankly, zaniness have been the energy behind this production. We so look forward to hearing your reactions to these concerts as we discern our plans for our 2020-2021 season. We will perform a telephone survey of all ticket-holders next Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday to get your wisdom. Thank you for taking our call and for joining us this weekend.

— BILL CRANE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
The first season of PPI’s new model of artistic direction with our first “guest artistic curator,” Marc-André Hamelin, has been a great success and we are so grateful to Marc-André for his leadership, generosity and good-heartedness. These programs, as you know, were to have been presented as recitals in March; they were postponed to August, then turned into the live-streamed extravaganza you will experience with us on both Saturday and Sunday. We could not have turned this all around without Marc-André’s steady hand. Merci, cher ami, vous nous avez fait un tel honneur!

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN
GUEST ARTISTIC CURATOR
2019 / 2020

PROGRAM NOTES

In the time of COVID-19, our mission still rings true—in fact, it has never felt more urgent. We’re fired up and more inspired than ever to make classical music a powerful and relevant force in society, even while isolated apart, cross-country. In association with Portland Piano International, we’ve created two online concert experiences to capture the in-the-moment essence of live performances. We asked ourselves, “How can we recreate all the things we love about live performances, but in a virtual world?” Crucial to our quest: a strong sense of community, the thrill of risk-taking, and a profound connection with the human condition. We are resolved to make these virtual events feel impactful, surprising, relevant to our times, highly interactive, and lovingly tailored to the city of Portland.

Thank you for taking this virtual expedition with us. Happy listening, viewing, and participating!
SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 2020

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH: FOUR SELECTIONS

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) is universally considered the exemplar of the Baroque era, if not the ultimate composer for the ages. Through this set of scholarly, sacred and secular works, we aim to present a concise yet fully dimensional portrait of Bach, showcasing the extraordinary range of his compositional output. We juxtapose original and reimagined versions of his music, reframing Bach’s art in a modern context while underscoring its timeless vitality, profundity, and power. The reciprocity of duo-pianism also unveils unexpected and intriguing dimensions—from the conversational and intimate to the adversarial and epic—within Bach’s legendary compositions, a further reminder of the elastic yet unwavering authenticity of his creative voice.

J. S. BACH

Five Canons on the First Eight Notes of the Goldberg Ground, BWV 1087 (3 min) — MUSIC VIDEO PREMIERE

The lesser-known Canons from the Goldberg Ground are based on the first eight bass notes of Bach’s titanic Goldberg Variations. In this music video, we perform five of the fourteen canons, each of which employs stunning contrapuntal gymnastics. For example, Canon No. 11 is something of a puzzle: the cross can be found in a variety of guises, both musically and graphically within the notation itself, symbolizing the inscription Bach himself inserted: “Christ will crown those who carry His cross.” Our music video rendering—featuring Bach’s own manuscripts of this piece—visually illustrates the compositional and executional ingenuity of these variations, as well as the bassline’s omnipresent role.

J.S. BACH

Sonatina from Gottes Zeit is die allerbeste Zeit “Actus tragicus”, BWV 106 (arr. Kurtag) (3 min) — MUSIC VIDEO PREMIERE

If his deeply devotional religious works are any indication, Bach seemed in direct communion with the divine, as heard in Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit (“God’s time is the best time”). Twentieth-century Hungarian composer György Kurtág (b. 1926) created this simple yet poignant duet transcription of the opening movement to perform with his wife Mártá. Significantly, the primo part is performed nearly entirely with overlapping arms, creating a visual representation of the cross for audience members.
We filmed this music video at the Sunset Center in Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, where we gave a recital for the Carmel Bach Festival. It is dedicated to the loving memory of Michael Hawley, an extraordinary friend, Renaissance man, and brilliant amateur pianist.

J. S. BACH
“Allegro” from Concerto in A minor for Four Harpsichords, BWV 1065
(4 min) — MUSIC VIDEO PREMIERE

Bach is known for making transcriptions of his own compositions, but he also arranged the compositions of other composers, including Antonio Vivaldi. This Concerto for Four Harpsichords (or pianos, in our modern-day version) is based on Vivaldi’s Concerto for four violins, from his Opus 3 L’estro armónico series of concertos for string instruments in various combinations, noted by Vivaldi scholar Michael Talbot as “perhaps the most influential collection of instrumental music to appear during the whole of the eighteenth century.” Bach adapted five concertos from this set in 1713-14 during his tenure in Weimar as court organist; nearly 20 years later he created this concerto—his sixth, final and most ambitious adaptation of Vivaldi’s Op. 3 concerti. Bach reimagined Vivaldi’s composition in significant ways: not only did he change the instrumentation from four violins to four harpsichords, he altered the key from B minor to A minor, added his own distinctive keyboard-friendly flourishes of extra notes and chords, filled out the harmonies, and endowed the solo parts with greater complexity and clarity. One can imagine Bach’s excitement at having four independent harpsichord parts to play with; even further, one can envision a potential performance of this work being a family affair considering his musically talented progeny!

Just as Bach must have relished the possibilities of writing for four keyboards, we have discovered a similar measure of freedom and expansion through the capabilities of technology. Despite being isolated apart since March, we unearthed the opportunity to tackle projects we could never execute in a live concert setting. In this case, we perform the first movement of Bach’s virtuosic concerto by each taking on two keyboard parts (Greg on Keyboards 1 & 4, Elizabeth on Keyboards 2 & 3) and combining them in a music video of diametric interplay.

J. S. BACH /
FERRUCCIO BUSONI

Ich ruf zu dir Herr Jesu Christ, BWV 639
(3 min)

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Prelude in D major, Op. 23 No. 4
(4 min)

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Prelude in D minor, Op. 28 No. 24
(3 min)

SOLO WORKS FOR PIANO PERFORMED LIVE BY ELIZABETH JOY ROE

Preludes are an integral part of the piano repertoire. Originally, they served as introductory pieces that precede larger works; they have evolved into stand-alone pieces in their own right, undertaken by composers as heterogenous as Messiaen, Ginastera, and Kapustin. Though usually miniature in size, preludes can contain and evoke entire universes, moods and states of being. Elizabeth performs gems from the prelude repertoire by three of the most masterful composer-pianists of all time: Busoni, Rachmaninoff, and Chopin.

J. S. Bach’s Ich ruf zu dir was originally composed for organ and transcribed for solo piano by the formidable pianist-composer Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924). He left behind a legacy of sterling transcriptions, most notably...
of Bach’s music. Busoni looked to Bach himself as a source of inspiration: “From [Bach] I learnt to recognize the truth that Good and Great Universal Music remains the same through whatever medium it is sounded. But also the second truth, that different mediums each have a different language (their own) in which this music again sounds somewhat differently.” Along these lines, this Chorale Prelude achieves a more personal feel in Busoni’s transcription for piano; the original’s profound sorrow and poignant dissonances are emphasized by the piano’s dynamic range and timbral nuances.

The late Mike Hawley (the dedicatee of our Gottes Zeit video at the beginning of today’s program) deeply loved Bach’s music; he shared a beautiful treatise on this prelude in an email to us years ago, including the following excerpt:

“When Bach was just a little boy, aged 9, his mom died. And the next year, just 10, his dad died. So, Bach grew up with his oldest brother. He became a star organist in his teens (but he seems to have excelled at playing all the instruments for which he composed), and he married the beautiful Maria Barbara, a cousin, at age 22. In February of 1713 they were blessed with twins (their third and fourth children), little Johann Christoph and Maria Sophia, but alas, both babies died: Johann Christoph died the day he was born, and Maria Sophia survived barely three weeks. Johann and Maria were just 28. The young couple must have been devastated. I have not been able to pin a precise date on this chorale, but it is dated by many as having been written that year. Was it connected to the loss of the twins? Who knows? In 1720, Bach took a business trip and when he returned home, he was stunned to find he was a widower: while he was away, his beloved Maria Barbara was buried on July 7th. She may have died on the 6th. He had four children to look after (the youngest was two; three of the seven she had born had already died, including the twins). Maria Barbara was just 36. That was the year Bach wrote the intensely emotional Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue. The cantata on “Ich ruf zu dir” may date from around then. But it was not performed until 1732, on the fourth Sunday after Trinity. The performance date, which Bach wrote into the score, was July 6th. That was “the” Sunday in the Liturgical year to which “Ich ruf zu Dir” was assigned—and was it the first time during Bach’s cantata years that July 6th fell on a Sunday after her death? Coincidence? Farfetched? It’s hard to say. But special pieces happen for special reasons.

“At the end of the autograph manuscript, as with many of his works, Bach wrote the initials ‘S.D.G.: soli Deo gloria, to God alone the glory, a reminder of the devotion that is at the heart of his music.” Here is the text to the hymn:

I call on thee, Lord Jesus Christ,  
I have none other help but thee.  
My heart is never set at rest  
till thy sweet words have comforted me.  
And steadfast faith grant me therefore,  
to hold by thy word evermore,  
above all things,  
never resisting,  
but to increase in faith more and more.

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943), arguably the last in line of the Romantic tradition and one of history’s greatest pianist-composers, left behind an oeuvre that continues to permeate the piano recital landscape. The breathtaking virtuosity and emotional immediacy of his playing—captured by a plethora of recordings, essential for any stereophile—shine through his compositions for piano. His sets of Preludes, Opp. 23 and 32, reveal his penchant for creating fleeting yet unforgettable musical moments of power and poetry. The D major Prelude from Opus 23 is dreamy and tender, evoking the sound-world and sensibility of his spiritual predecessor Chopin. The swaying triplet figuration of the accompaniment underlies a bel canto melodic line, which then gets layered above by an ethereal descant in rhythmic diminution of the bass accompaniment. The Prelude hovers between light and shadow, with chiaroscuro-like shifts between major and minor, until it builds to one of Rachmaninoff’s signature climaxes before expiring to its idyllic D major pastures.
The iconic set of 24 Preludes by Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) influenced not only Rachmaninoff but quite possibly most composers who followed in his footsteps, particularly Debussy and Scriabin. For good reason: these preludes are potent glimpses into the interior life of Chopin and even vignettes of the universal human psyche. The 24th and final Prelude in D minor is a devastating dive into the abyss; Chopin was grappling with personal struggles and one can feel his emotional turmoil in the churning bass accompaniment and ferocious right-hand cascades of notes, descending like torrents of rain or lava. D minor is famously the key of fate, and the closing tolling Ds seem to summon the gongs of hell or the final judgment of God, as if darkness and suffering cannot be escaped nor resolved here on Earth. No matter the narrative. In just a few minutes, this piece paints a visceral, fervent portrait of Chopin’s soul: the sensitive poet who rages against the dying of the light.

AMY BEACH

“Dreaming” from Four Sketches, Op. 15, No. 3
(6 min)

COLE PORTER / GREG ANDERSON

“So In Love” from Kiss Me, Kate
(4 min)

SOLO WORKS FOR PIANO PERFORMED LIVE
BY GREG ANDERSON

Amy Beach (1867-1944) was a trailblazer in the history of American classical music; she holds the distinction as the first female composer to have a symphony performed by a major orchestra, and she earned acclaim during her lifetime for her prolific compositional output. “Dreaming” is an exquisite piece for solo piano, reminiscent of Schubert’s G-flat major Impromptu, D. 899. The accompaniment undulates with breathtaking, unexpected harmonic progressions, reminiscent of the ever-shifting nature of dreams. As you listen, we invite you to practice Point No. 18 from our Music Listening Manifesto (https://www.andersonroe.com/listening-manifesto): Drift. Allow the music to guide your listening. Explore aimlessly.

Greg composed this arrangement of “So In Love” by Cole Porter (1891-1964) for pianist Jenny Lin’s Broadway-themed album Get Happy on the Steinway Label. (Jenny gave Greg free choice from the vast theatrical songbook, so he chose his all-time favorite Broadway tune.) “So In Love” is an unrequited love song characterized by intense yearning: the melody is a constant series of ascending intervals, and in each verse it ascends higher and higher, striving and suffering in delicious agony (as demonstrated by the lyrics):

So in love with you am I
In love with the night mysterious
The night when you first were there
In love with my joy delirious
When I knew that you could care
So taunt me, and hurt me
Deceive me, desert me
I’m yours, till I die...
So in love ... So in love...
So in love with you, my love ... am I.

To musically amplify this constant longing, Greg’s arrangement repeatedly stacks the melody in canons, extending the reach of the ascending intervals. Much of the accompaniment sounds almost digitized or computerized, as if to portray the detached, disinterested recipient of the singer’s love. This secco, desiccated accompaniment over the lush melody is made possible by the piano’s sostenuto (i.e. middle) pedal.
ASTOR PIAZZOLLA / ANDERSON & ROE

Primavera Porteña
(6 min) — MUSIC VIDEO PREMIERE

What do tango dancing and piano duo performance have in common? Racing heartbeats, intense eye contact, physical friction, a charged chemistry and an element of danger ...

In transcribing the irresistible melodies of Astor Piazzolla (1933-1990) for four hands at one piano, we aimed to emulate the physical choreography of tango dancers, the sonic textures of a tango band, and, most important, the emotional spirit of the tango. We incorporate extended piano techniques as a metaphor for the tango’s forays into forbidden territory. Four-hand playing already hints at an intrinsic eroticism, but in our tango arrangements we dare to raise the heat and intensity to another level: we boldly invade each other’s personal space, while also exploring regions of the piano that typically remain unseen. The effect is at once sensual, visceral, and highly dramatic.

Certainly, the tango remains one of the most passionate and intimate forms of dance; it inspires a surrendering of the mundane to a realm of heightened awareness and experience. Piazzolla’s spicy Primavera Porteña (which literally means “spring season”) conjures up the bold energy of springtime. The piece opens with a dizzying fugue, then proceeds with the menace of a conflicted love affair. To capture the seductive and complex spirit of this tango, we created a cinematic, James Bond-inspired music video that highlights the “fancy footwork” of our constantly crossing—and dancing!—hands and arms.

Let Primavera Porteña take you on a riveting ride: feel free to lose yourself to the music’s pounding aggression, luxuriate in a haze of mystery, and finally get carried away to the precipice of desire.

GERD KÜHR

Corona Meditation
(10 min) — LIVE PERFORMANCE + MUSIC VIDEO PREMIERE

Written in April 2020 by Austrian composer Gerd Kühr (b. 1952) in response to the pandemic, this reflective, aleatoric work is designed to be performed by any number of pianists. For today’s performance, the two of us are playing the piece live in conjunction with pre-recorded performances by dozens of pianists, most of them Portlanders.

Kühr, a prize-winning composer, conductor, and professor at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, has composed a multitude of works for opera, orchestra, chamber music, choir, and cinema. He has worked with such esteemed artists and organizations as Ensemble Modern, Oliver Knussen and the Styriarte Festival (which commissioned the Corona Meditation). His music is often introspective and explores the musical parameters of time. “Composing means less inventing than finding ... discovering what is already there.”

Here is the work’s concept, adapted from Gerd Kühr’s own commentary on his composition:

We are experiencing a time of large-scale societal reflection, and the piece explores the reverberations of this unique historic moment. The music’s calm, steady pulse, not coordinated by a metronome, ensures that the simultaneous playing of numerous pianos, in principle unlimited in number, cannot be carried out with precision. This blurring, along with the gradual tonal accumulation, creates an effect of expansion similar to the expansion of the cosmos.

The Corona crisis is a time for making music at home. The format of this piece and its suitability for all abilities takes this into account. Moreover, difference in timing, piano tuning and sound quality are explicitly desired effects. In this way, the work in an accurate reflection of the currently flourishing streaming culture.

portlandpiano.org / 7
According to Kühr: “Music is a message against poverty in imagination.” Let your imagination roam freely amid the echoes of this timely musical creation.

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF / ERIC CARMEN / ANDERSON & ROE

Adagio sostenuto from Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18 — mashed-up with “All by Myself”
(9 min)

MUSIC VIDEO + WORLD PREMIERE OF A BRAND-NEW ANDERSON & ROE MASHUP

All by myself / Don’t wanna be /
All by myself / Anymore ...

In indefinite social isolation and separated from each other by nearly 3,000 miles ... we couldn’t have said (or sung) it better! So goes the chorus of the 1975 hit song by Eric Carmen (b. 1949), then famously covered by powerhouse pop diva Céline Dion two decades later.

Greg initially undertook an arrangement of this song as a fun way of musically collaborating with his husband, Carl, an emergency physician, pandemic frontline responder, and gifted singer. During the early days of quarantine, Greg (at the piano) and Carl (on vocals) would read through the music of Bach, Vivaldi, Gershwin and others. When they came upon “All By Myself,” Greg started accompanying Carl as if it were the piece upon which the song is based (the second movement, Adagio sostenuto, from Rachmaninoff’s Concerto No. 2 in C minor). The arrangement organically expanded into a two-piano work, which receives its world premiere tonight.

This two-piano mashup/arrangement remains mostly loyal to Rachmaninoff’s original. Carmen, a fan of Rachmaninoff’s lush music, stated: “I was listening to my favorite music which was Rachmaninoff. ‘All By Myself’ incorporated a melody from his second piano concerto as the verse...”. The Adagio sostenuto is timeless in its appeal and has struck an emotional chord with generation after generation; most memorably it was prominently featured decades earlier in David Lean’s 1945 film Brief Encounter (incidentally one of Elizabeth’s favorite movies).

We hope this mash-up resonates with you during this age of anxiety. Beyond the obvious relevancy of the title and lyrics, the recognizable nature of this song coupled with the sweeping romanticism of Rachmaninoff’s textures may nourish our shared craving for familiarity and comfort. Please feel free to sing along with our performance; singing together is not only one of the most joyful acts of community, but music like this invites a much-needed collective catharsis. (Also, we all need to tap into our inner diva once in a while!)

VINCE GUARALDI / ANDERSON & ROE

Linus and Lucy
(3 min)

LIVE DUO PERFORMANCE + WORLD PREMIERE

As an encore of sorts, this call-and-response arrangement was composed with bandwidth latency in mind, enabling the two of us to perform the piece live from our respective homes on opposite coasts. We are both lifelong Peanuts fans who have always adored its classic theme song, composed by American jazz pianist Vince Guaraldi (1928-1976). It was one of the first pieces that we tried to play by ear as kids, and all these years later it remains one of the most requested tunes at parties!

The jazzy spirit of the original makes it ideal fodder for a dueling-piano-style arrangement. The reactive nature of our arrangement also evokes
the individual and relational characteristics of Linus and Lucy: their opposing traits (Lucy is a bossy know-it-all while her younger brother Linus is gentle and preternaturally sage) and their often-contentious sibling dynamic. Our arrangement also calls to mind the colorful playfulness that characterized Charles M. Schulz’s beloved comic strips and animated cartoons, including Snoopy’s adventures, Charlie Brown’s mishaps, Schroeder’s Beethoven-worship and the constant children’s games, rituals and celebrations.

Finally, musical winks are sprinkled throughout this arrangement in the form of affectionate quotations: listen for nods to the music of Brahms and Gershwin, among others. Best of all, this piece makes us want to dance our hearts out like the Peanuts gang.
EVENT TWO
SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2020

FLEET FOXES / ANDERSON & ROE

The Cascades
(3 min)
WORLD PREMIERE PERFORMANCE AND VIDEO FEATURING AUDIENCE-SUBMITTED PHOTOS, FOOTAGE, AND ARTWORK

Fleet Foxes, one of the 21st century's premier indie rock bands, was formed in Seattle in 2006. The culture, environment, and sensibilities of the Pacific Northwest play an integral role in the band’s earthy, folk-inflected sound. When their acclaimed Grammy-nominated album Helplessness Blues—which includes “The Cascades”—was released in 2011, the band was based in Portland; per a Pitchfork interview from that year, lead singer/guitarist Robin Pecknold shared:

“Being in Portland is cool. I have some good friends here and the general feeling might be a little more welcoming .... The song ‘The Cascades’ sounds like the area to me, hence the name. We put the Cascadian flag on the back of the album. But I’d say the whole West Coast is like the physical location that the music on the album was meant to evoke—Washington, Oregon, Northern California, etc.”

“Our music video pays homage to the resurgence of birdwatching nationwide during the COVID-19 pandemic. For those of us with the privilege to adopt a slower pace of life in quarantine, sheltering in place has engendered opportunities for a heightened awareness of nature’s wonders. The mystical, aerial quality of Fleet Foxes’ song inspired us to center this music video on birds since they traditionally symbolize freedom and transformation. (And, of course, we must “put a bird on it” in honor of Portland!) Thanks to you, our bird-watching audience, we have received a delightful assortment of photos, videos, and artwork of the avian population in Portland and beyond. May our two-piano cover and accompanying video lift you to a more harmonious and hopeful state of being.

PHILIP GLASS

Etude No. 2
(6 min)

RYAN ANTHONY FRANCIS

Etude IV “Doppelgänger”
(4 min)

FRANZ SCHUBERT / FRANZ LISZT

“Aufenthalt” from Schwanengesang, D. 957
(3 min)

SOLO WORKS FOR PIANO PERFORMED LIVE BY ELIZABETH JOY ROE

Musical études are technically “studies.” However, composers throughout history, from Frédéric Chopin to György Ligeti, have transformed what could be viewed as merely exercises to an elevated and exhilarating artform. The two études programmed here surely surpass this formal definition; they are...
more akin to musical meditations that invite a fullness of attention and intention from both performer and listener. This solo set culminates in a haunting selection by Franz Schubert, whose music has struck a resonant chord with both of these present-day composers. Glass named Schubert as his favorite composer (which is understandable in light of their shared metaphysical bent), and Francis’s étude was directly influenced by Schubert’s immortal voice.

Still as productive as ever today at age 83, Philip Glass (b. 1937) has achieved close to guru status in contemporary culture; his creative output comprises multiple operas, symphonies, concertos, string quartets, piano works, compositions for his own ensemble, piano works, soundtracks for films as varied as “Koyaanisqatsi” and “The Hours,” and collaborations with artists like Paul Simon, Linda Ronstadt, Yo-Yo Ma and Aphex Twin. Glass composed the bulk of his piano Etudes in 1994, completing his collection of twenty in 2012. The composer Nico Muhly has described these études as “little diagrams of where his head is at the time.”

The Etude No. 2 is quintessentially Glass: minimalist, hypnotic, ever unfolding. As serene as a lullaby and as transporting as a mantra, it feels as if it has already begun before the first note is sounded and that it could continue for infinity. Every encounter with his music reminds me of this koan-like musing of his:

“Openings and closings, beginnings and endings. Everything in between passes as quickly as the blink of an eye. An eternity precedes the opening and another, if not the same, follows the closing. Somehow everything that lies in between seems for a moment more vivid. What is real to us becomes forgotten, and what we don’t understand will be forgotten too.”

Composer Ryan Anthony Francis (b. 1981) is a Portland native and resident. He was a classmate of ours at The Juilliard School, and I performed his sprawling, transfixing Consolations at my [Elizabeth’s] Lincoln Center recital debut in 2007. His Etude No. IV “Doppelgänger” is permeated by pathos, spellbinding soundscapes and textural layering. There is an intriguing, indefinable quality to Ryan’s aesthetic: the omnipresent melancholy in this work (and others in his oeuvre) recalls the emotional depths of mythic Romantic figures like Goethe’s Werther and Senancour’s Obermann, while the compositional style is rooted in 21st-century postmodern idioms.

Here are Ryan’s notes on his Etude:

Doppelgänger is from a set of six études I wrote back in 2007. Most of the pianistic writing from that set was very influenced by MIDI sequencing, something I did to get out of my own pianistic habits, where I would write material without any consideration to whether it was physically feasible for the piano, and then I would take the MIDI sequences I would write (think like a digital player piano roll) and then I would translate the MIDI data into traditional notation via software. I’d then go into a process of refining the material into something that was pianistic, but that I wouldn’t have written if I just sat down at the keyboard.

With all that being said, that’s not really how I wrote Doppelgänger! I used that étude as something of a stylistic/creative break from all of the MIDI sequencing to write an entirely different sort of étude, one that, rather than avoiding familiar pianistic tropes, would instead lean into them. So the étude begins with a series of descending thirds that suggest one sort of (relatively) modern approach, maybe evoking the Debussy or Ligeti études, and more or less that akin to the rest of the études in the set. However, as the piece progresses a restrained Schubertian texture gradually takes control of the piece. I’ve always been enamored with the sort of dramatic rhetoric of Schubert’s piano writing, because while he’s often characterized
as a sort of transitional figure towards romanticism, the rather blunt/boxy conception of pianistic resonance in his works clearly shows the fortepiano influence over his textures, leading to this weird mismatch between the pathos of his music and how the technical limitations of the time shaped his conception of their expression.

Ryan dedicated *Doppelgänger* to me back in 2007, and I proudly perform it today in honor of one of our generation’s visionary voices.

As Ryan revealed, the music of Franz Schubert (1797-1828) served as a spiritual predecessor of sorts to *Doppelgänger*, specifically the eerie song bearing the same title from Schubert’s final song cycle *Schwanengesang* (“Swan Song,” a title granted by his publisher). Today’s program features another song from this cycle, “Aufenthalt” (“Resting Place”); Schubert’s original lied features the following text by Ludwig Rellstab:

> Surging river, roaring forest, immovable rock, my resting place.  
> As wave follows wave, so my tears flow, ever renewed.  
> As the high treetops stir and heave, so my heart beats incessantly.  
> Like the rock’s age-old ore my sorrow remains forever the same.

In the wake of rejection and heartbreak, this so-called resting place is one of bitterness. Throughout this solo piano transcription by Franz Liszt (1811-1886), both hands share the role of the suffering wanderer (represented by the yearning melody) as well as the turbulent forces of nature (embodied by the urgent, throbbing accompaniment).

---

**JOHANNES BRAHMS**

**Theme and Variations in D minor, Op. 18b**

*(12 min)*

**SOLO WORK FOR PIANO PERFORMED LIVE BY GREG ANDERSON**

As a nod to our original March recital programs in which we planned to perform seminal duo piano works by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), we have chosen to feature two of his compositions on today’s event; he is one of our favorite composers of all time, in part due to the grandeur and gravitas of his compositions.

Brahms’ Theme and Variations, Op. 18b is a faithful arrangement of the second movement of his String Sextet No. 1 in B-flat major. He was often inclined to create multiple versions of his compositions, usually to experiment with instrumentation. In this case, Brahms simply translated most of the piece note for note; since the original instrumentation features wide harmonic spacings, the piano arrangement features numerous tenths (pages of them, in fact!), elevenths and rolled chords. Surely this transcription is not for the faint of heart, which makes sense since Clara Schumann—formidable pianist, woman, and Brahms’s muse—was the compelling impetus for this transcription; it was created for the occasion of her 41st birthday on September 13, 1860.

The work could be considered an heir of sorts to Bach’s great Chaconne: they share the same key, a similar usage of harmony, dotted rhythms in the main melody, a minor-major-minor structure, and an epic vision. (Whether or not there exists any conscious link between the two works, Brahms was arguably the Romantic era’s bearer of Bach’s aesthetic lineage.)

One of the most fascinating aspects of this piece is its overall structural trajectory; the grandest part occurs at the beginning, and then the piece gradually recedes, as if to retreat inward. The work commences with a stately and powerful theme, then progresses in traditional variation
form with the first three variations increasing in speed. Variations 4 & 5 are both in D major; the fourth variation is reminiscent of the slow movement from his first piano concerto and the fifth evokes a music box. The sixth and final variation returns to minor, marking a resigned return home. Almost identical to the opening theme but performed pianissimo, the theme’s majesty is replaced by a newfound, saddened awareness, to devastating effect.

JOHANNES BRAHMS

“Scherzo” from Sonata for Two Pianos in F minor, Op. 34b
(7 min)

MUSIC VIDEO PREMIERE

The Sonata for Two Pianos, Op. 34b is best known in its iteration as the legendary F minor Piano Quintet. Notoriously a perfectionist, Brahms made multiple versions of this composition (as in the preceding work on today’s program): it began as a string quintet in 1862, then was destroyed and transformed into this two-piano sonata (performed by Brahms and virtuoso pianist Karl Tausig) before attaining its final version as a piano quintet. Brahms’ Piano Quintet is universally considered a masterpiece and “often called the crown of his chamber music” (according to Jan Swafford’s biography.)

We are passionate about the two-piano version because the piano duo dynamic underscores the striking duality of the piece: not only are the two pianos dueling, but a variety of opposing forces are at work throughout this epic sonata: the tensions between major and minor, hope and despair, light and darkness, good and evil. The Scherzo movement (featured today) stands out as demonic in character and execution. It is one of those adrenaline rushes that tests the technical control and pacing of the pianists. We like to say that this is the movement where Brahms turns the intensity level up to an 11 (to quote Spinal Tap).

SCOTT JOPLIN / ANDERSON & ROE

Maple Leaf Rag Fantasy
(3 min)

WORLD PREMIERE THREE-PIANO MUSIC VIDEO FEATURING THE WINNER OF OUR YOUTH COMPETITION FOR LOCAL PIANISTS!

The “Maple Leaf Rag” by Scott Joplin (1868-1917) remains an irresistible American classic. We included this work to encourage the involvement of young Portland pianists, and we are excited to announce and feature our talented winner tonight!

Known as the “King of Ragtime,” Joplin grew up in a musical family of railway laborers in the South. He learned to play the piano during his childhood, then worked as a traveling musician from his teen years onward; his musical pursuits brought him to the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893. In 1894, he put down roots in Missouri, teaching and composing in addition to his touring gigs. His first works, a couple of songs, were published the following year, and his first published rag, “Original Rags,” appeared in print in 1897 (the same year that the first ragtime work was published, William Krell’s “Mississippi Rag”). In 1899, the “Maple Leaf Rag” was published; it became a hit that earned him widespread fame. It would eventually become the bestselling ragtime piece in history, selling more than a million copies.

The jaunty and infectious “Maple Leaf Rag” served as a highly influential model for composers during ragtime’s heyday at the turn of the century, and it is still considered the archetypal rag thanks to its rhythms, melodic lines, and harmonic progressions. According to Scott and Rutkoff’s book, “New York Modern: The Arts and the City,” Joplin and ragtime are responsible for energizing, representing, and propelling American culture forward: “Its syncopation and rhythmic drive gave it a vitality and freshness attractive to young urban audiences indifferent to Victorian proprieties.
... Joplin’s ragtime expressed the intensity and energy of a modern urban America.”

Our three-piano fantasy preserves the original in notes and spirit, while injecting extra doses of playfulness and pizzazz via the improvisatory commentary of two extra pianos. Keeping the central piano part tied to the original presented an unusual challenge while reimagining this classic rag; we couldn’t make major harmonic alterations, so we found other ways to breathe new life into the work through spicy rhythms, new solos, and a variety of virtuosic licks (à la Art Tatum). Rather than describe the work in full, however, we’d rather save the surprises for today’s world premiere!

——

ERIK SATIE

Selections from 1913
(10 min)

A SELECTION OF AUDIENCE FAVORITES
PERFORMED LIVE BY ANDERSON & ROE
AND A PORTLAND-BASED CAST OF NARRATORS

“To whom it may concern: I forbid anyone to read the text aloud during the performance. Ignorance of my instructions will bring my righteous indignation against the audacious culprit. No exceptions will be allowed.”

This (tongue-in-cheek!) proclamation was made by Erik Satie (1866-1925), one of classical music’s originals and an eccentric of the Parisian avant-garde. In 1913 he created multiple sets of surrealist absurdist pieces for piano that incorporate elements of Dada (the pre-war “anti-art” movement dismissing conventional aesthetics). Satie’s 1913 collections possess such colorful titles as Croquis et agaceries d’un gros bonhomme en bois (“Sketches and exasperations of a big wooden fellow”), Embryons desséchés (“Dessicated Embryos”), and Peccadilles importunes (“Troubling little thoughts”). And that’s just a small sample—one of our favorite Satie titles is Trois Morceaux en forme de poire (“Three Pieces in the Form of a Pear”), piano-duet pieces he wrote in response to the establishment who criticized his compositions for their lack of form. (How clever ... and impudent!)

Satie utilized the practice of écriture automatique (“automatic writing”), a Dadaist technique that involves the subconscious writing of whatever thoughts and imaginings come to mind. (In fact, a trio of these 1913 pieces is called Descriptions automatiques.) Through such experiments, Satie endeavored to get away from the excesses of the fin-de-siècle Wagnerian style dominating art music. He consistently aimed for freedom of form, harmonic innovation, and simplicity. Although elements of parody, satire, and irony permeate these 1913 pieces, both the music and text reveal a charming, childlike sense of wonder. It is refreshing that he didn’t take himself too seriously! In this spirit we are thrilled to collaborate with Portland’s very own in a live performance of these witty and weird amuses-bouches.

——

MILY BALAKIREV / ANDERSON & ROE

Untitled fantasy for undetermined number of pianists based on Balakirev’s Islamey
(9 min)

MUSIC VIDEO PREMIERE

At the time of writing these program notes, we have not decided on a title for our composition; it will be your job to help us officially name the work immediately following its premiere on August 16!

Balakirev’s Islamey is notorious for being one of the most difficult pieces in the entire solo piano repertoire. Mily Balakirev (1837-1910), himself a virtuoso pianist, deemed his own composition “unplayable” and that he “couldn’t manage” various passages in the piece. The great pianist Anton Rubinstein, who premiered the piece
in 1869, proclaimed that “few would be able to master it.” Even Maurice Ravel challenged himself to create a work “more difficult than Balakirev’s *Islamey.*” (The result? *Gaspard de la nuit.*) However, Balakirev was not merely interested in creating a pianistic Everest; he was primarily inspired by his ethnomusicological discoveries in the Caucasus region, located in an area where Europe and Asia meet, between the Black and Caspian Seas, in the 1860s. This region is known for its astonishing linguistic and cultural diversity. It was here that Balakirev came upon a melody that would eventually make its way into his “Oriental Fantasy.” As he wrote to his friend Eduard Reiss:

“...the grandiose beauty of the luxuriant natural surroundings in that region and the commensurate beauty of its inhabitants, all of this taken together left a deep impression on me. As I was interested in the local folk music, I sought out the acquaintance of a Circassian prince, who frequently came to see me and played folk melodies on his instrument, which bore some resemblance to a violin. I took a special liking to one of those melodies, a dance tune called ‘Islamey,’ and with a view to the work I had in mind on [the symphonic poem] Tamara, I began to arrange it for the piano. The second theme was communicated to me in Moscow by an Armenian actor [K. N. de Lazari, a member of the Bolshoi Theatre] ... and is, as he assured me, well known among the Crimean Tatars.”

In a flurry of inspiration (and contrary to his usual years-long compositional process), Balakirev wrote the work over the span of a single month in 1869. In 1902, he revised the work with several *ossia* passages.

Fast forward to 2020: we decided to tackle the challenge and honor *Islamey*’s ambitious pianism by taking on several piano parts each, over a dozen altogether! Rather than split the original into several easier piano parts, we added plenty of extra material in true Anderson & Roe style. (Seriously, each of these piano parts is a colossal challenge!)

At the crux of our over-the-top adaptation is the spirit of a piano battle: the composition (and accompanying music video) revolves around the competition between two teams, in this case Team Liz and Team Greg. Throughout, there are friendly and rollicking hootenannies with each of us jumping into the middle to show off our pianistic chops. The individual piano parts in combination are reminiscent of a kaleidoscope, with the original material being reflected and refracted upon itself by the multitude of pianists. The first third of the work is performed slower than the solo version to bring out the dance-like lilt and highly complex rhythms. The middle section is an embellished, grandiose version of the original, ending with some killer scales. Finally, the last third proceeds at a demonic pace, performed faster than the original version could ever be played; it gains such momentum that the perceived pulse becomes more expansive and the music essentially become airborne, soaring to a bravura and triumphant conclusion.

© 2020 Elizabeth Joy Roe & Greg Anderson
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These virtual extravaganza events have been a true test of imagination, ambition, mettle, creativity, resourcefulness, endurance, technology, and teamwork. We offer our deepest gratitude:

- First and foremost, to PPI’s wonderful Board members, Bill, Maryellen, Robin, Marc-André and the entire Portland Piano International family for your willingness to walk the tightrope with us; your partnership has been extraordinary!

- To Anca and Jon for your indispensable collaboration on the technical aspects of this multifaceted operation.

- To all the amazing participants in our interactive activities for making both events feel like a truly personalized and vibrant experience, representing the unique spirit of Portland in spades. Bravi, tutti!

- To the one and only Fred Child for debriefing our activities with excellent questions and commentary.

- To our husbands for your incredible patience and moral support as we worked long days and nights since the beginning of June (and filled our piano rooms with all sorts of gear!) to achieve our vision for these special events.

- To everyone else in our lives who has given us support, assistance, encouragement, and empowerment throughout all the stages of this project: Jasmine, Emmy, our wonderful families and friends, and fans around the globe.

Last but not least: we give our heartfelt appreciation to you, our viewers, for joining us in this brave new world of classical music presentation and engagement. Amid the challenges in society, connecting with you all gives us hope and inspiration. Thank you for celebrating the joys of community and music with us!

Peace + Love + Piano!

ALTERMAN LAW GROUP

These concerts are sponsored by The Alterman Law Group PC.

We thank these great colleagues for participation in many ways: Nike, Badbeard’s Micro-Roastery, Steven Smith Tea Maker, McTavish Shortbread, A Y en for Chocolate, Metropolitan Youth Symphony, Portland Youth Philharmonic, All Classical Radio.

So many colleagues have helped to make this production a reality.

- Producer: Maryellen McCulloch
- Expert technical assistance: Lilo Arfalo, Cheri Wilson, and Will Irace
- Pianist in the “pre-show warm-up”: Joshua Ji
- Pianists for the Corona Meditation: Susan de Witt Smith, Yoko Greeney, Robin Power, Ryan DeHaven, Jeff Payne, Ryan Francis, Momoko Muramatsu, Bill Crane
- Narrators for Satie’s “1913”: Will Irace, Robert McBride, Anne Glickman, Christa Wessel
- Trivia contestants: Robert McBride, Adam Eccleston, Justin Kagan, Cindy Peterson-Pearl, David Hattner, Steven Hainlen, Sonja Haugen, Raul Gomez

This production was expertly and collegially aided by The AV Department, a full-service audio-visual and media production company in Portland and their partner, Tree-fan Events. We are grateful for their camaraderie and can-do spirit. Visit them online at theavdept.com.
1 **Allow music to transform you.** The prerequisites for transformation: the openness to experience events and the willingness to be changed by them.

2 **Embrace the new.** It takes courage to depart from familiarity and escape your comfort zone: only with change is there life.

3 **Make every encounter new.** Every listening adventure – no matter how seemingly familiar or repetitive – is new. All musical occasions are an opportunity for transformation, growth, and discovery.

4 **The musical experience is yours.** You live it. You create it. Your engagement is a vital ingredient.

5 **If you are bored, see points 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

6 **Whoa.** The music doesn’t always happen where we think it ought to. Instead, it happens somewhere else – in the silence, in the reverberation on the walls, in the performer’s gasp for air. Music comes charged with a palpable energy created by its surroundings at that very moment. Under any other circumstance, it would be different.

7 **Go deep. Really deep.** Some treasures are freebies, but many more are buried in the sand, perceived only under the microscope, or clouded in the murky depths of the mind. The deeper you go, the more likely you will find something of value.

8 **Listen as if it were the last time your ears could hear.** Savor it.

9 **Nature is beautiful** because it is untouched by humans, but music is beautiful because it is a human creation. Music is direct interaction with the human spirit.

10 **Be open to other life,** whether it be the composer’s life, the performer’s life, or the lives of those around you (…yes, even the noisemaker to your left). Other people’s lives are more weird and wonderful than we could ever imagine. By absorbing the musical complexity of the human condition, you will walk away transformed.

11 **Join the party.** Music is an interactive event that serves our primal need to share in something greater than ourselves.

12 **As E.M. Forster said, “Only connect.”** Music is a pliant collaboration actively involving all participating factors: performers, composers, listeners, and musical elements. Relish the conflict, euphoria, frustration, and innumerable creative possibilities that arise with collaboration.

13 **Liberate yourself** from technological trappings and to-do lists. Just be present with and within the music.

14 **Close your eyes.** Focus on the sonic essence of the music.

15 **Feel the music** course through your body. One of the most amazing sensations when listening to music is the “shiver.” Experiences with music can be thrillingly visceral.

16 **Lack judgment and postpone criticism.** Free yourself from labels.

17 **If something strikes you as strange or incomprehensible, don’t panic.** Welcome the confusion and enjoy the music without preconceived ideas or predetermined goals.

18 **Drift.** Allow the music to guide your listening. Explore aimlessly.

19 **Think for yourself.** Take chances and mess up. The well-intentioned guidance of others doesn’t always lead you in the direction you need to go because music is intensely personal and thus impacts each listener differently.

20 **Music is not universal.** It is a myth to believe that there is one “correct” way to respond to a musical experience. Human beings are too sophisticated and music is too subtle to be whittled down in this manner.

21 **Work the metaphor.** Beyond the obvious exists a myriad of alternate meanings and interpretations.

22 **Listen for polarities.** Music is at once mundane and surreal, cerebral and sensual, trivial and significant, ephemeral and everlasting, raw and refined, profane and sacred, etc., etc.

23 **Laugh.** We, Greg and Liz, laugh our way through rehearsals. Joy is a natural reaction to the realization of overwhelming, authentic communication.

24 **(Allow space for the unknown.)**

25 **Abandon any notion of “clock time”** – you may find your sense of time shifting. Some pieces or experiences may even strike you as utterly timeless.

26 **If you are bored, use it to your listening advantage.** Strange and marvelous things happen in unusual states of being.

27 **Rely on gut instinct.** Go where it feels good.