

Michael Arnowitt

classical piano

New Programs



Kaleidoscope

Michael Arnowitt's new program *Kaleidoscope* takes the listener on a stimulating journey through rich and colorful musical landscapes. The program opens with a half-dozen of Bach's miniature 3-Part Sinfonias, companion pieces in 3-part counterpoint to Bach's more familiar 2-Part Inventions that have been learned by generations of piano students for 200 years. Bach's Sinfonias are delightful jewels, the music at turns spirited, good-humored, lyrical, mysterious, and joyful. Three Debussy études take us on interesting adventures into Debussy's unique world of spacious sonorities, bells, water imagery, and experiences that go beyond sound to evoke touch and our other senses.

A highlight of the program are pieces by the present-day Ukrainian composer Victoria Poleva. This Kiev-based composer writes highly absorbing music that is simple yet powerful, expressive, and deeply spiritual. Victoria Poleva recently sent Michael Arnowitt ten of her piano compositions. This program, featuring four of these pieces, marks the beginning of Arnowitt's efforts to champion her music and raise awareness in North America of this outstanding composer.

The Hungarian-born Gyorgy Ligeti, in the final decades of his life, wrote three books of études Michael Arnowitt regards as the best piano pieces of the last fifty years. This concert provides a great opportunity for audiences to hear live these widely-praised pieces that have been among the most talked about classical compositions of recent decades. Arnowitt will perform *Open Strings*, *Fanfares*, *Rainbow*, and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, showcasing the amazing imagination and creativity of these pieces full of beautiful new piano sounds and textures.

The pianist will also perform his *Burana Bop*, a jazz arrangement of musical material drawn from Carl Orff's famous chorus and orchestra piece *Carmina Burana*, inspired by 13th century medieval secular poetry. *Burana Bop* has consistently received enthusiastic positive comments from audiences since its premiere in early 2021.

The program is rounded out with the shorter works *Piano Figures* by the British composer George Benjamin, with its enchanting, creative depictions of knots, a mosaic, and more, and a bright, rambunctious 1941 piece by Lutoslawski full of Prokofiev-like youthful hijinks. Altogether, *Kaleidoscope* offers a concert experience that nicely balances serious and lighter fare.

Program: Kaleidoscope

J.S. Bach • Six selections from the 3-Part Sinfonias

Claude Debussy • Selections from 12 Études (1915)

Étude no. 11 Pour les arpèges composés

Étude no. 6 Pour les huit doigts

Étude no. 3 Pour les quartes

Victoria Poleva • Excerpt from the music to her ballet *Mirror, Dreams or A Little Life* (2021)

Victoria Poleva • Music that is not yet and *Lacrimosa*, from *Marginalia* (1998-2008)

Victoria Poleva • Sonata no. 2 "quasi una fantasia" (2011)

Witold Lutoslawski • Study for Piano no. 2 (1941)

George Benjamin • From *Piano Figures* (2004)
Spell - Knots - Alone - Hammers - Mosaic

Michael Arnowitt • *Burana Bop* (jazz improvisation based on music from Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*)

Gyorgy Ligeti • Selections from *Études for piano*, Book 1 (1985) and Book 2 (1988-1994)

Étude no. 2, *Cordes à vide* (Open strings)

Étude no. 4, *Fanfares*

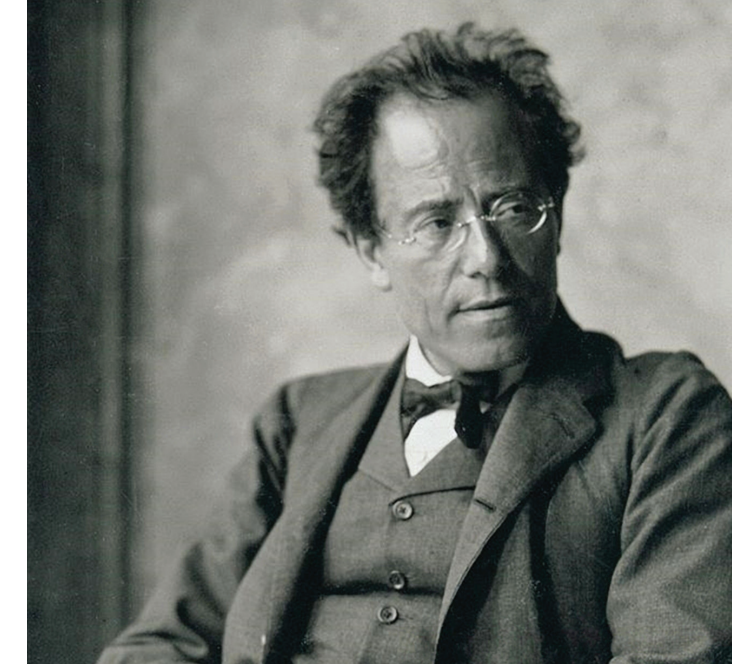
Étude no. 5, *Arc-en-ciel* (Rainbow)

Étude no. 10, *Der Zauberlehrling*

(The sorcerer's apprentice)

ENCORE

Michael Arnowitt • *Bi Bim Bop* (a jazz fugue, mixing Bach and bebop jazz)



Crossroads

Crossroads is a special program full of profound, highly personal and expressive pieces, music well-suited to Michael Arnowitt's style. The centerpiece of the program is a piano transcription of the first movement of Mahler's celebrated Ninth Symphony, universally recognized as one of the greatest symphony movements of all time, expressing Mahler's feelings on the earth, nature, and death. Highlights of the program include the recent pieces *Ischia Island* and *Sonata "quasi una fantasia"* by the Ukrainian composer Victoria Poleva, whose emotionally moving and deeply spiritual music Michael Arnowitt greatly admires and is trying to raise appreciation of in Canada and the United States. Also featured is a set of the wonderfully creative piano pieces of the early 20th century composer Arthur Lourié, whose forgotten music has only just been receiving attention from performers in the last few years. The program is rounded out with shorter pieces by Bach, Schoenberg, and Debussy.

Program: Crossroads

J.S. Bach • My Favorite Fugues, four selections from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Books 1 and 2

Claude Debussy • Étude no. 3, *Pour les quartes* (1915)

Victoria Poleva • *Ischia Island* (2019) and *Sonata no. 2 "quasi una fantasia"* (2011)

Arthur Lourié • *Mazurka op. 7 no. 1* (1912), *Intermezzo* (1928), and *Marche* from *Quatre pièces* (1927)

Arnold Schoenberg • *Piano Piece op. 11 no. 1* and *Six Small Piano Pieces op. 19*

Gustav Mahler • *Andante comodo*, first movement from *Symphony no. 9*, transcribed for piano by Iain Farrington



From East to West

From East to West explores the influence on Western classical composition of the music of eastern Europe, the Middle East, the Far East, and southeast Asia. The program includes many pieces by great composers of the past, including Mozart's well-known "Rondo alla turca," music by Gustav Mahler based on 8th century Chinese poetry from the Tang Dynasty, and Debussy's "Pagodas," influenced by his experience seeing a gamelan group from Java at the 1889 World's Fair in Paris. The program also presents several intriguing and colorful pieces from recent decades, including Peter Feuchtwanger's "Tariqa 1," which offers an amazingly realistic evocation of the meditative, mesmeric sounds of the santur, an Iranian dulcimer, and Fazil Say's "Black Earth," based on a song for saz, a Turkish lute.

The East's influence on the West in the area of spirituality is featured in Alexander Scriabin's powerful "Black Mass" Sonata, music strongly affected by Scriabin's knowledge of Eastern views on mysticism. The program also reveals the flip side of the coin, how the West has influenced the East, through pieces from Japan and China as well as the charming jazz-influenced classical music of the Russian pianist-composer Nikolai Kapustin. Michael Arnowitt is half-Korean, and discovered his mother's uncle was a leading pianist, conductor, and composer in Korea in the mid-20th century. Like the program's title, Michael Arnowitt is himself a mixture of East and West.

Program: From East to West

Peter Feuchtwanger • Study no. 4 in an Eastern Idiom, Tariqa 1 (1982)

W.A. Mozart • Rondo alla turca (1778)

Claude Debussy • Pagodas, from Prints (1903)

Alexander Scriabin • Sonata no. 9 "Black Mass," op. 68 (1912-1913)

Toru Takemitsu • Rain Tree Sketch (1982)

Gustav Mahler • The Lonely One in Autumn, from The Song of the Earth (1908-1909)

Fazil Say • Black Earth (1997)

Excerpt from Chinese opera • Red Lake

Nikolai Kapustin • Preludes 3 and 13 from 24 Preludes in Jazz Style, and Scherzo from Sonata no. 2 (1989)

Musical Landscapes

Musical Landscapes presents a cornucopia of pieces Michael Arnowitt has been currently fascinated with, spotlighting both some of the finest solo piano pieces of recent decades and some important works of the early 20th century that foreshadowed the course of the 100 years of music that has led up to our own time.

The program features a major work by the present-day Ukrainian composer Victoria Poleva. This Kiev-based composer writes highly absorbing music that is simple yet powerful, expressive, and deeply spiritual. Victoria Poleva recently sent Michael Arnowitt ten of her piano compositions. This year marks the beginning of Arnowitt's efforts to champion her music and raise awareness in North America of this outstanding composer. Her Sonata "quasi una fantasia" is a dramatic, moving work of great emotional depth. In an interview, Poleva said, "What I have is a splendid lawless land where no one can give orders, just as no one has to take them; where anything can happen. I'm soaring over this land, responding to whatever interests or affects me by writing music."

Two British composers are highlighted on the program. Elisabeth Lutyens, an important mid-20th century composer, is represented by her work The Nature of Water which she wrote near the end of her life. A provocative, outspoken composer with a larger-than-life personality best known for her film scores, Lutyens' sensitive piano writing, with its dark sensuous low rumblings, gentle rippling motions, and beautiful use of silences, is a perfect fit for a piece about the fascinating fluidity of water. Another British composer whose music Michael Arnowitt has been enjoying discovering recently is George Benjamin. His 2004 collection Piano Figures has enchanting, highly creative depictions of knots, hammers, a mosaic, and more.

Elliott Carter's exciting 2006 composition Caténares (Cables) has been receiving many performances in recent years, becoming one of the hottest pieces of new music of our time. In Caténares, there is no harmony or counterpoint: rather, all you hear is a whirlwind of super-fast notes creating a single line that flies through the different regions of the piano in quicksilver fashion, occasionally interrupted by repeated notes in the middle of the keyboard. This piece was composed by Carter at the astounding age of 98 years old – he lived until age 103, composing to the very end.

A special feature of the program is a set of five études by the Hungarian-born composer Gyorgy Ligeti. In the last few decades of his life, Ligeti had a huge burst of energy for writing piano music and composed three books of études, widely-praised pieces that have become instant classics of our times since their publication in the 1990's. Michael Arnowitt's selections showcase the amazing imagination of these études full of beautiful new piano sounds and textures, some of which creatively treat the piano keyboard as a non-linear loop where music goes off one extreme end of the piano and magically reappears on the other end.

Shorter works on the program include some of the pianist's favorite fugues from Bach's The Well-Tempered Clavier and The Art of the Fugue, important pieces from Schoenberg's expressionist period of free atonality that influenced a great deal of 20th century music,

Program: Musical Landscapes

J.S. Bach • My Favorite Fugues, selections from The Well-Tempered Clavier and The Art of the Fugue

Arnold Schoenberg • Six Small Piano Pieces op. 19 and Piano Piece op. 23 no. 3

Victoria Poleva • Sonata no. 2 "quasi una fantasia" (2011)

Elliott Carter • Caténares, no. 2 from Two Thoughts About the Piano (2006)

Gyorgy Ligeti • Selections from Études for piano, Book 1 (1985) and Book 2 (1988-1994)

Étude no. 2, Cordes à vide (Open strings)

Étude no. 3, Touches bloquées (Blocked keys)

Étude no. 4, Fanfares

Étude no. 5, Arc-en-ciel (Rainbow)

Étude no. 10, Der Zauberlehrling (The sorcerer's apprentice)

George Benjamin • Selections from Piano Figures (2004)
Spell - Knots - Alone - Hammers - Mosaic

Dennis Báthory-Kitsz • no. 11, 20, 14, and 2 from Tirkiinistra: Landscape Preludes (2002)

Elisabeth Lutyens • The Nature of Water (1981)

Arthur Lourié • Selected pieces

Mazurka, op. 7 no. 1 (1912)

Intermezzo (1928)

Upmann, A "Smoking Sketch" (1917)

A Phoenix Park Nocturne (1938)

Marche from Quatre pièces (1927)

and four of Vermont composer Dennis Báthory-Kitsz's Landscape Preludes, based on the design, color, and density change information of autumn outdoor photographs taken by the composer.

The concert ends with a set of pieces by the Russian-born Arthur Lourié, who lived in Paris in the 1920's and 1930's and later emigrated to the United States. Lourié has been well described as one of the most interesting forgotten composers of the 20th century, and Michael Arnowitt has been among a growing number of performers of today bringing Lourié's fascinating music to greater attention. His Mazurka inhabits a dreamworld with tinkly out of tune resonances that are reminiscent of the sound of a music box. The intriguing Intermezzo begins with some brooding music whose slow swirling dance gestures gradually gather momentum and accelerate to a waltz, spurred on by some crackling drum rhythms. The Upmann, A "Smoking Sketch", written for a pantomime, is an Erik Satie-like piece of whimsical comedy influenced by ragtime. A Phoenix Park Nocturne, regarded by some as Lourié's finest piece of piano music, refers to a section of James Joyce's novel Finnegans Wake depicting the different behaviors of people, birds, and exotic animals in the park zoo as they settle down for the night. Finally, the March, dedicated to Horowitz, is full of humor and energetic good spirits.



John Bach

J.S. Bach's Six Partitas

Bach said on the title page of his publication of the six partitas, "composed for music-lovers, to refresh their spirits." His six partitas are particularly cherished by pianists as topline pieces universally regarded as among Bach's very best compositions for keyboard alongside the Goldberg Variations and the prelude and fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier. The partitas take as their starting point old dance traditions from different countries of Europe. Bach created musical shapes evocative of not just the arm and leg motions of these dances, but more generally of many aspects of everyday living: walking, running, even the act of thinking and countless human emotions are touched on in these extraordinary pieces. The true achievement of these partitas is how Bach magically transforms these shapes far beyond background music for dance to the pure, spiritual, joyful, and lively music of his own unique soundworld that is some of the most satisfying music ever created.

Michael Arnowitt has throughout his career been gradually learning all six of Bach's partitas, and he is very excited to be ready now to present the complete set in performance. These partitas, which will also be the music of his next piano recording, each have their own distinct personality and character and are surprisingly different from each other. After a lifetime of reflecting on Bach, gaining insights and developing musically, Michael Arnowitt offers this program of Bach partitas as a wonderful opportunity for audiences to hear the pianist perform live these remarkable and unique masterpieces.

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