

Michael Arnowitz

classical piano

Program Offerings



From East to West

Michael Arnowitt's newest program explores the influence of the music of eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia on Western classical composition. The concert program features many pieces by great composers of the past, including Mozart's lively *Rondo alla turca* (Turkish march), romantic music by Gustav Mahler based on 8th century Chinese Tang Dynasty poetry, and the French impressionist composer Debussy's delicate *Pagodas*, influenced by his experience seeing a gamelan group from Java at the 1889 World's Fair in Paris.

The program also presents colorful pieces from recent decades such as *Study no. 4 in an Eastern Idiom: Tariqa 1* by the English composer Peter Feuchtwanger, which offers an amazingly realistic evocation of the meditative, mesmeric sounds of the Iranian santur, and Fazil Say's *Black Earth*, based on a moving traditional song for saz (a Turkish lute) written by Asik Veysel, a blind nomadic balladeer.

Several pieces of music on the program highlight the East's influence on the West in the area of spirituality, including Alexander Scriabin's cosmic and mysterious Sonata no. 9 "Black Mass," music influenced by the composer's interest in Indo-Tibetan mysticism, plus the beautifully transparent *Rain Tree Sketch* by Toru Takemitsu of Japan. A running theme of the program is how composers have through the centuries artfully merged Eastern musical and cultural material into the mainstream of the romantic concert piano sound developed in the West. The music of this concert resonates personally with Arnowitt as he is himself part Western and part Oriental. Like the program's title, Michael Arnowitt is a mixture of East and West.



"If Music Be the Food of Love..."



This new program by Michael Arnowitt is more than a concert – it's a multi-sensory experience. Arnowitt, joined by assisting musicians, performs pieces of music about food while simultaneously the audience is served the particular food dishes suggested by the music selections' titles. The food tastes have been professionally catered by chef Susan Olander, or you can use a chef from your own area.

The program can consist of a mixture of classical and jazz music or can be a jazz-only evening with a combo. Classical selections have included Henry Purcell's *If Music Be the Food of Love*, a 1692 song based on the famous line from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Rossini's *Almonds*, a light romantic piece from his collection *Sins of My Old Age*, Leonard Bernstein's *Plum Pudding*, where the words of the song are literally the lines of a recipe from a French cookbook by Emile Dumont, excerpts from Bach's *Coffee Cantata*, a humorous dialogue where a father schemes to cure his daughter of coffee addiction, plus music by Mozart, Rachmaninov, and Ravel. Jazz songs about food on this program have been drawn from tunes performed by Louis Armstrong, Bill Evans, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, and Charlie Parker, as well as an original by Michael Arnowitt celebrating his favorite restaurant.

The tasting dinner menu has included almond-stuffed dates wrapped with bacon, biscuit with pulled pork and barbeque sauce, snow peas with boursin cheese and a peppers garnish, spicy Thai sea scallop ceviche, melon hearts, éclairs, Swedish apple pastry, and plum pudding tarts. Arnowitt says, "at a standard music concert people primarily use their sense of hearing and secondarily their sight, but in this performance the audience will be simultaneously stimulated by their senses of taste, touch, and smell as they enjoy the food flavors and textures that inspired the composers to write these pieces of music." This most pleasurable evening is a unique special event creatively combining two of humanity's greatest loves: music and food.

"If music be the food of love ... play on"

– William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*

Standard Programs

For those who prefer a traditional piano recital without a particular theme, here are some excellent choices. Program A is oriented to profound, highly personal and expressive pieces, music well-suited to Michael Arnowitt's style; Program B has a different tone, one that nicely balances serious and lighter fare; the all-Russian Program C is a fun concert popular with audiences featuring the colorful, passionate and virtuosic styles of Russian composers.

Program A

- Beethoven - Sonata in E minor, op. 90
- Schumann - Scenes from Childhood
- Chopin - 4 Études, including the "Aeolian Harp" and "Double Thirds"
- J.S. Bach - Partita no. 3 in A minor
- Brahms - Andante moderato, slow movement from Symphony no. 4
- György Ligeti - selected Études
- Olivier Messiaen - The Robin

Program B

- Scarlatti - set of 4 miniature sonatas
- Debussy - Ondine & other Préludes from Book 2
- Beethoven - Sonata in A major, op. 101
- William Byrd - A Voluntarie for my ladye nevell
- J.S. Bach - "My favorite fugues" (from the Well-Tempered Clavier)
- Rachmaninov - 3 Études-tableaux
- Arthur Lourié - Nocturne
- Prokofiev - Suggestion diabolique

Program C (all-Russian program)

- Rachmaninov - Liebesleid, Sonata no. 2
- Taneyev - Prelude in G# minor, op. 29
- Stravinsky - Russian Dance from Petrouchka
- Kapustin - 3 jazz-influenced pieces
- Lyadov - The Music Box
- Tchaikovsky - selections from The Seasons
- Lyapunov - "Lezhinka"
- Sofia Gubaidulina - from Musical Toys
- Arthur Lourié - selected pieces
- Prokofiev - Étude op. 2 no. 3 in C minor

Program D

- The six keyboard partitas of J.S. Bach

Beethoven & Arnowitt VII

Sonata no. 27 in E minor, op. 90

Sonata no. 28 in A major, op. 101

Sonata no. 29 in B-flat major ("Hammerklavier"), op. 106

For many pianists, performing all 32 Beethoven piano sonatas over the course of a single year is the ultimate challenge – and a remarkable musical and spiritual experience for both performer and audience. In 1989 Michael Arnowitt began his novel and unique presentation of the complete Beethoven sonatas, an odyssey that will last him not one year, but twenty-six. His concept is to traverse the 32 sonatas chronologically, matching up his age as he performs the various sonatas with Beethoven's age as Beethoven composed them.

The project began in 1989 with a youthful Arnowitt and Beethoven's spirited early sonatas. As he has aged, Michael Arnowitt has gradually tackled Beethoven's middle-period works, then the late, transcendent final sonatas, the last concert not scheduled for performance until the year 2015. In many ways, the series of eight concerts will be a study in the psychology of aging: audiences hear how Beethoven developed as a composer, how Arnowitt develops as a pianist, and the intersection of the two processes.

The current installment in the series, the seventh of eight, features three magnificent sonatas no. 27-29. The *Sonata in E minor, opus 90* is deeply satisfying music of the sort Leonard Bernstein was referring to when he spoke of the feeling of "rightness" in Beethoven's music. The *Sonata in A major, opus 101*, a favorite with musicians and audiences alike, brings us into the sensitive sound-world and musical textures of Beethoven's spiritual late-period string quartets. Finally, the entire second half of the program is devoted to Beethoven's grandest sonata, the "Hammerklavier," a breakthrough piece where the composer surmounted an extended period of depression and writer's block which accompanied his now nearly complete deafness. This sonata took Beethoven a full year to finish and upon its completion he wrote, "Finally I know now how to compose."

Duet with Jeffrey Chappell

Pianists Jeffrey Chappell and Michael Arnowitt team up for this exciting duet concert. Featured compositions are Maurice Ravel's classic *Mother Goose Suite* and a beautiful, rarely performed piano 4-hands version of the entirety of Johannes Brahms' *Symphony no. 4* in an arrangement believed to be by the composer himself. Written near the end of Brahms' life, the Fourth Symphony is a masterwork both Chappell and Arnowitt have deeply loved since their childhood, and their joy in performing this eloquent symphony carries over to the audience.

In addition to these two major works, the pianists will each perform complementary solo pieces to allow the audience to hear more clearly the different personalities of the two performers. As a special optional treat, Michael Arnowitt has made two entertaining duet jazz arrangements based on classical music by Ravel and Brahms. Michael Arnowitt, from Vermont, and Jeffrey Chappell, from the Washington, D.C. area, have collaborated in both 2-piano and 1-piano duet concerts since the early 1990's.



photo of Jeffrey Chappell

Water Music

*multi-media performance with
photographer/speaker Marjorie Ryerson*

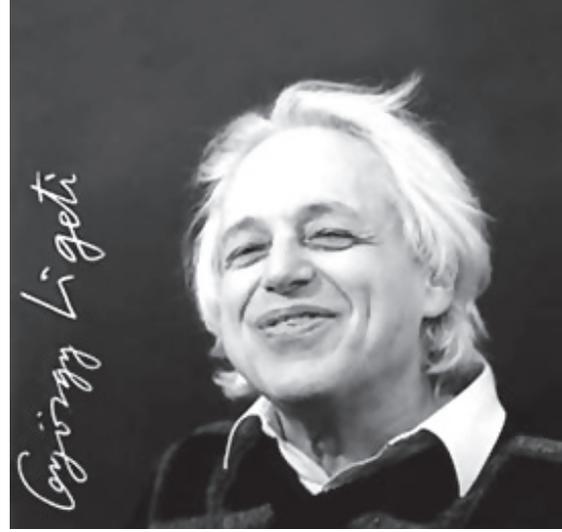
Noted photographer and author Marjorie Ryerson's remarkable book *Water Music* contains her exquisite photographs of water interspersed with writings about water by sixty-six world-class musicians of today from across the musical spectrum, including Bobby McFerrin, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Midori, Dave Brubeck, Mark O'Connor, Randy Newman, Renée Fleming, Taj Mahal, Pete Seeger, and Carol Maillard (of Sweet Honey in the Rock). These musicians contributed an imaginative collection of memoirs, poems, anecdotes, song lyrics, and thought-pieces about the magic of water and its inspiration on their lives and their music.

Pianist Michael Arnowitt, in collaboration with Ryerson, created this special live concert realization of the concept behind *Water Music*. Pieces of water-related piano music are performed by Arnowitt in alternation with Ryerson speaking excerpts of writings about water from the book, while throughout the concert Ryerson's beautiful water photographs are projected on stage as a gentle visual backdrop. The readings, music, and visuals have been selected with care to match up in tone at each point in the performance, creating for the audience a stimulating multi-media experience. Among the musical highlights of the program are Debussy's *Reflections in the Water*, Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* (The Fountain), and Chopin's *Barcarolle*, a boat-song. Ryerson and Arnowitt's *Water Music* concerts have included performances in Holland, Germany, Florida, and Colorado.

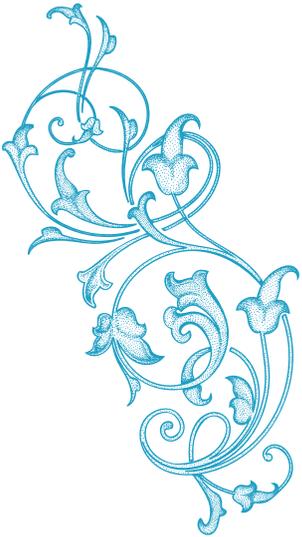
Marjorie Ryerson's book, published by the University of Michigan Press, has been hailed as a fresh new approach to raising societal awareness of the important water issues facing us today. Ryerson donates royalties from sales of *Water Music* to a special fund of the United Nations Foundation devoted to international projects that help improve the natural health of bodies of water and provide clean drinking water to families around the world. Ryerson has received several awards for her project from organizations excited by her cultural look at our planet's most essential element.

Ligeti and his Influences

Over the last twenty years of his life, musical pioneer György Ligeti (1923-2006) composed a series of three books of piano études, music universally acknowledged as a worthy successor to the famous étude sets of Chopin and Debussy. These viscerally exciting pieces, wonderfully stimulating to both body and mind, possess colorful harmonies, a dynamic, propelling rhythmic vitality, and extraordinary piano textures never before imagined: Michael Arnowitt regards these compositions as the finest piano pieces of the entire twentieth century. Ligeti is best known in the USA for his atmospheric music in the hit film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, but his piano music contains a fascinating, wide-ranging mix of influences beyond classical music, from sub-Saharan African drumming and jazz to areas of science such as water waves, organic growth in Nature, topology, fractals, and chaos theory.



Arnowitt presents the études here with a bit of a twist: a special selection of Ligeti études will form the second half of the program, led up to by a first half of music by other composers from the past who influenced Ligeti: Scarlatti, Schumann, Chopin, Debussy, Bartok, Nancarrow, and the American jazz pianists Thelonius Monk and Bill Evans. By listening first to the earlier piano music that inspired Ligeti's creations, and only then to the études themselves, the audience gains a far greater understanding of these imaginative pieces and what makes Ligeti's music tick. An interesting presentation format to consider would be a multi-disciplinary symposium about Ligeti, with talks during the day by professors about these various music and scientific fields that influenced Ligeti, concluding with Michael Arnowitt's concert in the evening.



1913: Looking Back 100 Years Later

If you were alive in 1913, what sort of music might you have heard? This fascinating program offers a window into the past by presenting contrasting pieces of piano music by major classical composers all written in the single year 1913. This was a true crossroads time between the old and the new in both music and world history. The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed an unparalleled creative explosion in all the arts. The world situation was equally rich in change, with the end of aristocracy, the birth of new technologies such as the car, the airplane, and electricity, and mass social unrest over the issues of rights for women and factory workers. Tensions were further heightened by a series of diplomatic and military crises that ultimately led to the outbreak of World War I the following year. In 1913, the world was very much a world on edge.

With the Romantic era in its twilight years, new and original music was emerging everywhere. These new musical currents included responses to expressionist and impressionist visual art, nationalist styles using energetic folk music elements, compositions aiming to create a mystical experience, pre-Surrealist music, and what was dubbed at the time "futurist" music, pieces that did indeed foreshadow the 100 years of music to come.

The most sensational musical event of 1913 was the famous riot that took place at the premiere of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in Paris. Featured on this program is the complete first half of the Rite of Spring, *The Adoration of the Earth*, in Michael Arnowitt's extraordinary piano transcription. At the opposite end of the spectrum is Sergei Rachmaninov's lush, nostalgic Sonata no. 2, the epitome of late-period Romanticism. Contrasting both these major works is Alexander Scriabin's powerful Sonata no. 9 "Black Mass," perhaps a musical depiction of what it was like to be at one of the many supernatural séances popular at the time.

The program of "1913" also includes Charles Ives' *The Alcotts* from his Concord Sonata, *Dwarfs at Dawn* and *Suicide in an Airplane* by Leo Ornstein, the most controversial and important figure in American music in the 1910's, Claude Debussy's *Ondine* and *Mists*, and Erik Satie's *Embryons desséchés*, modestly comic and gently whimsical pieces about sea cucumbers and crustaceans that prefigured Surrealist art and writing. "1913" offers a vibrant and rich program that brings you right into this extraordinary time.

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these programs is available at:
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