

LINCOLN CENTER'S 2017/18 GREAT PERFORMERS

The Program

Sunday, December 3, 2017, at 11:00 am

Sunday Morning Coffee Concerts

Conrad Tao, Piano

BACH **Chromatic fantasia and fugue in D minor (c. 1720)**

JASON ECKARDT ***Echoes' White Veil* (1996)**

RACHMANINOFF **Étude-tableau in A minor (1916–17)**

BEETHOVEN **Sonata No. 31 in A-flat major (1821–22)**

Moderato cantabile, molto espressivo

Allegro molto

Adagio, ma non troppo—Fuga: Allegro, ma non troppo

This program is approximately one hour long and will be performed without intermission.

Please join the artist for a cup of coffee following the performance.

Please make certain all your electronic devices are switched off.

Refreshments provided by Zabar's and zabars.com

This performance is made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.

Steinway Piano
Walter Reade Theater

Great Performers

Support is provided by Rita E. and Gustave M. Hauser, Audrey Love Charitable Foundation, Great Performers Circle, Chairman's Council, and Friends of Lincoln Center.

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Endowment support is also provided by UBS.

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UPCOMING GREAT PERFORMERS EVENTS:

Wednesday, December 6 at 7:30 pm in Alice Tully Hall

Bach Collegium Japan

Masaaki Suzuki, conductor

Sherezade Panthaki, soprano

Jay Carter, countertenor

Zachary Wilder, tenor

Dominik Wörner, bass

BACH: Four Cantatas from *Weihnachts-Oratorium* ("Christmas Oratorio")

Pre-concert lecture by Michael Marissen at 6:15 pm in the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

Sunday, December 17 at 11:00 am in the Walter Reade Theater

Calmus

Christmas Carols Around the World

Sunday, January 14 at 3:00 pm in David Geffen Hall

Budapest Festival Orchestra

Iván Fischer, conductor

Dénes Várjon, piano

BACH: Orchestral Suite No. 2 in B minor

BEETHOVEN: Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor

RACHMANINOFF: Symphony No. 2

Pre-concert lecture by Michael Beckerman at 1:45 pm in the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit LCGreatPerformers.org. Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 to learn about program cancellations or to request a Great Performers brochure.

Visit LCGreatPerformers.org for more information relating to this season's programs.

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We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.

In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.

By Kathryn L. Libin

Chromatic fantasia and fugue in D minor, BWV 903 (c. 1720)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Born March 21, 1685, in Eisenach, Germany

Died July 28, 1750, in Leipzig

Approximate length: 11 minutes

The re-discovery and canonization of Johann Sebastian Bach's music that unfolded over the course of the 19th century were due in large part to the enthusiasm and energy of Felix Mendelssohn. It was the 20-year-old Mendelssohn who launched the Bach revival in Berlin in 1829 by conducting a performance of the *St. Matthew Passion*; a decade later, established in Leipzig and the foremost musician in Germany, Mendelssohn continued to bring Bach's works out of obscurity and into the light of public taste. As part of a chamber music series at the Gewandhaus called "Evening Conversations," Mendelssohn and violinist Ferdinand David presented a concert on February 29, 1840 that introduced Bach's now famous *Chaconne* (arranged with a piano accompaniment by Mendelssohn); on the same evening, Mendelssohn offered the D-minor Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue. The Gewandhaus audience embraced both works with rapturous applause, which Mendelssohn repaid the following year when he performed a further selection of Bach's works—including, again, the Fantasia and Fugue—on a series of "historical concerts." Mendelssohn's historical concerts placed Bach's works among those of Handel, Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, thus establishing a German pantheon of composers that survives to this day.

In Bach's own time, much of his renown arose from his extraordinary skills as a keyboard player. His dazzling improvisations at the organ, and the emotional intensity and difficulty of his compositions, brought him devoted students and followers. It is believed that Bach's Fantasia and Fugue originated during the period of his employment at Cöthen, before he accepted the post at Leipzig in 1723 where he would spend the rest of his life. The work became well known among Bach's admirers late in his career when it circulated in many hand-written copies; several such copies by his students provide the basis for modern editions. The Fantasia combines freely flowing scales and arpeggiations with starkly chromatic melodic voices; a section marked "Recitativo" brings a more measured, vocal utterance into the argument. Mendelssohn wrote to his sister Fanny about one lengthy passage of arpeggiations, indicating that he took the liberty of enhancing their effect by doubling the bass line and adding all the dynamics and pedaling of which the modern piano was capable. Bach builds the elaborate structure of the Fugue on a deceptively simple scaffolding, which extends the chromaticism of the Fantasia through an elegant, upwardly unfurling melodic line.

***Echoes' White Veil* (1996)**

JASON ECKARDT

Born May 17, 1971, in Princeton, New Jersey

Approximate length: 12 minutes

The music of Jason Eckardt combines rhythmic intricacy with dense harmonies and textures, fervent expression, and demanding physical challenges. Born in Princeton, New Jersey in 1971, Eckardt studied guitar at the Berklee College of Music and went on to earn advanced degrees in composition at Columbia University. A co-founder and director of the New York-based contemporary music group Ensemble 21, Eckardt currently teaches at Brooklyn College and at the CUNY Graduate Center. His work has garnered critical accolades as well as major awards, such as a Guggenheim Fellowship. His commissions have come not only from major performing arts institutions, such as Carnegie Hall and Tanglewood, but also from adventurous individual artists; his body of work thus includes a long list of compositions for solo instrumentalists and chamber ensembles. Eckardt's 1996 composition *Echoes' White Veil* was written for pianist Marilyn Nonken, who writes, "it is a constant and provoking challenge to achieve the level of detail the score demands: the clarity of articulation, the infinite degrees of dynamic and rhythmic subtlety, and the sheer physicality required to get around the keyboard."

Echoes' White Veil emerged from Eckardt's reading of W. S. Merwin's prose poem, "Echoes":

Everything we hear is an echo. Anyone can see that echoes move forward and backward in time, in rings. But not everyone realizes that as a result silence becomes harder and harder for us to grasp—though it in itself is unchanged—because of the echoes pouring through us out of the past, unless we can learn to set them at rest. We are still hearing the bolting of the doors at Thermopylae, and do not recognize the sounds. How did we sound to the past? And there are sounds that rush away from us: echoes of future words.

So, we know that there are words in the future, some of them loud and terrible. And we know that there is silence in the future. But will the words recognize their unchanging homeland?

I am sitting on the shore of a lake. I am a child, in the evening, at the time when the animals lose heart for a moment. Everyone has gone, as I wanted them to go, and in the silence I call across the water, "Oh!" And I see the sound appear running away from me over the water in her white veil, growing taller, becoming a cloud with raised arms, in the dusk. Then there is such silence that the trees are bent. And afterward a shock like wind that throws me back against the hill, for I had not known who I was calling.

Étude-tableau in A minor, Op. 39, No. 2 (1916–17)

SERGE RACHMANINOFF

Born April 1, 1873, in Oneg, Russia

Died March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills

Approximate length: 7 minutes

Rachmaninoff's career took a decisive turn in 1917 when he left Russia with his family at the dawn of the revolution, eventually settling in New York. Having forfeited their estate and most of their possessions, the family lived on Rachmaninoff's earnings from concert tours; he himself popularized his three great piano concertos and his many solo piano pieces through hundreds of live performances and one of the earliest recording contracts, signed in 1920 with the Victor Talking Machine Company. He was renowned for his superb technique and for the great accuracy and precision of his playing. In his compositions for piano, Rachmaninoff developed a distinctive personal voice that emphasized lushly chromatic harmonies, extremely broad and passionate melodies, and great sensitivity to color and timbre.

Rachmaninoff composed two sets of *Études-tableaux*, which as the title implies are both virtuosic studies and evocative "scenes," though they were not published with descriptions and only later would Rachmaninoff reveal the sources that had inspired some of them. The Op. 39 set originated in 1916–17, and was thus the last major group of pieces Rachmaninoff wrote in Russia. While both sets of études offer robust keyboard challenges, Op. 39 is generally considered the more difficult of the two. The second piece, in A minor, opens with a restless and melancholy motive, reminiscent of the *Dies Irae* chant, which sounds amid the left-hand triplets as the right hand crosses between ranges and explores all the timbres of the keyboard.

Sonata No. 31 in A-flat major, Op. 110 (1821–22)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 16, 1770, in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna

Approximate length: 20 minutes

By 1818 Beethoven had almost entirely lost his sense of hearing, and began to communicate with friends by means of "conversation books," where his visitors wrote down questions or comments to which he would respond orally. It seems therefore utterly remarkable that he should at that time launch some of his most challenging and complex compositional projects, including the massive "Hammerklavier" Sonata, the *Missa solemnis*, and the gigantic set of "Diabelli" Variations. In May 1820, he received a commission from Berlin publisher Adolf Martin Schlesinger to produce three new piano sonatas. These sonatas, published as Opp. 109, 110, and 111, all show innovative approaches

to formal structure, combine rich lyricism with rigorous contrapuntal writing, and make inventive use of pianistic idioms.

In Beethoven's time, full textures and coloristic effects on the piano were becoming the norm in Vienna, but no other composer of his day exploited the instrument's tonal possibilities to the extent that Beethoven did. Despite the fact that he was entirely deaf and not in robust health, he continued to create vivid sounds with unimpeded energy and imagination. His Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 110, dated December 25, 1821, is among the most lyrical and expressive of his late piano works. The first movement, with its meditative opening theme and the delicate flow of arpeggios that follows it, sets the tone of the entire work; even the vigorous rhythms and accents of the second movement create no sense of disruption. The last sections of the piece form an unbroken continuity, from the almost vocal eloquence of the *Adagio* with its soft pedal effects and "lamenting song" (*klagender Gesang*), through the great fugue, its inversion, and its final, transcendent resolution.

Musicologist Kathryn L. Libin teaches music history and theory at Vassar College.

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Meet the Artist



BRANTLEY GUTIERREZ

Conrad Tao

Conrad Tao has appeared worldwide as a pianist and composer, performing to acclaim from critics and audiences alike. Selected as a U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts, Mr. Tao is the recipient of a YoungArts Gold medal in music, a Gilmore Young Artist Award, and an Avery Fisher Career Grant. With each passing year, Mr. Tao continues to emerge as both a thoughtful and thought-provoking artist, pushing boundaries as a performer, composer, curator, and commissioner, and championing new music while continuing to present core repertoire in a new light.

As a composer, Mr. Tao has garnered eight consecutive ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composer Awards in addition to the Carlos Surinach Prize from the BMI Foundation. During the 2013–14 season, he served as the Dallas Symphony Orchestra's artist-in-residence and premiered his orchestral composition, *The world is very different now*, commissioned in observance of the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. In September 2015 the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia premiered his piano concerto, *An Adjustment*, with Mr. Tao at the piano.

Highlights of Mr. Tao's 2017–18 season include his debut today at Lincoln Center; a residency with the Utah Symphony; debut engagements with the Seattle Symphony, and the Atlanta and New Jersey Symphony Orchestras; as well as appearances in Switzerland, Italy, Poland, and Finland, and a solo recital in Malaysia. Mr. Tao is a Warner Classics recording artist; his first two albums, *Voyages* and *Pictures*, have been recognized by NPR, *The New York Times*, and *The New Yorker's* Alex Ross, among others.

Lincoln Center's Great Performers

Initiated in 1965, Lincoln Center's Great Performers series offers classical and contemporary music performances from the world's outstanding

symphony orchestras, vocalists, chamber ensembles, and recitalists. One of the most significant music presentation series in the world, Great Performers runs from October through June with offerings in Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Walter Reade Theater, and other performance spaces around New York City. From symphonic masterworks, lieder recitals, and Sunday morning coffee concerts to films and groundbreaking productions specially commissioned by Lincoln Center, Great Performers offers a rich spectrum of programming throughout the season.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

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