

The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

March 8th, 2021 1:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Ari Livne, Piano

Partita No. 4 in D Major, BWV 828 (1728)

Overture

Allemande

Courante

Aria

Sarabande

Menuet

Gigue

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685-1750)

INTERMISSION

Piano Etude No. 1, *Digital Sustain* (2007)

Ryan Anthony Francis

(b. 1981)

From *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book II (1742)

Allegro molto sostenuto

Andante assai

Allegro con brio, ma non leggiero

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685-1750)

Piano Sonata in E-flat Minor, Op. 26 (1949)

Allegro energico

Allegro vivace e leggero

Adagio mesto

Fuga: Allegro con spirito

Samuel Barber

(1910-1981)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.

Notes on the Program

Bach Partita No. 4 in D Major, BWV 828

Bach published his Partita No. 4 in 1728, at the age of forty-three and five years into his tenure as the Cantor of Leipzig's St. Thomas School. Although he already had hundreds of compositions to his name, the Partitas were his first independent publications, and by 1731 he would release the complete set of six Partitas under the title *Clavier-Übung*, or "keyboard exercise". It is generally assumed that the Partitas were composed years earlier while Bach was at his previous post in Köthen, but the details of their genesis are largely unknown. The concert culture to which we are now so accustomed did not exist for keyboard instruments in Bach's time, and the newly published Partitas were likely enjoyed privately by music lovers on the clavichords, spinets, or harpsichords to which they had access.

The Partita No. 4 is at once intimate and exuberant, sorrowful at times, joyful at others, and ultimately hopeful. It begins with a French Overture in the style of Lully, the court composer for King Louis XIV. Grand scales and dotted rhythms announce a joyous, opulent affair, after which an extended fugue alternates between contrapuntal density and a lighter, dancing texture. A proud, stately *Allemande* follows, in which a slowly unfolding duet in the lower register supports a winding, ornamental soprano melody. Two energetic dances follow: the boisterous *Courante* with its shifting textures and metric emphases, and the upbeat, syncopated *Aria*. The *Sarabande* begins with a declamatory announcement before splitting into a two-voice processional, the lower voice serving as a walking anchor while the upper voice weaves into elaborate yet dignified figurations. This nostalgic beauty is finally disrupted by the more hopeful and light *Menuet*, before the cheerful and lilting *Gigue* brings the Partita to a close.

Francis Etude No. 1, *Digital Sustain*

"Digital Sustain" is the first of Ryan Francis's six Etudes for Piano, composed in 2007-8. Its title refers to the Etude's juxtaposition of sustained chords with flighty staccato passagework, the continuous sound of the chords overlaid with flourishes of pseudo-electronic riff patterns. This effect can only be achieved using the piano's middle *sostenuto* pedal, which allows the pianist to select specific notes for sustained sound while others are cut short (as usual) when the hand leaves the key. The sustained chords contain echoes of jazz, while the accompanying figuration harkens back to the minimalist techniques of Steve Reich, comprising a repetitively unfolding pattern with shifting metric accents. The result is both a rich sonic landscape and an engaging exercise in pattern recognition.

Bach 2 Preludes and Fugues from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book II

Bach completed Book II of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* 1742. Although it begins with the Prelude and Fugue in C Major and ends with the Prelude and Fugue in b minor, their manuscripts suggest that they were composed in the opposite order, with the C Major pair as

one of the last additions to the collection. Nevertheless, the C Major Prelude opens the set with ceremonious grandeur as four voices twist and turn around a steady underlying progression. The Fugue begins with a simple announcement, followed by a sixteenth-note continuation that switches from voice to voice and serves as the motor throughout. Unlike the lush textures and expressive leaps in the Prelude, the Fugue is dry, driven, and playful. The b minor Prelude is essentially a duet, in which a spinning theme is paired with a more angular supporting subject. The hands trade musical material frequently, until a sudden halt and a series of failed restarts brings the Prelude to a close. The Fugue's motive is a dance that both swings and searches; while most of the accompanying material keeps the dance in motion, a soaring lyricism sometimes emerges over the fray. One such lyrical episode returns right before the end to usher the collection to a passionate close.

Barber Piano Sonata in E-flat Minor, Op. 26

Barber's Piano Sonata was commissioned for the 25th anniversary of the League of Composers, and premiered by Vladimir Horowitz in 1949. Barber requested Horowitz specifically for the occasion, and it was on Horowitz's suggestion that Barber added a flashy fugal finale to the originally three-movement work. Each movement merges Baroque and Romantic influences with an austere, dystopian modernism, as though the music yearns to reclaim a past to which it can only have a fleeting connection.

The *Allegro energico*, in sonata form, opens with a martial and unyieldingly chromatic theme, whose rhythmic angularity and crashing dissonances contrast with its sinuous melodic contour. As the initial outburst winds down, a more lyrical second theme emerges, calling out through a mist of swirling arpeggios. But the second theme is interrupted, first by a new tonal theme and then by a trumpet call of four repeated notes, which reappears with diminishing intensity until it winds down into a whispered return of the martial theme. Thus begins the development, and for the remainder of the movement, Barber reconfigures and reimagines each of the themes, alternating between dissonant textures and moments of dark neo-Romantic tonality.

The first movement's sonic and emotional heft gives way to a flighty, mischievous scherzo, which playfully varies its rhythmic emphases as the hands chase each other through chromatic sequences. Where the first movement ends with a dramatic downward crash of sound, the second dissolves into an upward flourish. The *Adagio mesto* takes the form of a passacaglia, in which a repeating series of six dyads serves as reliable scaffolding onto which a lonely, mournful theme emerges. The dyads continue undeterred as the theme, first understated, twists itself into increasingly dense figurations, leading to a gigantic crescendo and a desperate exclamation of the theme in the left hand, followed by a downwardly cascading outburst. As the fog clears, the mournful theme returns, reduced to a slowly receding echo while the dyads continue their inevitable cycle to the end.

The *Fuga* is built entirely out of a rhythmically vibrant subject and a *legato* counter-subject. Yet, through a variety of rhythmic, harmonic, and textural manipulations, Barber spins these two ingredients into a gripping drama. The same materials appear in disguised forms, sometimes at half or quarter speed, sometimes inverted, sometimes in creative interactions

with other voices. The movement's coda builds itself up to a climax of crashing chords, and we hear a final slow, emphatic statement of the theme on top of a leaping ostinato figure before a flurry of octaves bring the piece to a close.

About the Artist

Active as a solo artist, collaborator, and chamber musician, Ari Livne has performed extensively throughout the United States at such venues as Benaroya Hall and the Kennedy Center. His diverse set of interests and skills has allowed him to become equally comfortable as a performer, opera coach, and lecturer. He has worked as repetiteur for *Don Giovanni* and *Butterfly* with New York's Heartbeat Opera, and has presented lecture-recitals on themes from psychoanalysis for the Northwestern Psychoanalytic Society and Institute.

Ari was a Gold Award winner at the youngARTS competition, and subsequently was selected as a Presidential Scholar in the Arts. While at Juilliard, Ari was recognized for his inventive programming; he premiered a new set of songs by the composer Cyrus Von Hochstetter at one of his recitals, and presented a recital consisting of Brahms' last four completed works. He was one of two Juilliard students selected to be a featured performer at the Kyoto International Music Festival in Kyoto, Japan, and he has been invited to perform multiple times at the Hudson Chamber Society in New York and at Piano on Park. Ari has appeared twice at the Juilliard Focus Festival, and in April 2012 he performed for Dr. Alexander Scriabine and Dr. Christine Scriabine, close relatives of the composer Alexander Scriabin. He has also been a faculty member at the State College Piano Festival (State College, PA), where he performed both a solo recital and a recital of Beethoven Violin Sonatas on successive evenings.

Ari Livne received his Bachelor of Arts from Yale University in 2012 and his Master of Music Degree at The Juilliard School in 2014. He is currently working towards a doctorate at the CUNY Graduate Center, where he is the recipient of a Graduate Center Fellowship.

Spring 2021 Events

March

- 8 Ari Livne, piano
- 12 Han Chen, piano

April

- 7 Kirsten Jermé, cello
- 9 GC Composers
- 16 Audrey Chen, cello
- 23 Carrie Frey, viola
- 26 Federico Diaz, guitar
- 28 Antonio Valentin, piano
- 30 Austin Lewellen, double bass

May

- 3 Thapelo Masita, cello
- 5 Clare Monfredo, cello
- 7 GC Composers
- 12 Julia Danitz, violin
- 14 Johnna Wu, violin
- 17 Isabel Fairbanks, cello
- 19 Jeremy Kienbaum, viola
- 21 Fifi Zhang, piano

All events begin at 1:00pm and will be live-streamed free of charge at this link:

<https://gc-cuny.zoom.us/j/95813229159>

For detailed concert information, please visit our website at: <http://gcmusic.commonsgc.cuny.edu>