

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

December 18, 2023 6:00 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*



## Antonio Valentin, piano

Goldberg Variations, BWV 988 (1741)

Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685–1750)

*Aria*

*Variation 1 a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 2 a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 3 Canone all'Unisuono a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 4 a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 5 a 1 ô vero 2 Clav.*

*Variation 6 Canone alla Seconda a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 7 Al tempo di Giga a 1 ô vero 2 Clav.*

*Variation 8 a 2 Clav.*

*Variation 9 Canone alla Terza a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 10 Fughetta a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 11 a 2 Clav.*

*Variation 12 Canone alla Quarta a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 13 a 2 Clav.*

*Variation 14 a 2 Clav.*

*Variation 15 Canone alla Quinta in moto contrario a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 16 Ouverture a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 17 a 2 Clav.*

*Variation 18 Canone alla Sexta a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 19 a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 20 a 2 Clav.*

*Variation 21 Canone alla Settima a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 22 Alla breve a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 23 a 2 Clav.*

*Variation 24 Canone all'Ottava a 1 Clav.*

*Variation 25 Adagio a 2 Clav.*

*Variation 26 a 2 Clav.*

*Variation 27 Canone alla Nona a 2 Clav.*

*Variation 28 a 2 Clav.*

*Variation 29 a 1 ô vero 2 Clav.*

*Variation 30 Quodlibet a 1 Clav.*

*Aria da capo*

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.  
Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

## INTERMISSION

Etude No. 11 from *Etudes Book II* (2005)

Philip Glass  
(b. 1937)

*Gaspard de la Nuit* (1908)

*Ondine*

*Le Gibet*

*Scarbo*

Maurice Ravel  
(1875–1937)

### Notes on the Program

#### Goldberg Variations, BWV 988

The Goldberg Variations are hailed as one of Johann Sebastian Bach's keyboard masterpieces. Originally titled *Aria mit verschiedenen Veränderungen vors Clavicimbal mit 2 Manualen*, they were selected as the final segment for his keyboard series *Clavier-Übung IV* in 1741. Legend has it that Count Keyserlingk, a Russian ambassador, requested that Bach create the variations for his protégé, Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, as musical therapy to cure his insomnia. Although they were composed for the harpsichord, they have found a niche in the piano repertoire due to the popularity of recordings by Wanda Landowska and Glenn Gould.

#### The Aria

The work's structure is circularly symmetrical: it begins and ends with the Aria, and in the middle sits 30 variations that can be divided evenly into two halves, with the second half beginning with the French Overture in Variation 16. In just 32 bars, his spellbinding, ethereal, and heavenly Aria seamlessly weaves through 4 keys (G Major – D Major – E minor – G Major). Structurally reminiscent of a sarabande dendre with its slow triple meter, pulse on 2, and melancholic character, the right hand's melody spirals down gracefully through four-bar phrases while the bass proceeds in eight-bar units. This pattern continues until the final eight bars, where Bach introduces a catalyst of running semiquavers in an eight-bar melodic line, pulling the theme to its close.

#### The Variations

The variations are thematically woven around the Aria's harmonic progression. They can be grouped into ten sets of three variations, where each set contains three selections: a dance or genre piece popular of the time, a virtuosic piece displaying hand-crossings, and a two-voice canon. He begins his first set, for example, with a polonaise (Variation 1), followed by an imitative trio-sonata (Variation 2), and a canon of the unison (Variation 3).

Bach's use of dance and genre piece adds both variety and historical context to the composition. This diverse collection includes the passepied (Variation 4), dotted gigue (Variations 7), fughetta (Variation 10), sarabande (Variation 13), French overture (Variations 16), minuet (Variation 19), gavotte (Variation 22), adagio (Variation 25), and toccata (Variations 28). His stylized incorporation of these selections reflects the Baroque tradition of adapting popular dance forms into the world of keyboard music through a cohesive and captivating musical tapestry.

The virtuosic variations require a high level of technical mastery from the performer, especially on an instrument that lacks a second manual (such as the grand piano). They feature both Italian and French style hand-crossing, reminiscent of Scarlatti and Couperin. At times, these arabesque-like variations mirror his two- and three-part inventions.

The mathematical precision and structural brilliance of Bach's contrapuntal writing is showcased in his canons—a compositional technique like a “round” where a melody is imitated by one or more voices. They appear strategically at every third variation, progressing with intervallic complexity from a unison to a ninth, and contribute significantly to the overall depth and richness of the piece.

### Quodlibet and Aria de Capo

In place of the tenth canon, the last variation is a musical joke. Bach writes a four-part voice quodlibet based on two German popular folk songs: “*Kraut und Ruben haben mich vertrieben*” (Cabbage and beets have driven me away) and another “*Ich bin so lang nicht bei dir gewest*” (I've been so long away from you). The melody fits flawlessly with the harmonies of the Aria, which bring a close to the work.

### **Etude No. 11 from *Etudes Book II***

Renowned American minimalist composer, Philip Glass, originally wrote his eleventh etude alongside his twelfth as part of a two-movement set devoted to his close friend, titled *A Musical Portrait of Chuck Close*, in 2005. The etudes later found their place in Glass's second volume of etudes. The etude, written in the key of C minor, serves not only as finger exercise, but as an exploration to Glass's signature compositional techniques, including patterns of repetition, rhythmic pulsations, and extended harmonies.

### ***Gaspard de la Nuit***

Maurice Ravel's “Gaspard de la Nuit” (1908) is a three-piece piano suite based off the book of poems by Aloysius Bertrand which bear the same title. Bertrand, who is often noted as the French counterpart to Edgar Allan Poe, wrote in the poems in 1835 as a literary reimagination of the artistic visions of Rembrandt and Jacques Callot. Ravel selected three poems from Bertrand's collection, skillfully transforming them into musical fairytales.

The first movement, titled *Ondine*, tells the story of a sea-nymph who falls in love with a mortal. Disappointed by his unrequited love, she lures him down into the seas where he becomes king in her underwater palace. In the second movement, *Le Gibet*, Ravel juxtaposes life and death through a haunting musical depiction of a corpse being hung from the gallows during sunset. The distant tolling of a bell rings in the distance symbolized by a recurring three-note B-flat/A-sharp motif. In the final movement, *Scarbo*, Ravel ventures into the realm of Romantic expressionism with virtuosic writing kin to Franz Liszt. It tells the story of Scarbo, a small, wicked, and mischievous beetle-like dwarf.

## About the Artist

Pianist **Antonio Valentin** is a versatile artist, collaborator, and piano teacher based in the New York City area. He has presented concerts in Tokyo, Madrid, San Juan, Washington D.C., New York City, and Philadelphia. Hailing from the culturally diverse Maryland suburbs, Antonio has honed his expertise in Neoclassicism, French Impressionism, Nationalism, and Minimalism under the tutelage of renowned teachers such as Alan Feinberg, Marilyn Nonken, Thomas Schumacher, and Donn-Alexandre Feder.

His noteworthy performances encompass a solo engagement with the Grammy-nominated Eastman Wind Ensemble, a collaboration with Renée Fleming, and the world premiere of Sō Percussion member Jason Treuting's "Homage to a Triad." Career highlights also include an accompanying role for Towson University's dance program and an adjunct faculty appointment at New York University. Antonio is currently pursuing a Doctorate of Music in piano performance at the CUNY Graduate Center.