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NAREK ARUTYUNIAN, CLARINET STEVEN BECK, PIANO



Narek Arutyunian, *clarinet*
Steven Beck, *piano*

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NAREK ARUTYUNIAN

Clarinetist Narek Arutyunian is an artist who “reaches passionate depths with seemingly effortless technical prowess and beguiling sensitivity” (*The Washington Post*). As soloist with orchestra, his performances include Copland’s Clarinet Concerto with the Orchestra of St. Luke’s at Alice Tully Hall, Artie Shaw’s Concerto for Clarinet with The Boston Pops, Mozart’s Concerto with Oregon’s Newport Symphony and New York’s St. Thomas Orchestra, appearances with Prague Radio Symphony, the Kaliningrad Philharmonic, the Moscow Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra and the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra, and a recording of Weber’s Concertino with the New Russia State Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Armenia, Mr. Arutyunian’s family moved to Moscow when he was three. As a teenager, he won First Prizes in the International Young Musicians Competition in Prague and the Musical Youth of the Planet Competition in Moscow. He graduated from the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory as a student of Evgeny Petrov, received a Bachelor’s degree from The Juilliard School, where he worked with Charles Neidich, and continued his studies with Mr. Neidich at the Manhattan School of Music on a Leon Russianoff Memorial Scholarship, where he received a Master’s Degree in 2018.

Mr. Arutyunian has performed extensively in Australia, Asia, and in Europe, including at the Musée du Louvre in Paris and the Palazzo del Principe in Genoa. He has appeared at the Marlboro Music Festival and at Juilliard’s ChamberFest, the New York Festival of Song, the Methow Valley Chamber Music Festival in Washington, the Krzyzowa Music Festival in Poland, Germany’s Usedomer Musik-festival, Musica Viva’s Huntington Estate and Sydney festivals in Australia, and Young Concert Artists Festivals in Tokyo and Beijing. In addition to solo recitals, he consistently receives acclaim for his educational outreach programs in New York City public schools and around the country.

Mr. Arutyunian was scheduled to appear in March 2020 when COVID intervened, and in place of that concert he created a video that we streamed the following June. This afternoon is his first appearance on our stage.

PIANO & FRIENDS SERIES

STEVEN BECK

American pianist Steven Beck is a graduate of the Juilliard School, where his teachers were Seymour Lipkin, Peter Serkin, and Bruce Brubaker. He made his debut with the National Symphony Orchestra, and has toured Japan as soloist with the New York Symphonic Ensemble. Other orchestras with which he has appeared include the New Juilliard Ensemble (under David Robertson), Sequitur, the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players, and the Virginia Symphony.

Mr. Beck has performed as soloist and chamber musician at the Kennedy Center, Alice Tully Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, Miller Theater, and Steinway Hall, as well as on the New York Philharmonic Ensembles Series and WNYC. Summer appearances have been at the Aspen Music Festival, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, the Greenwich Music Festival, the Woodstock Mozart Festival, and the Wellesley Composers' Conference. He is an Artist Presenter and regular performer at Bargemusic (where he recently performed all of the Beethoven piano sonatas), performs frequently as a musician with the Mark Morris Dance Group, and has performed with the New York City Ballet.

Composers Mr. Beck has worked with include Elliott Carter, Henri Dutilleux, George Perle, and Charles Wuorinen, and he has appeared with ensembles such as Speculum Musicae, the Da Capo Chamber Players, the Manhattan String Quartet, the Pacifica String Quartet, The Metropolis Ensemble, New York Philomusica, the New York New Music Ensemble, Mosaic, the Lyric Chamber Music Society, the Omega Ensemble, Ensemble Sospeso, the Orchestra of the S.E.M. Ensemble, Counterinduction, the American Contemporary Music Ensemble, the East Coast Composers' Ensemble, the Fountain Ensemble, Friends and Enemies of New Music, Lost Dog, and Antisocial Music. He is a member of the new music ensemble Future In Reverse (FIRE) as well as the notorious Knights of the Many-Sided Table. His recordings are on the Albany, Bridge, Monument, Mulatta, and Annemarie Classics labels.

This afternoon's performance marks the first time Mr. Beck has appeared in our concerts.

THIS AFTERNOON'S PROGRAM

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–1990)

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano

Grazioso—Un poco più mosso
Andantino—Vivace e leggiero

CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786–1826)

Grand Duo Concertante for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 48

Allegro con fuoco
Andante con moto
Rondo: Allegro

INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

*Sonata in E-flat Major for Clarinet and Piano,
Op. 120, no. 2*

Allegro amabile
Allegro appassionato
Andante con moto—Allegro

PAUL SCHOENFIELD (b. 1947)

Sonatina for Klezmer Clarinet and Piano

I. ♩ = 104
II. Allegretto

The appearance of Narek Arutyunian is sponsored by the generous contribution of Dagmar Cushing.

PROGRAM NOTES

“The Clarinet Sonata was my first published piece (1942). I’m still proud of it, despite a certain student element in the music.”

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

AMERICAN ICON Leonard Bernstein has been described as a Renaissance man. Renowned as a much-recorded composer, conductor, and pianist, he also wrote influential books and essays that promoted music as a vital, living art. An inspiring teacher, Bernstein brought his messages into American life through televised lectures and Young People’s Concerts. Despite a schedule of astounding complexity, he remained dedicated to numerous humanitarian causes throughout his life. His impressive list of awards includes 21 honorary degrees, 13 Grammy Awards, 11 Emmy Awards, 25 television awards, 23 civic awards, and honorary titles in 20 societies and orchestras, including Laureate Conductor of the New York Philharmonic and the Israel Philharmonic.

While still a student at the Curtis Institute, Bernstein began his clarinet sonata during a 1941 visit to Key West. He recalled in an interview that he had bought a clarinet in a pawnshop two years earlier. “I fooled around with it, so I was inclined towards the instrument. The Clarinet Sonata was my first published piece (1942). I’m still proud of it, despite a certain student element in the music.”

The songful *Grazioso* combines the neoclassical idiom of Paul Hindemith, his summer teacher at the Tanglewood Institute, with an element of boogie-woogie. The second movement, influenced by both Aaron Copland and Key West jazz clubs, is cast in four sections with alternating slow-fast tempos.

LAUDED AS THE STANDARD BEARER for the new romantic movement that swept Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, Carl Maria von Weber built his reputation with operas such as *Der Freischütz* (1821), marvelous works that evoked the world of dreams and supernatural mysteries. His music, admired by Wagner as an affirmation of the Teutonic spirit, vibrated with echoes of German folksong. Weber also created concert works, many with detailed programs, as well as short piano pieces that conveyed his musical ideas with unprecedented structural freedom.

Weber wrote his *Grand Duo Concertante* (1815) for himself, a powerful pianist, and his clarinetist friend Heinrich Baermann. Since the composition of light and rapid works came most naturally to him, Weber initially wrote the rondo finale; the second and first movements followed in that sequence. During composition the work was designated a sonata. Upon completion it was renamed *Grand Duo Concertante* to suggest that it was a showpiece for two virtuosos rather than a more classical structure. The work is often described as “a double concerto without orchestra.”

The vigorous *Allegro con fuoco* (fast and with fire) unfolds in sonata form with lively exchanges between the instruments. Its two playful themes are developed with colorful passagework. The C minor *Andante con moto* (leisurely but with motion) opens with a pensive song for clarinet. An extended solo piano passage offers a second theme, and the two ideas are developed; the movement concludes in a somber atmosphere. The Rondo finale (E-flat major) begins with a joyous theme that grows ever more energetic in its returning statements. Momentum builds towards a brilliant conclusion.

IN 1890 BRAHMS STARTLED both friends and publishers by announcing his retirement from composition. According to his friend Theodor Billroth, he “rejected the idea that he would ever compose anything again.” Fortunately, Brahms soon regained his inspiration after hearing clarinet performances by Richard Mühlfeld, a 23-year-old virtuoso who was then acclaimed the greatest wind player of his day. Formerly unaware of the clarinet’s lyric potential, Brahms decided to create chamber works showcasing Mühlfeld’s artistry. He immediately began to write a trio and quintet for clarinet; three years later he completed his two sonatas for clarinet and piano, the first scored for this pairing. Although Opus 120 No. 2 (1894) was Brahms’s final chamber composition, he agreed to recast it for viola and piano.

Brahms wrote his two clarinet sonatas with Mühlfeld’s specific sound in mind. His performance style was described as dramatic and emotional; tooth marks on the mouthpiece of one of his surviving instruments suggest the use of vibrato. The atmosphere of Opus 120 No. 2, characterized as “lyric expressivity,” serves the focused intensity of Mühlfeld’s art, and its themes are idiomatic for the clarinetist’s singing style. The sonata was performed four times within five days for Brahms’s musically critical friends Clara Schumann and Joseph Joachim, whom he had known since writing his first surviving sonata forty-two years earlier, and both gave well-received advice.

The sonata develops as a continuous design with two serene outer movements framing a passionate interior. The genial opening movement explores two songful themes in sonata form, here unfolding with unprecedented subtlety and fluidity. The sinuous development area presents new material that forms the basis for the transcendent coda. Conversational ease prevails at the recapitulation, and the *tranquillo* (tranquil) coda brings the movement to a gentle conclusion.

The three-part Allegro appassionato (E-flat minor, fast and passionate) is a deft scherzo underpinned by a massive keyboard score. The central section (B major) explores a noble, warmly glowing theme; the opening material returns.

The Andante con moto is a set of six variations based on a serene theme that echoes the primary motive of the earlier Opus 120 No. 1. The variations increase in difficulty through ingenious ornamentation and alterations of rhythm; the fourth variation comes to a pause before the Allegro outburst of Variation 5 (2/4 meter, minor mode). The final section begins in a pastoral atmosphere but concludes with a mood of celebration.

PAUL SCHOENFIELD RECEIVED his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Arizona, where his principal teachers were Ozan Marsh and Robert Muczynski. After living in Israel during the 1990s, he returned to the United States, where he has pursued an active career as a touring pianist and composer. He has been awarded numerous commissions and grants from organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Fund, and Chamber Music America. Often compared to Gershwin, Schoenfield takes inspiration from a wide range of musical experience—American and foreign popular styles, folk traditions, and established classical practice, often treated with a sly twist. He delights in combining these diverse elements within a single work. The result, he states, “is not the kind of music for relaxation, but the kind that makes people sweat; not only the performer, but the audience.”

Klezmer, a genre of the Ashkenazi Jewish tradition, originally implied spirited dance tunes played for celebrations; in recent decades it has incorporated American jazz elements. The two movements of Schoenfield’s playful and virtuosic *Sonatina for Klezmer Clarinet and Piano* proceed without pause. The composer indicates that the first should be performed “always very marked, exaggerated and grotesque,” and the second “drunken and lively.”

Notes by Nancy Monsman

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Of green and glint of sunbeams mixed together
(And I had forgotten both) in water clear.

Full of the foulness of blood and lust and fear
Is the past now. I break its holding tether,
And stand once more with guiding Innocences.

You are like silence in which I can be myself.
You are the truth of music: something lost
Ages and ages ago, and forgotten, and found.

Ere death my feet are set upon holy ground,
I, wanderer amid a wandering host,
Come home, led by the magic of one sweet elf.

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THE LOFT

CINEMA

50TH ANNIVERSARY

★ 1972 - 2022 ★

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
OF CINEMA IN 2022!**

VISIT LOFTCINEMA.ORG FOR OUR LATEST FILMS & EVENTS SCHEDULE.

SASO

**SOUTHERN ARIZONA
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**2021-2022 Season
Linus Lerner, Music Director**

October 16 and 17

Verdi, Beethoven, and Grieg

November 13 and 14

Tchaikovsky, Saint-Saëns and Mendelssohn

February 5 and 6

Beethoven, Borodin and talented youth

March 12 and 13

Flying High with Holland, Stravinsky,
Gershwin and talented youth

April 30 and May 1

Dvořák and Moszkowski

SATURDAY PERFORMANCES

7:30 pm at DesertView
Performing Arts Center
39900 S. Clubhouse Drive
SaddleBrooke

SUNDAY PERFORMANCES

3:00 pm at St Andrew's
Presbyterian Church,
SW Sanctuary
7575 N. Paseo Del Norte
Tucson

For more information call (520) 308-6226 or visit sasomusic.org

COMING SOON

JANUARY

Imani Winds

Wednesday, January 19, 2022
7:30 pm Leo Rich Theater

FEBRUARY

Yura Lee, *violin*

Gilles Vonsattel, *piano*

Wednesday, February 2, 2022
7:30 pm Leo Rich Theater

Poulenc Trio

Sunday, February 13, 2022
3:00 pm Leo Rich Theater

Goldmund Quartet

Wednesday, February 23, 2022
7:30 pm Leo Rich Theater

MARCH

Tucson Winter Chamber Music Festival

Sunday, March 13, 2022
3:00 pm Leo Rich Theater

Tuesday, March 15, 2022
7:30 pm Leo Rich Theater

Wednesday, March 16, 2022
7:30 pm Leo Rich Theater

Friday, March 18, 2022
7:30 pm Leo Rich Theater

Saturday, March 19, 2022
Gala Dinner and Concert
6:00 pm Arizona Inn

Sunday, March 20, 2022
3:00 pm Leo Rich Theater

APRIL

Vienna Piano Trio

Wednesday, April 6, 2022
7:30 pm Leo Rich Theater

Arizona Friends of Chamber Music
Post Office Box 40845
Tucson, Arizona 85717

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