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CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL AND INSTITUTE

WINTER SERIES



December 8, 2016

KONSTANTIN LIFSCHITZ

J. S. Bach – Six Partitas for Keyboard

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About Music@Menlo

One of the world's foremost chamber music festivals and institutes, Music@Menlo promotes the enjoyment and understanding of classical music by encouraging audience members, artists, and young musicians to engage deeply with great music. Under the artistic leadership of David Finckel and Wu Han, Music@Menlo combines world-class chamber music performances, extensive audience engagement, and intensive training for young artists in its Chamber Music Institute in an effort to enrich and further build the chamber music community of Silicon Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Music@Menlo's unique approach enhances concert programs by creating an immersive experience through numerous opportunities for deepening and intensifying listeners' understanding and enjoyment of the music. With a context-rich atmosphere and powerful engagement between its audience and the music, Music@Menlo has set a new standard for chamber music festivals worldwide.

David Finckel and Wu Han, Artistic Directors

Music@Menlo Artistic Directors David Finckel and Wu Han are among today's most influential classical musicians. Named *Musical America's* 2012 Musicians of the Year, the cellist and pianist have appeared at many of the world's most prestigious venues and music festivals. Also Artistic Directors of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York, David Finckel and Wu Han are widely recognized for their initiatives in expanding audiences for classical music and for guiding the careers of countless young musicians.

Music@Menlo

Thursday, December 8, 2016, 7:30 p.m.

Schultz Cultural Arts Hall, Oshman Family JCC, Palo Alto

KONSTANTIN LIFSCHITZ, *PIANO*

PROGRAM

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Six Partitas for Keyboard (Clavier-Übung I) (1726–1731)

Partita no. 1 in B-flat Major, BWV 825

Praeludium
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Menuets I and II
Gigue

Partita no. 4 in D Major, BWV 828

Ouverture
Allemande
Courante
Aria
Sarabande
Menuet
Gigue

Partita no. 2 in c minor, BWV 826

Sinfonia
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Rondeau
Capriccio

INTERMISSION

Partita no. 5 in G Major, BWV 829

Praeambulum
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Tempo di minuetto
Passepied
Gigue

INTERMISSION

Partita no. 3 in a minor, BWV 827

Fantasia
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Burlesca
Scherzo
Gigue

Partita no. 6 in e minor, BWV 830

Toccata
Allemande
Courante
Air
Sarabande
Tempo di gavotta
Gigue

PROGRAM NOTES

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

(Born March 21, 1685, Eisenach, Germany; died July 28, 1750, Leipzig)

Six Partitas for Keyboard (Clavier-Übung I)

Composed: 1726–1731

Other works from this period: Six French Suites for Keyboard, BWV 812–817 (ca. 1722–1725); Fantasia and Fugue in a minor for Keyboard, BWV 904 (1725); Sei Lob und Ehr dem höchsten Gut, BWV 117 (chorale) (ca. 1728–1731); Concerto in a minor for Solo Violin, Strings, and Continuo, BWV 1041 (ca. 1730)

Approximate duration: 2 hours

With the condescending pronouncement, “Since the best man could not be obtained, mediocre ones would have to be accepted,” City Councilor Abraham Platz announced the appointment of Johann Sebastian Bach in 1723 as Cantor for Leipzig’s churches. Platz’s “best man” was Georg Philipp Telemann, then the most highly regarded composer in all of Germany, and the local disappointment at not being able to pry him away from his post as Hamburg’s Music Director was only one of the many difficulties that Bach faced during his first years on the job in Leipzig. Bach’s new duties centered on directing the music for Sunday worship at the town’s four churches, principally St. Thomas, where the service usually stretched to four hours and required copious amounts of music, a sizeable portion of which the new Cantor was required to compose. Bach was responsible to the city’s ecclesiastical Consistory in fulfilling these duties, which he had to balance with his teaching at the church’s school, run by the town council. He was also charged with providing some of the music for Leipzig University’s chapel, administered by that institution’s board of governors. His dealings with none of these bodies were eased by his volatile, sometimes even belligerent temper, and his relations with his superiors were almost constantly strained. The most serious of these animosities erupted in a petition to the land’s highest authority, Augustus “the Strong,” Elector of Saxony, asking him to adjudicate a dispute over his assignments and pay with the university authorities, who were much concerned with Bach’s paucity of formal education. Bach lost.

Much of Bach’s early activity in Leipzig was carried out under the shadow of the memory of his predecessor, Johann Kuhnau, a respected musician and scholar who had published masterly translations of Greek and Hebrew, practiced as a lawyer in the city, and won wide fame for his keyboard music. In 1726, probably the earliest date allowed by the enormous demands of his official position for new sacred vocal music, Bach began a series of keyboard suites that were apparently intended to compete with those of Kuhnau. In addition to helping establish his reputation in Leipzig, these pieces would also provide useful teaching material for the private students he was beginning to draw from among the university’s scholars, who were less hampered by bureaucratic exigencies than their superiors in recognizing Bach’s genius. (Several of his secular cantatas were written for commissions from the university students.) The Partita no. 1 in B-flat Major (BWV 825) issued in that year was the first of his compositions

to be published, with the exception of two cantatas that appeared during his short tenure in Mühlhausen many years before (1707–1708). Bach funded the venture himself and even engraved the plates (to save money) with the help of his teenage son Carl Philipp Emanuel, who was then learning that exacting craft. (Copies could be had directly from the composer, cash in advance.) Bach published an additional partita every year or so until 1731, when he gathered together the six works and issued them collectively in a volume entitled *Clavier-Übung* (Keyboard Practice), a term he borrowed from Kuhnau's keyboard suites published in 1689 and 1692.

The partitas of what became Part I of the *Clavier-Übung* were well received; Johann Nikolaus Forkel, in the first full biography of Bach (1802), reported that “the works made in their time a great noise in the musical world. Such excellent compositions for harpsichord had not been seen or heard before, so brilliant, agreeable, expressive, and original are they. Anyone who could play them well could make his fortune in the world thereby, and even in our times, a young artist could gain acknowledgement by doing so.” Bach continued his series of *Clavier-Übung* with three further volumes of vastly different natures: Part II (1735) contains the Italian Concerto, the ultimate keyboard realization of that quintessential Baroque orchestral form, and the *Ouverture* (Suite) in the French Manner; Part III (1739), for organ, includes the Catechism Chorale Preludes, several short canonic pieces, and the St. Anne Prelude and Fugue; and Part IV (1742) contains the incomparable Goldberg Variations.

The term “partita” was originally applied to pieces in variations form in Italy during the sixteenth century, and the word survived in that context into Bach's time. The keyboard partitas of the *Clavier-Übung*, however, are not variations but suites of dances, a form that in France occasionally bore the title of *partie*, meaning either a movement in a larger work or a musical piece for entertainment. The French term was taken over into German practice in the late seventeenth century as *parthie* to indicate an instrumental suite, and Bach's “partita” seems to have been a corruption of this usage. (He had earlier used the title for three of his works for unaccompanied violin.) Bach referred to these pieces as *galanteries*, or “entertainment pieces,” and broadened the usual German succession of dances (*Allemande*, *Courante*, *Sarabande*, *Gigue*) to include such alternate movements as *Rondeau*, *Capriccio*, *Burlesca*, *Aria*, and *Gavotte*. Each of the six partitas opens with a movement of a different character: *Praeludium*, *Sinfonia*, *Fantasia*, *Ouverture*, *Praeambulum*, and *Toccata*. The dances that follow these prelude movements differ from one work to the next but satisfy the demand for stylistic variety and formal balance. Charles Sanford Terry wrote, “Bach's keyboard suites contain not far short of two hundred movements. They exhibit extraordinary fertility of invention, vivid imaginative power, and complete technical mastery of the forms they employ.”

Partita no. 1 in B-flat Major, BWV 825

The Partita no. 1 begins with a *Praeludium* of tender lyricism and placid temperament. The first two of the partita's dance movements are dynamically energetic, the *Allemande*, vigorous and marching and the *Courante*, agile and mercurial. Elaborate ornamentation encrusts the melody of the introspective *Sarabande*. If the Divinity

PROGRAM NOTES

had a music box, it would play the pair of Menuets that follows. The Gigue is a musical sleight of hand, with its staccato theme emerging from a curtain of ceaseless figuration.

Partita no. 2 in c minor, BWV 826

The Sinfonia that opens the Partita no. 2 in c minor comprises three continuous sections: a slow introductory passage whose pompous dotted rhythms are borrowed from the French overture, an austere two-voice exercise of sweeping scales supported by a walking bass, and a lively fugue in two parts. The next two movements follow the old custom of pairing a slow dance with a fast one: an Allemande (here marked by swiftly flowing rhythms and active dialogue among the voices) is complemented by a Courante, a dance type originally accompanied by jumping motions. The stately Sarabande that follows is balanced by a quick Rondeau based on a leaping theme and a closing Capriccio whose brilliance rivals some of Bach's concerto movements.

Partita no. 3 in a minor, BWV 827

Though the movement that launches the Partita no. 3 is called a Fantasia, there is nothing wayward or improvisatory about its meticulous counterpoint and frequent imitative exchanges. The Allemande is dignified and florid, the Courante is brisk and playful, and the Sarabande is reserved and somber. The two movements that follow take their titles and their spirit from the Italian words for "joke" or "jest": Burlesca and Scherzo. A virtuosic Gigue in fugal style closes the partita.

Partita no. 4 in D Major, BWV 828

The Partita no. 4 in D Major begins with a grand Overture, the instrumental form used as the opening number in French opera, as perfected by Lully. The movement comprises a stately slow section punctuated by sweeping scales leading to an extensive fugue in swinging 9/8 meter. The spacious Allemande (here marked by a florid melody set over carefully intertwined accompanimental voices) is complemented by an intricately cross-rhythmed Courante. The following Aria is cheerful and perhaps a little folkish in its melodic directness. The thoughtful Sarabande that follows is balanced by a quick Menuet of flowing triplet figurations and a brilliant closing Gigue.

Partita no. 5 in G Major, BWV 829

The Partita no. 5 begins with a scintillating *Praeambulum* of whirling scales and arpeggios. A gracious Allemande and a brilliant Courante precede the sweet duet strains of the Sarabande. The delicate *Tempo di minuetto* is paired with a *Passepied*, a quick variant of the minuet that was especially popular in French theatrical music. The closing Gigue is a full-fledged fugue in two-part dance form.

Partita no. 6 in e minor, BWV 830

The Partita no. 6 in e minor is one of Bach's most introspective keyboard compositions. It opens with an unusual Toccata, a form that typically admits only free, quasi-improvisatory figural work (as is heard in the first and last sections); here it

is expanded to incorporate a vast fugue as the central argument of the movement. The following Allemande is deeply expressive and richly decorated. The Courante is built around a precisely controlled chain of nervous rhythmic syncopations. The brief Air is a *moto perpetuo* piece rooted in largely scalar figurations. Next comes a Sarabande whose elaborate melodic filigrees temper its essentially tragic nature. Two fast movements close the *e minor Partita*: a Gavotta of vigorous rhythmic energy and a Gigue in imitative style.

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ARTIST BIOGRAPHY



In 2016, pianist **KONSTANTIN LIFSCHITZ** released his new CD, *Les saisons russes*. 2015 also saw the release of his second recording of the Goldberg Variations, performed most recently at the Rheingau Music Festival as part of his cycle featuring all the keyboard works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Lifschitz's Grammy-nominated previous version of those variations, recorded at the age of seventeen, affirmed his position in the ranks of the leading pianists of today.

Konstantin Lifschitz was born in 1976 in Kharkov, Ukraine. At the age of five, he began his studies at the Gnessin Special Music School in Moscow, where Tatiana Zelikman was his teacher. He furthered his studies in Russia, England, and Italy under such musicians as Alfred Brendel, Leon Fleisher, and Charles Rosen.

Since his debut in Moscow, Lifschitz has performed with famous orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the London Symphony under conductors including Mstislav Rostropovich, Sir Neville Marriner, Bernard Haitink, Sir Roger Norrington, Mikhail Yurovsky, Marek Janowski, Andrey Boreyko, Vladimir Spivakov, Yuri Temirkanov, Dmitry Sitkovetsky, and Alexander Rudin. He also performs solo recitals at major festivals and in the most important concert halls worldwide.

A passionate chamber musician, Lifschitz has collaborated with such artists as Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Gidon Kremer, Maxim Vengerov, Leila Josefowicz, Mischa Maisky, Mstislav Rostropovich, Lynn Harrell, Carolin Widmann, Natalia Gutman, Jörg Widmann, Sol Gabetta, Vadim Repin, Eugene Ugorski, Alexander Rudin, and Dmitry Sitkovetsky.

His diverse repertoire is reflected in his extensive discography, which includes Bach's *The Musical Offering*, Gottfried von Einem's Piano Concerto no. 1 with the ORF Symphony Orchestra (Vienna Radio) under Cornelius Meister, Brahms's Second Piano Concerto, and Mozart's Piano Concerto KV 456 under Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, as well as Bach's *The Art of Fugue*, which has been an important focus of his work over the years. He won the German Echo Klassik Award with his debut recording, featuring music by

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Bach, Schumann, Medtner, and Scriabin. His recording of the complete violin sonatas of Ludwig van Beethoven with Daishin Kashimoto, the Concertmaster of the Berliner Philharmoniker, was released by Warner Classics in January 2014.

In 2008, a live recording of Lifschitz's performance of Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (Books I and II) at the Miami International Piano Festival was released on DVD by VAI. Many of his CDs have received exceptional reviews. He has recorded all seven keyboard concerti of J. S. Bach with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, leading from the piano; he also appears more and more as a conductor with such ensembles as the Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra Wernigerode, the St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra of Vilnius, Musica Viva of Moscow, Lux Aeterna and the Gabrieli Choir of Budapest, Moscow Virtuosi, Solisti di Napoli, Dalarna Sinfonietta of Falun, and the Chamber Orchestra Arpeggione of Hohenems. In February 2015, he collaborated with the Osaka Century Orchestra on an all-Mozart program, performed in Osaka's Izumi Hall.

Konstantin Lifschitz is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in London and has been a professor at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts since 2008.

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Music@Menlo is proud to partner with the Stanford Park Hotel, Crowne Plaza Palo Alto, and Residence Inn Marriott Hotel for the 2016/17 season.



Restaurant Partner

Music@Menlo is proud to partner with LB Steak/Left Bank Brasserie for the 2016/17 season.



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Pacifica Quartet: Beethoven, Shostakovich, and Ravel

Wednesday, January 11, 2017, 7:30 p.m.

The Center for Performing Arts at Menlo-Atherton

Recognized for its virtuosity and exuberant style, the Pacifica Quartet has gained international stature as one of the finest chamber ensembles. On January 11, it presents Beethoven's energetic String Quartet in B-flat Major, Shostakovich's contemplative Third Quartet, and Ravel's innovative, richly textured String Quartet in F Major.

Sitkovetsky Trio and David Shifrin: Messiaen and Akiho

Sunday, May 21, 2017, 4:00 p.m.

The Center for Performing Arts at Menlo-Atherton

Clarinetist David Shifrin joins violinist Alexander Sitkovetsky, cellist Danjulo Ishizaka and pianist Wu Qian to perform the premiere of a Music@Menlo commission by composer Andy Akiho, winner of the 2014–2015 Luciano Berio Rome Prize. This new work is paired with Messiaen's iconic *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (Quartet for the End of Time), the 1941 chamber music classic that received its extraordinary premiere in a prisoner-of-war camp.

Tickets: \$52/\$47 full price; \$25/\$20 under age thirty

For tickets and information, go online to www.musicatmenlo.org or call 650-331-0202.

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