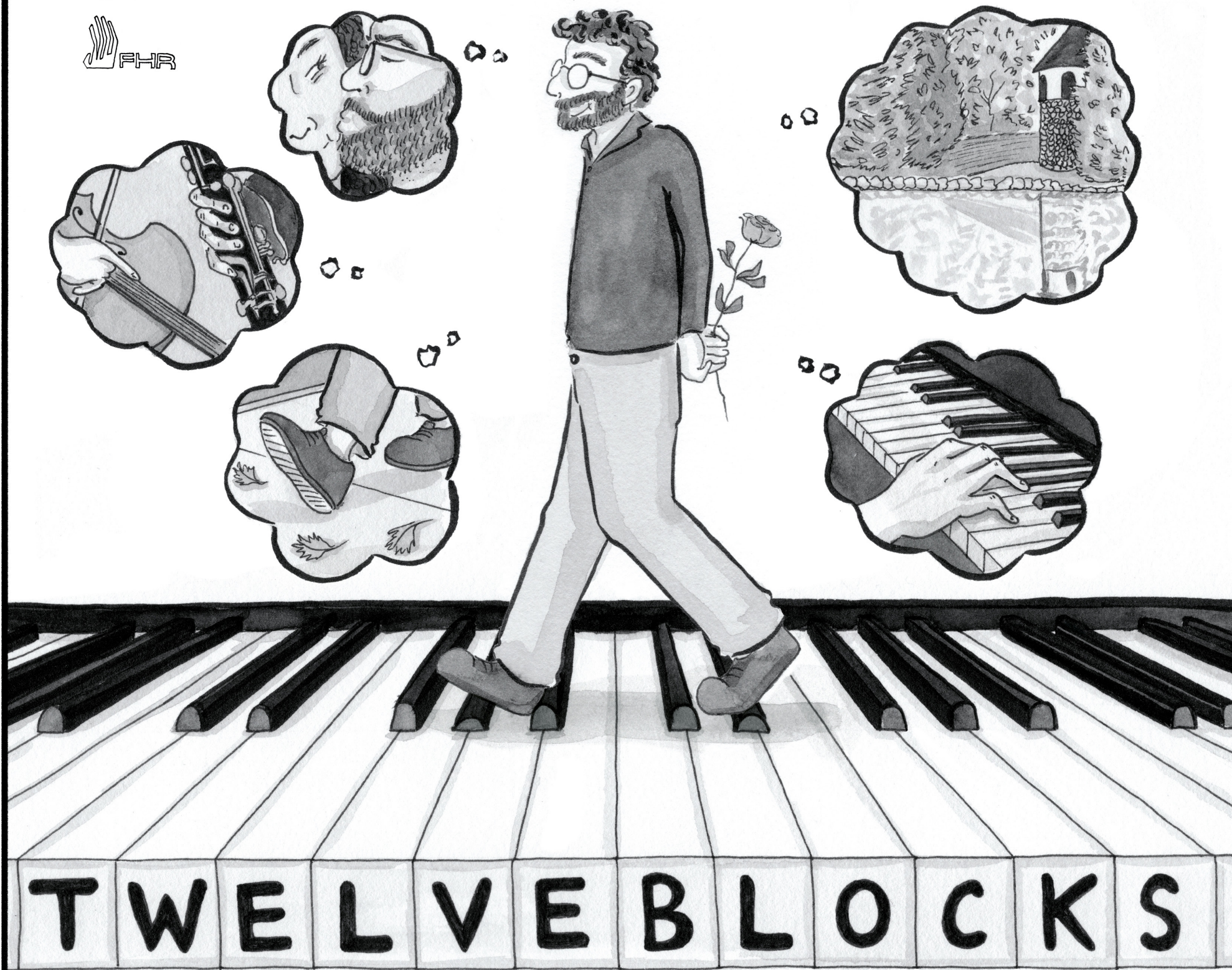


Michael Stephen Brown





Twelve Blocks Michael Stephen Brown

1-4 Four Lakes for Children (2024)

piano

5-7 Pas de trois (2025)

soprano + viola + piano

8-12 Relationship (2018)

clarinet + violin

13 Twelve Blocks (2021)

piano (four hands) + poetry

14-21 Love's Lives Lost (2023)

soprano + piano

22 Breakup Etude for the Right Hand Alone (2020)

piano

23 Pour Angeline (2024)

piano

Michael Stephen Brown, Jerome Lowenthal, Ursula Oppens, Anne-Marie McDermott (piano)
Susanna Phillips (soprano), Paul Neubauer (viola), Erin Keefe (violin), Osmo Vänskä (clarinet)



Michael Stephen BROWN (b. 1987)

Four Lakes for Children (2024)

[9:42]

- | | | |
|------------|---------------------|---------------|
| [1] | I. Lake Alan | [1:31] |
| [2] | II. Lake Spencer | [1:57] |
| [3] | III. Lake Christina | [3:20] |
| [4] | IV. Lake Katrina | [2:53] |

Michael Stephen Brown *piano*

Pas de trois (2025)

[13:06]

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| [5] | I. Piano | [4:50] |
| [6] | II. The Violist | [5:07] |
| [7] | III. Soprano | [3:09] |

SPA Trio:

Susanna Phillips *soprano*

Paul Neubauer *viola*

Anne-Marie McDermott *piano*

Relationship (2018)

[10:39]

- | | | |
|-------------|----------------------|---------------|
| [8] | I. The Meeting | [2:38] |
| [9] | II. Connection | [1:26] |
| [10] | III. The Argument(s) | [1:38] |
| [11] | IV. Ballad | [2:54] |
| [12] | V. Finale: Hora | [2:04] |

Osmo Vänskä *clarinet*

Erin Keefe *violin*

13	Twelve Blocks for Piano (Four Hands) and Poetry (2021) Jerome Lowenthal, Ursula Oppens <i>piano, narration</i>	[9:33]
	Love's Lives Lost (2023)	[17:30]
14	I. Introduction	[2:29]
15	II. Meeting	[0:52]
16	III. Parody of Chamisso	[1:47]
17	IV. In-lookers	[2:02]
18	V. Onlookers	[1:42]
19	VI. Chanson Triste	[2:38]
20	VII. Kalamazoo!	[1:28]
21	VIII. Finale: Split Mirror Susanna Phillips <i>soprano</i> Michael Stephen Brown <i>piano</i>	[4:26]
22	Breakup Etude for the Right Hand Alone (2020)	[6:36]
23	Pour Angeline (2024) Michael Stephen Brown <i>piano</i>	[2:17]
	Total Timing:	[69:43]

*The album is dedicated to the memory of Shirley Perle (1924–2024),
an extraordinary person whose impact on my life is beyond words. Michael Stephen Brown*

All première recordings apart from *Relationship* and *Love's Lives Lost*, which are première commercial recordings

All works published by Octavia Daria Music © 2018–2025

Relationship recorded at Reservoir Studios, New York City, USA, 2 December 2023
produced and engineered by **Silas Brown**

Pour Angeline recorded at Shirley Perle Music Room, Gardiner, New York, USA, 1 May 2025,
Breakup Etude for the Right Hand Alone, recorded at Shirley Perle Music Room, Gardiner, New York, USA, 31 July, 2025
produced and engineered by **Michael Stephen Brown**

All other works recorded at Oktaven Audio, Mount Vernon, New York, USA, 23 April 2025
produced and engineered by **Ryan Streber**

All tracks mastered by **Ryan Streber**

Tracks 1–21: 24bit 96kHz high resolution recording • Tracks 22–23: 24bit 48kHz high resolution recording
24bit 48kHz mastering

Photos / images

Album cover art by **Amy Kurzweil**

Pages 3 and 26 of Michael Stephen Brown by **Sofian Khan**

Artwork by **David Murphy** (FHR)

FHR thanks Peter Bromley

Michael Stephen BROWN: Twelve Blocks

My first album devoted fully to my own music. These are pieces for the people who've shaped my life – people who made me stop and think and question everything. From lost loves to lifelong mentors, from children who never grew up to a legendary pianist couple who walk twelve blocks to see each other, this album is full of true stories, emotional detours and even a breakup etude I probably should've kept to myself.

Four Lakes for Children (2024)

In the summer of 2024, I spent three weeks in a cabin in the woods at Yaddo, an artist retreat in Saratoga, New York. Disconnected from the outside world – no phone, no social media, only the occasional letter – I immersed myself in the same grounds where Copland completed his *Piano Variations*. By day, I joined thirty other writers, poets, visual artists and filmmakers in silent creation. By night, we gathered for dinner, laughter and games, forging bonds through shared dreams, mosquito bites and ping pong.

Yaddo's history moved me deeply. The founders, Spencer and Katrina Trask, transformed their estate into a haven for artists to create after losing their four children, all of whom died before reaching the age of ten. Legend has it that their daughter Christina named the estate 'Yaddo,' a playful twist on 'shadow.' Each day, I wandered around the property's four lakes, each named after one of the Trask children. These serene waters, with their lush color scheme and sonic mix of birds, toads and

insects became a source of inspiration for my piano pieces. I imagined the laughter and whispers of the young children they honoured.

The four pieces were designed for children to play, each with a technical challenge to solve, a puzzle, a game. The first, *Lake Alan*, features cross-handed jumps over an ostinato left hand. *Lake Spencer* is a study in legato between the hands. *Lake Christina* incorporates extended techniques with sections for each hand. The fourth and final piece, *Lake Katrina*, concludes with a tranquil, hymn-like prayer. Through my work, I sought to give voice to the Trask children and honour Yaddo, a place where magic and creativity thrive.

I finished them in July 2024 and first played them for Yaddo artist Angeline Gragasin – now my fiancée – before performing them publicly at the Music@Menlo festival later that month.

Pas de trois (2025)

Pas de trois was written for the SPA Trio – three close friends and longtime collaborators: soprano Susanna Phillips, violist Paul Neubauer and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. Over the years, I've had the joy of performing with each of them, writing pieces for them and experiencing their unique personalities and artistry first hand.

When they asked me to compose a piece, I sought poetry that

would reflect their individuality as people, performers and friends. For Anne-Marie, *Piano* by D.H. Lawrence felt perfect – it evokes a quiet, nostalgic introspection that mirrors her profound and thoughtful artistry. I took a different route for Paul, writing my own poem, *The Violist*, a playful ode to the bold confidence of a musician who thrives in the spotlight. (Paul assures me he approves.) Set to Rita Dove’s poem, *Soprano* reflects on music’s power to transcend. Written for Susanna, it recalls the gift she has always shown in our collaborations – the ability to make listeners stop, freeze, and wholly engage in her singing – and it closes *Pas de trois* in quiet reflection.

Together, these songs explore a delicate interplay of reflection and playfulness – an intricate dance, a true pas de trois. Or, as Paul might say, ‘Finally, a work that understands me.’

Commissioned by Carol and Ron Sekura for the 2025 Ocean Reef Chamber Music Festival for the SPA Trio and premièred there on 22 January 2025.

Relationship (2018)

When musicians and power couple Osmo Vänskä and Erin Keefe asked for a piece, I wanted to capture the dynamic of two strong personalities – the tenderness, humour, absurdities, tension and of course the fireworks. There are musical depictions of their initials throughout and the *Finale: Hora* fuses the Finnish national anthem with American influences to celebrate the roots of two very alive, unique and fun people.

Commissioned by and dedicated to Erin Keefe and Osmo Vänskä. The première took place at the Seattle Chamber Music Society on 20 July 2020.

Twelve Blocks for Piano (Four Hands) and Poetry (2021)

This piece is a tribute to two extraordinary mentors, the pianists Jerome Lowenthal and Ursula Oppens. I studied with Jerry at The Juilliard for six years and I’ve shared unforgettable experiences with both around the world – including climbing the Great Wall of China.

During the pandemic, Jerry developed a ritual: walking twelve blocks to visit Ursula, reciting poetry along the way. That image became my starting point. The music moves through contrasting sections, punctuated by bell-like chords marking each block, with lines of poetry woven into the texture: Paul Verlaine’s *Green* and *Clair de lune*, John Keats’ *Endymion* and *Ode to a Nightingale* and Andrew Marvell’s *The Garden*. Together, they evoke nature, pilgrimage and a shared sense of wonder.

The choreography of four hands at one piano is acrobatic at times, but Jerry and Ursula embraced it with ease. They premièred the piece on a hot, muggy July day at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center in 2021 and have since played it all over the world.

Love’s Lives Lost (2023)

I met the soprano Susanna Phillips at the Marlboro Festival, where we spent a summer immersed in Schumann’s Frauen-

This image shows two pages of handwritten musical notation. The right page contains a vocal melody with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Tak - ing me back down the", "vis - it of years,". The musical notation includes treble and bass staves, with various notes, rests, and accidentals. The left page shows additional musical notation, including a piano introduction or accompaniment. The handwriting is in ink on aged paper.

Handwritten musical score on two pages. The right page features a vocal line with lyrics: "Tak - ing me back down the", "vis - it of years,". The musical notation includes treble and bass staves, with various notes, rests, and accidentals. The left page shows additional musical notation, including a piano introduction or accompaniment.

Liebe und Leben – a cycle about love, loss and everything in between. Years later, writing *Love's Lives Lost* for her felt inevitable. I wanted to respond to Schumann – and write a companion cycle inspired by his – so I asked my friend, pianist and poet Evan Shinnars, to write eight poems about two former lovers running into each other after years apart. While an unspoken chemistry lingers between them, they each hold contrasting interpretations of their shared past, adding depth and complexity to their journey. There's tenderness, tension and a little mischief, because memory never travels in a straight line. Like Schumann, the piano is a central character, opening and closing the work while weaving the songs together. And yes, there's a song called *Kalamazoo!*

Commissioned by ChamberFest West in Calgary and written for Susanna, the cycle is my wistful homage to the fleeting connections that shape our lives.

Breakup Etude for the Right Hand Alone (2020)

My *Breakup Etude for Right Hand Alone* pours out my own aching soul in the form of a masochistically difficult piece written for my right hand alone when my left hand was stuck in a splint. The ending of a relationship, a minor left hand

injury and pandemic isolation in 2020 made me feel that many aspects of my life, including my hands, were breaking up. In my despair, I searched for right-handed pieces to learn, only to discover that there were very few. To pass the time as my left hand healed, I wrote myself an insanely difficult etude for my right hand alone. I regret that now. The work requires extreme virtuosity, with passages that scamper around the entire range of the keyboard at breakneck speed. There are also a few surprises along the way. *Breakup Etude for the Right Hand Alone* reflects my inner state, from loss and longing to personal growth and discovery. It is dedicated to myself.

Commissioned by the Tippet Rise Arts Center.

Pour Angeline (2024)

The title says it all: for Angeline. A whisper between intimacy and desire, inspired by Chopin's *Mazurka No. 4 in A minor, Op. 17* – one I've played for her again and again, a piece that opens and ends with a question mark and lingers between F major and A minor, as if suspended in thought. It feels like the beginning of a private conversation between two people. Out of that sound world grows my own offering of love.

Michael Stephen Brown

Michael Stephen Brown – Pianist-Composer

A 2025 MacDowell Fellow and 2024 Yaddo Artist, Composer-Pianist Michael Stephen Brown performs recitals and concertos worldwide and receives commissions from leading orchestras, performers and chamber music festivals. Winner of the Emerging Artist Award from Lincoln Center and an Avery Fisher Career Grant, he has performed as a soloist with leading orchestras such as the Seattle Symphony and NFM Leopoldinum and in recitals at venues including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the Louvre, Wigmore Hall and Beethoven-Haus Bonn. He is currently composing *The Carnival of Endangered Wonders: A Zoological Fantasy*, a large-scale chamber ensemble work co-commissioned by four organisations premiering in 2026. A frequent artist with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Brown tours internationally in a duo with his longtime musical partner, cellist Nicholas Canellakis and collaborates regularly with violinists Pinchas Zukerman and Arnaud Sussmann. A passionate educator, he regularly gives lectures and masterclasses worldwide.

Brown's compositions have been commissioned by leading organisations and artists, including the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Bridgehampton and Gilmore festivals, the Maryland Symphony, Osmo Vänskä and Erin Keefe, the SPA Trio and pianists Anne-Marie McDermott, Jerome Lowenthal, Ursula Oppens, Orion Weiss, Adam Golka and Roman Rabinovich, soprano Susanna Phillips and cellist Nicholas Canellakis. Recently, he served as

Composer and Artist-in-Residence at the New Haven Symphony and is a recipient of the Copland House Residency Award. His symphonic work, *American Diaries*, draws on words by Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes and excerpts from his grandfather's World War II diary.

Selected by András Schiff to perform on an international recital tour, Brown made débuts at Zurich's Tonhalle and New York's 92nd Street Y. He regularly appears at major festivals including Tanglewood, Marlboro, Music@Menlo, Ravinia, Saratoga, Caramoor, Bard, Sedona, Moab and Tippet Rise. A prolific recording artist, Brown has recorded several albums for First Hand Records with future releases including his own *Piano Concerto* with the East Coast Chamber Orchestra and Mendelssohn+ with première recordings of the 19th century composer Delphine von Schauroth and the complete Nocturnes of Gabriel Fauré.

A First Prize winner of the Concert Artists Guild Competition and a recipient of the Bowers Residency from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Brown earned dual degrees in piano and composition from The Juilliard School, where he studied with pianists Jerome Lowenthal and Robert McDonald and composer Samuel Adler. Additional mentors have included George Perle, András Schiff and Richard Goode. A native New Yorker, Brown lives in New York City with his two 19th-century Steinway D pianos, Octavia and Daria.

Susanna Phillips – Soprano

Soprano Susanna Phillips has established herself as one of today's most sought-after musicians. Career highlights include many leading roles with the Metropolitan Opera, the Santa Fe Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Boston Baroque, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Gran Teatro del Liceu and Opéra National de Bordeaux. Dedicated to symphonic works, she collaborates with many orchestras including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, The New York Philharmonic and St. Louis Symphony. An avid recitalist and chamber music collaborator, she performs at many chamber music festivals internationally, often commissioning and performing new work, frequently collaborating with Paul Neubauer and Anne-Marie McDermott in the SPA Trio, Prestigious awards include the Metropolitan Opera's Beverly Sills Artist Award, the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and the First Prize and Audience Award at Operalia. She is an alumna of Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Opera Center and holds both a Bachelor and Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School.

Paul Neubauer – Viola

Violist Paul Neubauer has been called a 'master musician' by *The New York Times*. He recently released two albums for First Hand Records that feature the final works of two great composers: an all Bartók album including the revised version of the *Viola Concerto* (FHR175) and a Shostakovich recording with pianist Anne-Marie McDermott, including the monumental *Viola Sonata* (FHR176). Appointed principal violist of the New York Philharmonic at age 21, he has appeared as soloist

with the New York, Los Angeles and Helsinki philharmonics; Chicago, National, St. Louis, Detroit, Dallas, San Francisco and Bournemouth symphonies; and Santa Cecilia, English Chamber and Beethovenhalle orchestras. He has premiered viola concertos by Bartók, Friedman, Glière, Jacob, Kernis, Lazarof, Müller-Siemens, Ott, Penderecki, Picker, Suter and Tower. A two-time Grammy nominee, Neubauer is the artistic director of the Mostly Music series in New Jersey and is on the faculty of The Juilliard School and Mannes College.

Anne-Marie McDermott – Piano

Anne-Marie McDermott has been Artistic Director of Bravo! Vail since 2011. She enjoys performing, recording, commissioning and planning a tremendous variety of music encompassing many centuries and styles. She is currently working on recording the complete Mozart Concertos with the Odense Symphony in Denmark for release on Bridge Records. She has performed concertos with dozens of American orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, as well as international ensembles including the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Moscow Virtuosi and the Taipei Symphony. Last summer she premiered a new concerto by Chris Rogerson, commissioned for her by Bravo! Vail in honour of her 10th anniversary. She premiered an expanded version of the work with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra in April 2024. McDermott has been devoted to chamber music her entire career and performs regularly with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, where she has been a member since 1995. She is the Artistic Director of two

Paul Neubauer, Anne-Marie McDermott and Susanna Phillips



chamber music festivals: one at the McKnight Performing Arts Center in Oklahoma; the other in Ocean Reef, Florida.

Osmo Vänskä – Clarinet

Conductor and clarinetist Osmo Vänskä was born in Finland and began his clarinet studies at the age of eleven in Kotka. He undertook further studies at the Sibelius Academy as a pupil of Sven Lavela and spent a short but significant period as a pupil of Karl Leister in Berlin in 1974. He was the principal clarinetist of the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra (1971–76) and assistant principal clarinetist of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra (1977–82). He was the Artistic Director of the Crusell Festival in Uusikaupunki, Finland, from 1989 until 1993. Vänskä has made festival appearances at the Seattle Chamber Music Society, Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival, La Jolla SummerFest and the Crusell and Naantali festivals in Finland. He has recorded Crusell's three *Clarinet Quartets* and Kalevi Aho's *Clarinet Quintet* for the BIS label and is in the process of recording several duos for clarinet and violin.

Erin Keefe – Violin

Violinist Erin Keefe is the Concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra and on the violin faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music. Winner of an Avery Fisher Career Grant as well as numerous international competitions, she has appeared as soloist in recent seasons with the Minnesota Orchestra, New York City Ballet Orchestra, Korean Symphony Orchestra, Iceland Symphony, Lahti Symphony, Sendai Philharmonic and the Gottingen Symphony and has given recitals throughout the

United States, Europe and Asia. Keefe has been performing with The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center since 2005 and she has recorded for Naxos, the CMS Studio Recordings label, BIS, Onyx and Deutsche Grammophon. Her festival appearances have included Music@Menlo, La Jolla SummerFest, Mainly Mozart, Ravinia and the Seattle, Bravo! Vail Valley, Colorado College, Skaneateles, Music in the Vineyards and Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festivals. She has appeared as guest concertmaster with the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic and the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra.

Ursula Oppens – Piano

Widely admired for her original and perceptive readings of new music and the standard repertoire, Ursula Oppens has premiered and/or commissioned works by John Adams, Luciano Berio, Carla Bley, Anthony Braxton, Elliott Carter, John Corigliano, Anthony Davis, Julius Hemphill, John Harbison, Laura Kaminsky, György Ligeti, Witold Lutosławski, Conlon Nancarrow, Tobias Picker, Charles Wuorinen and many more. With five Grammy nominations to her credit, Oppens established her reputation early on with a classic recording of Frederic Rzewski's *The People United Will Never Be Defeated*. She has released *Piano Songs*, music by Meredith Monk, with pianist Bruce Brubaker; *Winging It: Piano Music of John Corigliano*; *Oppens Plays Carter* (complete Carter piano works); *Piano Music of Our Time*; *Keys to the City*, (complete Picker piano music); and, with pianist Jerome Lowenthal, *Visions de l'Amen* by Messiaen and Debussy's *En blanc et noir*.

Osmo Vänskä, Michael Stephen Brown and Erin Keefe



As guest soloist, Oppens has performed with the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Berlin Symphony and London Philharmonic orchestras, among others and has collaborated with the Arditti, Cassatt, Juilliard and Pacifica quartets.

Oppens teaches at Mannes College and is a Distinguished Professor of Music at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City. In 2019, Oppens was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from The New England Conservatory.

Jerome Lowenthal – Piano

American pianist Jerome Lowenthal has been a Juilliard faculty member since 1991. He has received prizes in international competitions in Brussels, Bolzano and Darmstadt and

has appeared with major orchestras in the U.S., including the Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, National, Baltimore, Cleveland, St. Louis and the Minnesota. He has premiered solo music by Rochberg, Capanna, Reise and Rorem's *Piano Concerto No. 3*. He has played duo recitals with Denis Brott, Itzhak Perlman, Ronit Amir and Ursula Oppens. Lowenthal is a regular participant in chamber music festivals in Sitka, Alaska, Montreal and Santa Barbara's Music Academy of the West. He played the New York premiere of Liszt's *Piano Concerto No. 3* with the New York Philharmonic. Lowenthal has made numerous recordings of solo concerto and chamber music repertoire. He studied with Olga Samaroff, William Kapell and at The Juilliard with Edward Steuermann. He also studied with Alfred Cortot at the École Normale de Musique on a Fulbright Grant.



Ursula Oppens and Jerome Lowenthal

Pas de trois

5 I. Piano

(Text: D.H. Lawrence, 1885–1930)

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the
 tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who
 smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for
 the past.

6 II. The Violist

(Text: Michael Stephen Brown)

A violist strolled down the quiet lane,
His viola in hand, he grinned in vain.
He played for the trees, the birds in flight,
But all he truly craved was the spotlight.

‘Oh, where are you going?’ a stranger asked,
‘To play my tune, for I am quite basked
In glamour and glory, the world’s my stage –
I am the star, the muse of this age!’

He paused for effect, a dramatic pose,
His bow held high, the music rose.
He glanced at the sky, beneath fleeting
 clouds –
In his heart, he knew he had made the proud.

‘I play for the heavens, the earth, and the sun,
For no one can match me, not anyone!’
He twirled his bow with a self-assured flair,
Ignoring the birds who flew through the air.

Oh, the sun shines for me, and me alone,
This bright spotlight is mine to own.
‘Can we share the light?’ the stranger said,
But the violist smirked and turned his head.

7 **III. Soprano**

(Text: Rita Dove, b. 1952)

When you hit
the center

of a note, spin
through and off

the bell lip
into heaven,

the soul dies
for an instant –

but you don't need
its thin

resistance
nor the room

(piano shawl,
mirror, hyacinth)

dissolving
as one note

pours into
the next, pebbles

clean as moonspill
seeding a path. . .

and which is it,
body or mind,

which rises, which
gives up at last

and goes home?

Soprano from *Collected Poems 1974-2004*,
W.W. Norton & Co., New York © 2016
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13 Twelve Blocks

Voici des fruits,
des fleurs,
des feuilles et des branches.

(Text: Paul Verlaine, 1844–1896, from *Green*)

Here are fruits
and flowers,
foliage and branches

(Translation: Jerome Lowenthal)

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

(Text: John Keats, 1795–1821, from *Endymion*)

Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,

Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres
Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau,
Les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les marbres.

(Text: Paul Verlaine from *Clair de lune*)

With the calm light of the moon sad and beautiful,

Which makes the birds dream in the trees
And the fountains sob with ecstasy,
The tall slender fountains,
Amongst the monuments of marble.

(Translation: Jerome Lowenthal)

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness;
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find,
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas;
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

(Text: Andrew Marvell, 1621–1678, from *The Garden*)

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music: – Do I wake or sleep?

(Text: John Keats from *Ode to a Nightingale*)

Love's Lives Lost

(Text: Evan Shinnars, b. 1986)

I. Introduction

Mysterious,
Or always this?
This thought I cannot show:

That once tenderest caress,
Now on a mere person I know.

And is it just to hide?
Or do we walk along the other
never looking to the side?

II. The Meeting

I know the midnight defeats,
the undelivered dreams,
the habits good and bad.

So what within those eyes
that flickered on our scene?
Was it something that we had?

III. Parody of Chamisso

Now you have caused me great back pain,
And it struck hard,
It's deep, a burning fiery pain
Deep as death!
Sharp as a knife!
Vertebrae aren't aligned ahead,
The spine is null and void.
I have laughed but I have leaned,
And so my posture's done.
Silently, I withdraw into a sofa,
The pillows fall,
And here I resign my strength.
I've lost my shoes,
You!
My Back!

17 IV. In-lookers

Oh you!
I have locked within palatial memory,
fixed within my mind,
(And though guilt forbids me to frequent)
I sneak a trip from time to time,
to those evenings that we spent.

18 V. Onlookers

They cry:
Don't conflate what's happening now
with what that's gone and been!

They tell:
Us together was
A fairy tale, at best only a dream!

Still, this tale is one I read,
The other, I've only seen!

A foreign life, a life too far,
And somehow all too near...

So how do I stay here?
And how do I stay here?

19 VI. Chanson Triste

Our photographs,
On a table we knew.

Under waterfalls,
On smooth pebbles,
The ocean behind,
In a chorus-line,
Pools green and salted,
And all my images erased,

And me in someone else's embrace.

20 VII. Kalamazoo

Kalamazoo! Kalamazoo!
What's there to do in this Kalamazoo?
Is there a zoo? Or a band of Kazoos?
Or a cheap night motel for a quick rendezvous?

I assume there's a lieu with good tiramisu,
Or a place for a brew and some chocolate fondue,
Oh help me see through or just let me ensue,
for I'm down and I'm blue stuck in Kalamazoo!

Kalamazoo! Kalamazoo!
What's there to do in this Kalamazoo?
Is this the right state for some good barbecue?
do I get a tattoo down that dark avenue?

I assume it's taboo to dismiss and pooh-pooh,
But something's askew I had better eschew...
Please give me a clue! Is this Waterloo 2?
'cause I'm down and I'm blue stuck in Kalamazoo!

21 VIII. Split Mirror

In what respect
do we intersect?
In what respect
do we intersect?

Shun
The sun
Until one's
Quaint connection
Of intersection
Will not need protection
And past affection
Turns round its run
And is here
Always

Do we intersect?
In what respect
do we intersect?
do we intersect?

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Michael Stephen Brown *piano*

RAVEL: Miroirs

MEDTNER: Second Improvisation (in variation form), Op. 47

Features première recordings of two recently discovered variations
from Medtner's *Second Improvisation*

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