

Spring 2014 Upcoming Events

Thursday, January 23, 7:30, Cook Recital Hall, FREE
The Maniacal 4 Trombone Quartet, Guest Chamber Artists

Monday, January 27, 7:30, Fairchild Theatre, RESERVED
Joanne & Bill Church West Circle Series: Happy Birthday Mozart
Generously sponsored by Selma and the late Stanley Hollander

Tuesday, January 28, 7:30, Hart Recital Hall, \$
10th Annual MSU Schubertiade

Sunday, February 2, 3:00, Fairchild Theatre, \$\$
MSUFCU Showcase Series: That's Amore
Generously sponsored by Ruth Charles

Thursday, February 2, 7:30, Wharton Center's Cobb Great Hall, \$
Symphony Band

Wednesday, February 5, 7:30, Cook Recital Hall, \$
Guy Yehuda, Clarinet

Tuesday, February 6, 7:30, Wharton Center's Cobb Great Hall, \$
Wind Symphony

Friday, February 7, 8:00, Wharton Center's Cobb Great Hall, \$
Symphony Orchestra

Monday , February 10, 7:30, Cook Recital Hall, \$
Peter Lightfoot, Baritone

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | COLLEGE OF MUSIC

Tickets purchased at Wharton Center, for events held there, have a \$5.00 restoration fee added. This is not a College of Music fee.

\$ - General Admission tickets are \$10 for adult, \$8 for senior (age 60 and older), and free for students with ID and those under age 18. These tickets are available at the door before each performance, online at music.msu.edu, over the phone at 517.353.5340, or in person in Room 102, Music Building, 333. W. Circle Dr., M-F, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

RESERVED - Reserved Seating tickets are \$15 for adults, \$12 for senior (age 60 and older), and \$5 for students with ID and those under age 18. These tickets are available at the door before each performance, online at music.msu.edu, over the phone at 517.353.5340, or in person in Room 102, Music Building, 333. W. Circle Dr., M-F, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

\$\$ - Special Admission tickets are \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors (age 60 and older), and \$10 for students and those under age 18. Tickets for **That's Amore** are available before each performance at the door (Fairchild Theatre), online at music.msu.edu, over the phone at 517.353.5340, or in person in Room 102, Music Building, 333. W. Circle Dr., M-F, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

presents

Faculty Artist Recital

Minsoo Sohn, piano

7:30 pm, Wednesday, January 22, 2014
Fairchild Theatre, Auditorium Building

*This concert is generously sponsored by
Jerry Kutchey and Kathryn Snyder*

Program

Goldberg Variations, BWV 988

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 – 1750)

- Aria
- Variation 1
- Variation 2
- Variation 3: Canone all'unisono
- Variation 4
- Variation 5
- Variation 6: Canone alla seconda
- Variation 7
- Variation 8
- Variation 9: Canone alla terza
- Variation 10: Fughetta
- Variation 11
- Variation 12: Canone alla quarta
- Variation 13
- Variation 14
- Variation 15: Canone alla quinta
- Variation 16: Ouverture
- Variation 17
- Variation 18: Canone alla sesta
- Variation 19
- Variation 20
- Variation 21: Canone alla settima
- Variation 22: Alla breve
- Variation 23
- Variation 24: Canone all'ottava
- Variation 25
- Variation 26
- Variation 27: Canone alla nona
- Variation 28
- Variation 29
- Variation 30: Quodlibet
- Aria da capo

Artist Bio

Pianist **Minsoo Sohn** has performed with the Boston Symphony, Boston Pops, Calgary Philharmonic, Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, the Israel Philharmonic, and many others. He was the First Laureate of the Honens International Piano Competition and was top prizewinner of several international competitions. Sohn recently earned accolades from the *New York Times* for his 2011 recording of the Goldberg Variations (released on the Honens label), and he received rave reviews for his October 2012 concert at Carnegie Hall.

Sohn has toured extensively throughout North America, Europe, and Israel at important venues including Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Toronto's Glenn Gould Studio and St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, Boston's Symphony Hall, Ottawa's National Arts Centre, Chicago's Cultural Center, Cleveland's Severance Hall, San Francisco's Herbst Theatre, Spain's Palacio Festivale de Cantabria, Tel Aviv Museum of Art and Mann Auditorium, Brussel's Palais des Beaux Art and Theatre Royal de la Monnaie, and Munich's Gasteig.

An avid chamber musician, Sohn has performed with Aviv Quartet, Cecilia Quartet and Ysaÿe Quartet, Israel Camerata Woodwind Quintet and Gryphon Trio. In January 2010, he collaborated with Mark Morris Dance Group alongside Russell Sherman and the Orchestra of Emmanuel Music in the Boston premiere of Mozart Dances presented by Celebrity Series of Boston.

Sohn's notable interpretation of Bach's Goldberg Variations has been broadcast numerous times on CBC and across the United States on NPR's Performance Today. His performance with Boston Symphony Salute to Symphony concert was broadcast on CBS and A&E Channels. Sohn was also featured on Canada's Bravo! channel.

In 2006, Sohn became the First Laureate of the Honens International Piano Competition. Prior to that, he was top prizewinner of international competitions such as the Busoni, Cleveland, Hilton Head, Rubinstein, Santander, and Queen Elizabeth competitions.

Born in Korea, Sohn began piano studies at age three. He moved to Boston to study with Russell Sherman and Wha Kyung Byun at New England Conservatory where he received his artist diploma in 2004. He is currently assistant professor of piano at the MSU College of Music.

The Goldberg Variations

The variation set is an inherently compelling musical design, at once cohering around a central structural thread *and* casting an ever-changing light upon it. We might imagine walking all the way around an object with a camera in our hands, taking photographs from each angle. While the photos will all show the same *thing*, each will display it from a different perspective, with different lighting, and with emphasis on features of it that may be hidden in the other photos. Likewise, for Bach, a bass line and series of harmonies acts as the subject of thirty musical photographs, prompting composer and performer alike to explore it from a stunning variety of angles. The work invites us to listen in two mutually informative ways—to notice the kinship among a set of variations even when the similarities are cleverly concealed, and simultaneously to marvel at the cornucopia that is assembled as each unique variation adds itself to the mix.

Bach's opening aria is not the *theme*, but in fact already the first *variation* on a 32-measure bass line that never sounds by itself. The first quarter of this bass line was common parlance among Baroque composers, underlying variation sets by Purcell, F. Couperin, and Handel. By lengthening the bass fourfold, Bach casts each variation as a complete *piece* and not just a single phrase. He thereby dramatically expands the scope of the Baroque variation set to that of a massive, 32-movement variation suite whose individual movements are substantial enough to evoke familiar genres (overture, aria, trio sonata), dances (passepied, siciliana), and compositional techniques (canon, fughetta).

This re-imagining of the variation set positioned the *Goldberg Variations*, composed in 1741, perfectly within Bach's larger project in the four-part *Clavier-Übung*, which also included the Italian Concerto, the French Overture, a number of organ works, and the six partitas. He had always been interested in comprehensiveness – one thinks of the 24 keys of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* and the years' worth of weekly cantatas in Leipzig during the 1720s, to name just two—but the *Clavier-Übung* cemented his legacy as a master of the keyboard. In it, he sought to exploit, exhaustively, the instrumental capabilities of the

organ and cembalo, the virtuosity of keyboard performers, and the full range of compositional styles and techniques for the instrument.

The expressive range of the *Goldberg Variations* is enormous – from the grandiose (#10) to the gossamer (#13), from the wistful (#21) and the whimsical (#28) to the profoundly tortured (#25). The set's elegant architecture groups the variations into threes. Those divisible by three are all canons, beginning at the unison (#3) and proceeding through the ninth (#27), and demonstrate Bach's nimble application of learned counterpoint even over a fixed succession of harmonies. Immediately before each canon is a virtuosic showpiece that requires the performer to cross his or her hands—even more of a feat on today's single-manual piano than on Bach's two-manual harpsichord. And after each canon is a character piece that evokes some particular genre or dance of the Baroque, such as the overture (#16) that embarks grandly upon the second half of the work's journey. Bach is even witty: Variation 30 is a quodlibet of two folk tunes, the lyrics of one ("I have long been away from you...") punnily foretelling the ensuing return of the aria. (The other tune, incidentally, expresses one's distaste for root vegetables.) The reappearance of the aria makes one mindful of all that has happened in the last hour or so; it is the same music as at the opening, but hardly the same.

The color blue is not the *subject* of each painting in Picasso's blue period (except in the sub-textual sense of his depression), but rather its *material*, and our interest as observers is piqued not by the color itself, but by the myriad shapes, textures, and sentiments that are expressed within such an economy of means. Likewise, this work by J. S. Bach is *made of* a bass line, but it is *about* the virtuosity of composing and bringing to life a stunning kaleidoscope of characters, rhythms, and expressions within the endlessly fertile constraints of this structural underpinning.

Dr. Michael Callahan
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