

2020: A Beethoven Odyssey Musical Explorations with Pianist Yael Weiss

The year 2020 marks the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. In celebration of this special moment in history, pianist Yael Weiss will be performing the complete cycle of Beethoven's 32 Piano Sonatas, to be presented alongside short new compositions from around the world that explore the relationship between Beethoven's musical realm and our own in the early 21st century.

The concerts will be presented as single events, as a series of concerts throughout a season or spread over several seasons, and as marathon-type events such as a full weekend of presentations incorporating the entire cycle. The concerts can also be presented in lecture-demonstration format, including a lively discussion of the new works and the excitement of making Beethoven's music personal and meaningful today.

The commissioned works will represent a wide array of current musical styles by established masters as well as the freshest young voices in new music today. The composers contributing to the project are free to draw upon Beethoven's music in whatever way they choose: Their pieces can be playful explorations of some specific element from Beethoven's sonatas, other Beethoven works, musical language or personal history. Some works will be directly related to material from a particular sonata. Others will be more generally and freely related to Beethoven's music. Taken as a whole, the entire cycle of new works will display a wide range of moods and character: humorous, serious, evocative, brash, virtuosic, ecstatic, playful, intimate, meditative – the possibilities are endless here! The list of exciting composers writing for A Beethoven Odyssey includes:

- **Paul Schoenfield:** Widely known for his inventive and very individual voice, Mr. Schoenfield has written a work combining motifs from all 32 Beethoven Sonatas. "The Complete Beethoven Sonatas in Less Than Two Minutes" will be included in 2017-18 programming. In addition, Mr. Schoenfield's wild "Boogie 54", based on Beethoven's Sonata Op. 54, was selected for this project and performed during the 2016-17 season. (Yael's recording of Schoenfield's trio "Four Music Videos" is available on Bridge Records.)
- **Paul Chihara:** One of today's leading film composers, with also a substantial body of concert music, including recent commissions for the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. His new work "Rag 109" was written for this project in 2016 and is first being performed during the 2016-17 season. (Yael's recording of Chihara's "Ain't No Sunshine" is available on Bridge Records.)
- **Joel Feigin,** a California composer inspired by the spiritual world of Zen Buddhism who has already written "Prelude before a Sonata" for this project. In 2010, Yael Weiss premiered his Piano Concerto, which was dedicated to her.
- **Pierre Jalbert:** A widely performed Canadian-American composer of powerful and personal music that audiences immediately identify with.
- **Zhou Long:** This Pulitzer-prize winning composer is one of the most important voices today in bringing Chinese traditional folk music to western music.
- **Lera Auerbach:** A powerful new presence in today's music, Russian-American composer Lera Auerbach's works are performed widely around the world. Her piece "Ludwig's Nightmare" is included in this project. It was written for the Beethoven International Piano Competition in Bonn in 2007. (Yael recorded Auerbach's "Triptych", which was commissioned by her piano trio, the Weiss-Kaplan-Stumpf Trio).

Overall, the Beethoven Odyssey journey is an in-depth reflection from the here and now on what makes Beethoven's music continue to feel "new", relevant and exciting.

In addition to performances, the project will incorporate a recording component, including a CD release of the new compositions, videography of various live performances, and

ultimately the recording of the complete cycle of Beethoven's Sonatas. A further important goal is to bring Beethoven and the new compositions to new and unusual venues. Aside from the traditional venues in major cities, Yael Weiss has a special interest in expanding the presentation possibilities by bringing this body of work to new audiences in unexpected places.