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**For This Piano Man, Two
Are Better Than One**

Christopher Taylor Performs at
the Met on Rare Two-Keyboard
Piano



Pianist Christopher Taylor rehearses at the
Metropolitan Museum of Art.

By **CORINNE RAMEY**

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At the Metropolitan Museum of Art recently, Christopher Taylor was practicing Bach’s “Goldberg Variations,” his fingers dancing over 164 keys and two stacked keyboards.

For Mr. Taylor, the instrument is a luxury. On a conventional piano, with its mere 88 keys, “you have to negotiate the collisions between the hands, and do weird fingerings,” he said. “All these issues get bypassed on this.”

The instrument is a rare two-keyboard Bösendorfer piano from around 1940, designed by the Hungarian composer and inventor Emáuel Moór. Only about 60 double-keyboard pianos were ever made.

The piano, which is [on long-term loan to the Met](#), will be seen by the public for

the first time in about three decades on Friday, when Mr. Taylor performs the “Goldberg Variations.” While the piano is a 20th-century creation, it has historical merit: Bach wrote his variations for a harpsichord with two keyboards.

But the story of Mr. Taylor and the double keyboards is really a tale of three pianos. The second is the world’s only two-keyboard Steinway, on which Mr. Taylor performs around the country. And third is his own patented invention, dubbed a “Frankenpiano” by one of his students.

The Frankenpiano electronically connects two grand pianos to a console with two keyboards. The pianist plays the console, which activates the two pianos, to sometimes startling,

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ventriloquial effect, as when pressing a single key sounds an entire chord.

Mr. Taylor, 44 years old, lives in Middleton, Wis., with his wife and two daughters, and teaches at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. In 1992, he earned a degree in mathematics at Harvard University and then, a year later, won the bronze prize at the Van Cliburn Competition, a prestigious contest for pianists. (Mr. Taylor invents other things as well, particularly computer programs.)

At the Met, the piano demonstrates how art doesn't just hang on a wall but is a repository of living ideas, said Limor Tomer, the museum's general manager of concerts and lectures.

"Performance is essential to the interpretation of that collection," she said. And this particular instrument is valuable—like, say, a pair of bell-bottom jeans or a Volkswagen Beetle—in preserving a slice of an historical narrative.



Christopher Taylor will perform Bach's 'Goldberg Variations' on a rare two-keyboard Bösendorfer piano at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

"A lot of things come into fashion and go out of fashion," said the museum's musical-instrument curator, Ken Moore. "This instrument represents that continuum of experimentation."

For Mr. Taylor, that experimentation never stopped. On the museum's Bösendorfer, he demonstrated the piano's bag of tricks, such as the ability to play massive intervals and big, rich chords with ease.

Launching into the triumphant final variation of the "Goldberg Variations," he showed how, at the push of a pedal, each note is doubled by another an octave above. Mr. Taylor threw back his head as if he had not 164 keys, but a full orchestra at his fingertips.

"It boosts it a little bit," he said.

Christopher Taylor performs Bach's "Goldberg Variations" on Friday at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Ave.; (212) 570-3949; metmuseum.org.

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