

# **Hopkins Center for the Arts**

at Dartmouth

presents

## **Frederic Chiu: Classical Smackdown**

### *Time Travelers: Bach vs. Glass*

**Friday, January 26, 8 pm**

Rollins Chapel • Dartmouth College • 2024

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*Funded in part by the Donna Bascom 1973 and Paul Biddelman Fund.*

*We thank Mrs. Selma Bornstein for her generous donation of the Petrof Concert Grand Piano, given in loving memory of her husband Dr. Murray Bornstein and used for tonight's concert.*

# Program

*Approximate duration: 75 minutes*

## Round 1

Prelude and Fugue No. 17 in A-flat major, BWV 886  
from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book II  
Etude No. 5

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Philip Glass (b. 1937)

## Round 2

Partita No. 2 in C minor, BWV 826: I. Sinfonia  
*Metamorphosis: One*  
Partita No. 2: II. Allemande  
*Metamorphosis: Two*  
Partita No. 2: VI. Capriccio

Johann Sebastian Bach  
Philip Glass  
Johann Sebastian Bach  
Philip Glass  
Johann Sebastian Bach

## Round 3

“Erbarme dich, mein Gott”  
from *St Matthew Passion*, BWV 244  
*Mad Rush*

Johann Sebastian Bach  
trans. Frederic Chiu  
Philip Glass

Frederic Chiu, piano

Mr. Chiu is a Yamaha Artist  
Representative: Maria Guralnik, Sky Top Group ([www.fredericchiu.com](http://www.fredericchiu.com))

# Program Notes

Tonight, vying for your attention, and your vote, are two towering and controversial figures: Johann Sebastian Bach and Philip Glass. In many ways, these two would seem to occupy radically opposite stylistic territories. Bach was born 329 years ago—Glass just celebrated his 75th birthday. In his time, Bach was considered a throwback to an old-fashioned, irrelevant tradition—Glass pioneered a “minimalist” style that would be embraced by popular culture. Bach’s music is very often a complex intertwining of multiple voices, rarely repeating themselves as they interact to create a rich harmonic world. A Philip Glass score often contains only a few distinct musical cells that are repeated seemingly endlessly.

The funny thing is that, as these two styles move away from each other in one sense, they approach each other on the back side. There is a sense of spirituality, a hypnotic quality of ecstasy that arises from both composers’ music. Bach’s music does this through an overload of information—themes that appear in multiple voices, in reverse, in mirror image—that encourages both hyper-focus and letting go. Glass’ music does this through repetition—a limited number of simple patterns that repeat to the point where one begins to notice the intricate details and interactions within those simple patterns.

Both composers enhance consciousness and appreciation of the beauty inherent in their music.

## Round 1

Disguised as ‘study pieces’ for Bach’s wife and children initially, the Well-tempered Clavier (WTC) broke traditional ground by revealing that the 18th-century tonal system could be expanded with unforeseen qualities. Each piece in the WTC pushed newer limits on the piano as a keyboard instrument of expression. It is the duty of the pianist to unmask these qualities.

The Etude by Glass is also outside the narrow confines of the Etude from the Romantic era, technically challenging and dazzling. This Etude focuses on the particular traits of Glass’ “repetitive structures,” proving to be an exercise in structure, clarity and rhythm.

## Round 2

Bach’s Keyboard Partitas (six of them) are the culmination of Bach’s exploration of the genre of the “Suite”, coming after his French Suites and German Suites. The second Partita in particular displays an amazing stylistic virtuosity, from deep declamation to impish dance, from lyrical beauty to multi-voice complexity and detail.

Glass’ series of *Metamorphosis* (five pieces) come from music for theatre and cinema. The title is taken from Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*, from which the music is drawn. Glass also adapted the music for the soundtrack of Errol Morris’ film *The Thin Blue Line*. Not only are the works in Glass’ signature “repetitive structures”, but each piece is a slightly altered repetition of its neighboring pieces.

## Round 3

Bach’s *Passion According to St Matthew* is one of the masterpieces of classical sacred music. Scored originally for two choirs, two orchestras and soloists, it was modified and performed several times by Bach in his duty as Kapellmeister, but then disappeared for almost a century. It was Felix Mendelssohn who staged the first full performance of the work, an event often cited as the beginning of the revival of Bach’s music, a movement that has continued on till today.

One of the most recognized and performed segments of this Cantata is the “Erbarme dich” aria for alto and violin. Despite its lulling string of repeated notes in the bass, the message of the aria is hardly one of comfort—“Erbarme dich” relates the despair resulting from the Apostle Peter’s betrayal of his Messiah. Bach’s eerily contained and focused approach to the expression only heightens the sense of despair—a musical enactment of the cold betrayal.

Glass and Bach shared at least one major trait: a capacity for adapting their existing music for new projects. The music of *Mad Rush* originated in a set of pieces featuring the organ. Soon after, Glass himself arranged the last piece of this set for piano, gave it the title and performed it on the occasion of the first public visit of the Dalai Lama to New York in 1981. The title is an apt description of the sudden changes between the meditative and the frantic, a particularly modern state of mind that Glass captures in music.

*Program notes © 2014 Frederic Chiu*

# About the Artist

A frequent guest artist at concert venues in Europe, South America and throughout the United States, **Frederic Chiu** is devoted to enhancing the live concert experience for diverse audiences. Chiu has created many innovative programs, often showcasing transcriptions and rarely-programmed repertoire. Also a skilled collaborator, he has performed with many friends in Classical music such as Joshua Bell, Pierre Amoyal, Gary Hoffman, the St Lawrence String Quartet; as well as with artists in other genres including the jazz pianist Bob James, writer/storyteller David Gonzalez, actor Brian Bedford, and the clown Buffo. Frederic Chiu has released over 20 CDs, many available on the *harmonia mundi usa* label, including the complete piano works of Prokofiev, as well as works of Chopin, Liszt, Ravel, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Rossini and Grieg. His most recent recordings include the Beethoven/Liszt Symphony No. 5, and the solo piano version of Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals* with David Gonzalez as the narrator of verse penned with today's young audiences

in mind. In addition, he is a frequent presence on popular radio shows such as *St. Paul Sunday Morning*, *Performance Today*, and WNYC's *Greene Space*.

Through his Deeper Piano Studies—a philosophic and holistic training program—Chiu brings together advanced concert pianists, promising students, high-level amateurs and piano teachers from around the world for workshops that develop a Body/Mind/Heart approach to piano-playing and music-making. He has taught at the Juilliard School, Indiana University's Jacob School of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, the New England Conservatory and the Banff Centre, among others.

Frederic Chiu's website, [www.FredericChiu.com](http://www.FredericChiu.com), contains up-to-date information about his upcoming concerts and DPS workshops, as well as links to recordings and videos.

# Connecting Artists to the Community

Frederic Chiu will also present a Classical Smackdown adapted for kids in a free HopStop family Show on January 27 and as part of our School Matinee Series on January 26. Both performances take place at the West Claremont Center for Music and the Arts.

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