

Center for New Music and Audio Technologies

Hélène Papadopoulos, piano

Extracts from JS Bach's Clavier-Übung



The monumental Clavier-Übung ("Keyboard Practice") cycle is one of the most intense, grandiose, and demanding collections of keyboard music in the history of music. Part I contains the Six Partitas BWV 825-830. Part II, featuring the Concerto in the Italian Taste BWV 971 and the Overture in the French Manner BWV 831, juxtaposes the two preeminent national styles of European music in the 18th century in a remarkable and delightful way. Part III includes the Four Duets BWV 802-805, which illustrate Bach's magnificent craftsmanship in counterpoint. Part IV consists of the Aria with 30 Variations BWV 988, which became known as the "Goldberg Variations". Altogether, the four

volumes explore and surpass all possible genres of keyboard music from the first half of the 18th century, propelling keyboard playing technique to new high standards and establishing formidable new compositional benchmarks.

Saturday, April 20, 2024, 8:00pm to 9:30pm

Four Duets BWV 802-805

1. Duetto I In E Minor, BWV 802
2. Duetto II In F Major, BWV 803
3. Duetto III In G Major, BWV 804
4. Duetto IV In A Minor, BWV 805

French Overture in B Minor BWV 831

1. Overture
2. Courante
3. Gavotte I & II
4. Passepied I & II
5. Sarabande
6. Bourrée I & II
7. Gigue
8. Echo

Presentation by Hélène:

We have been responding to Bach's music for more than 300 years. The deep spiritual and emotional content of this music, the composer's endless creativity and his aesthetic and technical artistry resonate more than ever with the intricacy of the modern world. Bach's music reminds us of how great art works can transport us to another realm where we can reflect and exhilarate our mind and spirit.

I present all-Bach programs because I believe that, when fully immersed in Bach's music, by undertaking the odyssey of a complete collection, performers and listeners together experience a unique way of joining the composer in the exploration of new musical territories and in the pursuit of new aesthetic experiences. By being confronted with the work in its entirety and by contrasting the various pieces that illuminate each other, the performers and the listeners are capable of discovering and grasping the different facets of Bach's genius, his unique sense of form, his design of structures of utmost complexity, his exploration of distinctive sonorities, and the freedom and profundity of his ideas within an established compositional frame.

Program Notes: Three questions to Hélène Papadopoulos

You have been interested in Bach since your early studies. What are some of the things about this composer and his music that continue to captivate and inspire you?

I like playing Bach's music the most because, more than any other music, it engages all my faculties—intellectually, emotionally, and physically. I find infinite possibilities of creativity in this music. Throughout his

creative life, Bach continuously searched for ways to elevate music to the highest level of development, always oriented towards the glory of God and to the recreation of the mind. Such absolute music demands uncompromising standards from both the performer and the listener. But the reward for me is being transported into a world where all emotional, intellectual, and spiritual sensations are excruciated, in a sphere of peaceful introspection and refreshment. This continuously captivates me. Yes, my understanding of Bach's music changes with time because I delve deeper into his music every day, discovering new facets and new ways of playing and realizing his music.

This music has been written for two-manual harpsichord, but you play them on the piano?

I believe that the modern piano is a wonderful medium for playing Bach's music. Instruments evolve over time. The harpsichords of today are not those of Bach's time, and furthermore, even in his era, there were significant differences in sound among instruments based on their geographical origin or year of production. Bach maintained a lifelong interest in discovering new sounds and was fascinated by the latest developments in keyboard instrument manufacturing. He was even acquainted with the piano! Additionally, many examples demonstrate that Bach did not conceive of his music in terms of a single sonority, as there exist versions of the same pieces for different instruments or combinations of instruments. For me, Bach's music transcends time, aesthetic changes, technological advancements, and the evolution of instruments. It is not limited by these changes, but rather, they allow for the exploration of new facets of this music.

Do you think this work will continue to be played in the future?

I think that this work of arts is one of the works that will adapt to the evolution of society, and to the changes of its reception because it has endless possibilities to create or inspire new kinds of significance. In my piano studio in New York, I have several photographs belonging to the cycle "Geography of poverty" of the great photographer Matt Black. These photographs inspire my playing of the Goldberg and conversely, listening to the Goldberg looking at these photographs allow me to reflect on the work of the photographer and better understand and penetrate the world around me.

Hélène Papadopoulos is a pianist known for her intricate and sensitive interpretations who possesses a transversal vision of music creation and performance. She embarks on her residency at CNMAT to delve into the legacy of American keyboardist Rosalyn Tureck (1913-2003) for Bach performance in the 21st century. She is commissioning new works from living composers inspired by Tureck's perspective, fostering a dialogue between tradition and innovation in Bach's performance.

She completed her higher music education in France, earning advanced degrees in piano, harpsichord, cello, and chamber music from the Conservatoire National de Région de Strasbourg and the École Normale de Musique in Paris. Additionally, she obtained a PhD in computational musicology from IRCAM / Paris Sorbonne University.

She performs both as a soloist and chamber musician across Europe and North America, gracing distinguished festivals such as Musica, Strasbourg Music Festival, and Paliesiaus Dvaras. Since her early years, she has harbored a particular fascination with J.S. Bach's music and in its connections with the music of today. She dedicates herself intensively to performing his keyboard music, presenting this season the complete Clavier-Übung and the entire Bach Sonatas for Keyboard and Violin. Recent appearances include the Union Arts Center in New York, An die Musik Live in Baltimore, Piano Forte in Chicago, and Paliesiaus Dvaras in Lithuania.



Continually enriching her artistry and interpretation, Hélène Papadopoulos engages in scholarly research to refine her performance style. Her scholarly endeavors have been supported by prestigious fellowships from the Government of Canada and the European Commission. She has also contributed to the field with the publication of a commented edition of Euler's complete works on music theory. Furthermore, she serves as the artistic director of the music Festival aux Chandelles in Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, France, which places special emphasis on the music of J.S. Bach and contemporary music.

Supported by the Bach-Archiv Leipzig, Hélène Papadopoulos embarks on a residency at CNMAT to delve into the legacy of American keyboardist Rosalyn Tureck (1913-2003) for Bach performance in the 21st century. During her residency, she seeks to examine the vitality of music from a past era within the contemporary technological, cultural, aesthetic, and social landscape.