

69th Concert Series 2022-23



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is pleased to present

**Albert Cano Smit,
piano**

Sunday, April 16, 2023. 3:00 pm.
Ossining High School. Ossining, New York

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Friends of Music Concerts, Inc. is an award-winning, non-profit, volunteer organization now celebrating its 69th season of showcasing, right here in Westchester, artists chosen from among the finest in today's diverse world of chamber music. Additionally, our Partnership in Education program in the public schools and free student admission to our concerts give young people enhanced exposure to and appreciation of classical music.

In order to help sustain what one of our artists called this “legendary series,” we would welcome people who can join the volunteers listed above, either as Board members or equally valued volunteer Associates and committee members. People we are looking for include, but are not limited to, those with writing/publishing production and/or fund development/grant writing skills. Call us at 914-861-5080 or contact us on our website (see below); we can explore the possibilities together.

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*as of March 31, 2023

Program

Preludes and Fugues from Well-Tempered Clavier

Johann Sebastian Bach

WTC I – Prelude and Fugue in C Major

(1685-1750)

WTC II – Prelude and Fugue in G minor

WTC I – Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major

WTC I – Prelude and Fugue in B-flat minor

WTC II – Prelude and Fugue in F Major

WTC I – Prelude and Fugue in A minor

Sonata No. 14 in C minor, K. 457

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Molto allegro

(1756-1791)

Adagio

Allegro assai

Intermission

Iberia, Book I

Isaac Albéniz

Evocación

(1860-1909)

El Puerto

Le Baiser de L'enfant Jesus, No 15 from Vingt Regards

Olivier Messiaen

(1908-1992)

Danzas Argentinas, Op. 2

Alberto Ginastera

Danza del viejo boyero

(1916-1983)

Danza de la moza donosa

Danza del gaucho matero

Alberto Cano Smit appears by arrangement with Young Concert Artists, Inc., 1776 Broadway, Suite 1500, New York, NY 10016.

Piano by Steinway

Next concert

Saturday, April 22, 2023, at 8:00 pm at **Ossining High School, Ossining, New York**

Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Wind Ensemble with Caroline Palmer, piano.

Program: Reinecke's Trio in A minor for oboe, horn, and piano; Mozart's Quintet in E-flat Major for piano and winds, K. 452; Schulhoff's Divertissement for oboe, clarinet, and bassoon; Beethoven's Quintet in E-flat Major for piano and winds, Op. 16.

Program notes

Preludes and Fugues from The Well-Tempered Clavier, Books 1 and 2

Johann Sebastian Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach was born into the most prodigiously musical family of all time, one that produced gifted musicians from the 16th through the 18th centuries. From that beginning, he grew to become a seminal composer of Western civilization. No composer did as much or went as far in perfecting the existing forms of music; he established new standards for every musical form of his time except opera – vocal, keyboard, instrumental, orchestral, and chamber. Says David Dubal, “In every form Bach touched, he stands alone. There is no greater series of organ works. The harpsichord music is one of the towering achievements of the Baroque. One could call **The Well-Tempered Clavier** music’s essential dictionary, and **The Goldberg Variations** show Bach as a supreme variationist.”

Musicologist Phil G. Goulding asks “What made Bach Bach?” answering that question thusly: a supreme technical mastery; a keenly analytical mind; a deeply profound mind; a consuming belief in God; passion and compassion; melodic genius; just plain genius; a conviction that music made by man was meant to be “a harmonious euphony to the Glory of God.”

“**The Well-Tempered Clavier**,” says Dubal, “is a landmark in the history of music. The keyboard instruments of the Baroque could not play in tune in all keys. They were tuned in the ‘mean tone’ system which was based on the slightly unequal division of intervals of string instruments. The ‘well-tempered’... system, by contrast, tuned the instruments to the fixed, equally divided pitched of the chromatic scale so it would stay in tune in all keys... Bach’s advocacy of the twelve-tone chromatic system through these forty-eight preludes and fugues in the twelve major and twelve minor keys gave added prestige to equal-tempered tuning. **The Well-tempered Clavier** laid the foundation of modern harmonic practice and, in the pianist and writer Ernest Hutchinson’s words, is ‘a treasury of musical scholarship, giving final definition to instrumental counterpoint and fugue.’

---note compiled by Betsy Weiner

Sonata No. 14 in C minor, K. 457

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Piano Sonata No. 14 is one of six sonatas that Mozart composed during his Vienna years; it was probably intended either as a teaching tool or for personal use. In fact, most of the sonatas he wrote were intended to be played in homes or other small, intimate settings. On the title page was a dedication to one of his students, Thérèse von Trattner, whose husband was an important publisher in Vienna and also Mozart’s landlord. The Trattners later became godparents to four of the Mozart children.

This sonata is one of only two sonatas that Mozart composed in a minor key. It includes an unusually wide range of emotions, with many of its effects nearly orchestral. It’s also pianistic in its demanding keyboard techniques. Over the years, musicologists have speculated about its possible influences on Beethoven’s early sonatas, which also are in minor keys.

In Baroque music, the word “sonata” denoted music that was to be played by instruments instead of sung. It later developed into a three-movement composition with a fast-slow-fast alternation. The most identifiable part of what we have come to expect within three-movement sonatas is sonata form, typically used in the first movement, which itself has three sections: an exposition; development; and then recapitulation of two principal themes.

The first movement of **Sonata No. 14**, *Molto Allegro*, which is in sonata form, starts with a commanding fanfare with a dramatically ascending arpeggio. Mozart then uses stark octaves as well as plaintive “sighing” gestures, harmonized and contrasting in register. Off-beat and sudden

juxtapositions of dynamic changes from loud and soft recur throughout the movement. The movement's second theme, in the major mode, is more genial, spinning out its smooth, lyrical melody above a bass made up of the notes of steadily-played triads. The short development is followed by the recapitulation and an agitated coda. Unusually, Mozart introduces a new melodic idea before the movement's end.

The second movement, *Adagio*, features a calm subject with several elaborate variations and elaborate ornamentation. Generally, such slow movements do not feature virtuosic displays, but the decorative detail Mozart uses here includes breathtaking runs spanning more than three octaves. It has been hypothesized that he included the entire span of the keyboard in order to showcase his own skills as a performer.

In the *Allegro assai*, Mozart chose to write a serious, intense third movement rather than a light, quick one that would have been more usual. This finale, with many of the characteristics of a rondo but with much longer sections, recalls the restless mood of the first movement. The initial theme has two parts, one soft with suspensions that create a feeling of pathos and tension and the other louder and more insistent. The second theme is in the major mode. The movement has an undercurrent of tension emphasized by its many sudden dynamic changes and the penetrating nature of its many dramatic pauses.

Iberia, Book I

Isaac Albéniz

Isaac Albéniz was the son of a local government official in the state of Catalonia, Spain. Having revealed his extraordinary musical ability at age four, when he was six his mother took him to Paris so he could study with a distinguished teacher. However, as a boy he ran away from home, earning a fortune as a pianist in Latin America. He ended up penniless in New York, playing in waterfront bars until he was able to go on a concert tour that took him as far as San Francisco. He had made enough money from that to get to England and Germany for academic studies; he then acquired a grant from the King of Spain that sent him to the Brussels Conservatory. Later, he studied with Franz Liszt in Germany and Italy.

All this activity took place in his first 20 years. Although Albéniz then began a great career as a serious pianist, little by little he withdrew from the life of a traveling virtuoso. In 1893 he settled in France, where he became a friend of Chausson, Dukas, Fauré, and d'Indy, and devoted himself more and more to composition.

His masterpiece is a collection of musical "impressions" published between 1906 and 1909 under the title **Iberia**. Each of its four books contain three huge and fiercely difficult piano pieces. The whole extraordinary work captures the sounds, flavors, and sights of Spain. Although Albéniz was from Catalonia, most of the musical styles he uses are those of Andalusia in southern Spain. Frequently he creates the feeling of a specific place with a dance rhythm from the region.

Although Albéniz dedicated **Iberia** to Chausson's wife, his correspondence indicates that he composed the work for the Catalan virtuoso Joaquim Malats. He noted that, bearing Malats in mind, he had taken "*españolismo* and technical difficulty to the ultimate extreme," requiring demanding counter-rhythms, hand crossings, large intervallic skips, and nearly impossible chords.

Iberia is not a suite in the sense of a continuous and organized whole made up of related parts but rather is an anthology of independent pieces. Its total effect is one of enormous musical variety and formidable eloquence of expression, achieved within the limits of a restricted musical language. The works can be played in any sequence; very often, as for this concert, only

a few are programmed at a time.

The first piece of Book 1, *Evocación*, serves as a prelude for the set. Although it's the only one of the twelve pieces whose title doesn't refer to a specific Spanish region, it still is dance-based, like the others. The dance is an Andalusian *fandanguillo*, designated by Albéniz's markings as soft and sweet.

El Puerto, the second piece, presents activities in the small Andalusian fishing port of Santa Maria in Cádiz. Here the dance is the rhythmically-complex *zapateado*. Albéniz directed that it be both "brusque and joyful." Full of life and color, it nevertheless ends quietly.

Le Baiser de L'enfant Jésus ("The Kiss of the Infant Jesus") No. 15 from Vingt Regards Olivier Messiaen

Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus (Twenty Gazes on the Infant Jesus), composed in 1944, is one of Messiaen's early works; the pianist Yvonne Loriod, his second wife, premiered it in 1945. Magnificently monumental, it consists of twenty lengthy, very difficult pieces in which Messiaen eagerly and intensely presents the mystic ecstasy of his faith. The exhilaratingly virtuosic fast movements indicate the joyfulness of his religion, while the slow movements have qualities of the sublime. The entire work contemplates all the figures associated with the story and theological implications of the Nativity. Throughout, he incorporates three cyclic themes to which he gives symbolic meaning: God, Star, and Cross. The "Theme of God" is first heard played in full in the opening movement, then pitched against birdsong in No. 5, and finally transformed and highlighted in this movement.

In a spoken introduction, Messiaen thus described **Le Baiser de L'enfant Jésus**, the 15th of the 20 pieces: "At each Communion, the Infant Jesus sleeps with us, close to the gate; then he opens it onto the garden and comes forth in a blaze of light to embrace us." This is the best known of the works included in **Vingt Regards**, and frequently is played as a substantial solo piece. The large, slow movement is beautiful and lyrical, treating the "Theme of God" as a slow-motion *berceuse* (French for lullaby), a form typical to the 19th century, adding birds, dances, tone clusters, and all the passion of the Romantic period.

After the opening section, the music becomes playful, and slowly the child Jesus's arms extend with love before the climactic kiss. The highly charged passion of this music is a reflection of the conjoining of the spirituality and sensuality of Roman Catholic iconography with that of Eastern eroticism. The piece ends with far-away cuckoo calls.

Danzas Argentinas, Op. 2

Alberto Ginastera

Ginastera, Argentina's foremost contemporary composer, studied at the National Conservatory of Music in Buenos Aires, where he later became professor of composition. As a youth he listened to many Argentine folksongs, including pentatonic melodies of the aboriginal Incans, Creole folksongs, and the guitar music of the gaucho, the Argentine cowboy. North Americans, whom he met on a number of stays here, commissioned several of his compositions. His first visit to the United States was made in 1946 via a Guggenheim Fellowship. He returned periodically when political differences with the ruling regimes in his homeland resulted in his dismissal from his teaching post and other official positions.

He wrote the early **Danzas Argentinas, Op. 2**, his first piano work, while he was in his final year of study at the National Conservatory. It was premiered on October 27, 1937 in Buenos Aires by Antonio De Raca. It consists of three movements, each a separate dance: *Danza del viejo boyero* (Dance of the Old Herdsman), dedicated to Pedro Sáenz; *Danza de la moza donosa* (Dance of the Graceful Girl), dedicated to Emilia A. Stahlberg; and *Danza del gaucho matrero*

(Dance of the Outlaw Cowboy).

In **Danzas Argentinas**, Ginastera introduces folkloric elements, including Spanish melodies, guitar chords, and the *malambo* rhythm. (A *malambo* is a gaucho dance for a solo male wherein he can show off his tap-dancing talents; its characteristic rhythm consists of successive eighth notes and dotted quarters.) Ginastera identified this work's subjective nationalism, stating that "all the melodies and rhythms... are Argentine; however, this material is used in a new, personal, and imaginative way, as if inspired by a folklore dream." The three dances contain the strong syncopated accents and sharp contrasts of Latin dance rhythms. Their vitality and wide range of coloristic and rhythmic variation are transformed by Ginastera from their original folk origins into his own music.

The first and third dances feature obsessive-rhythmic elements with long passages based on rhythmic patterns. The first's pattern is based on the *malambo*. The second dance, calmer and more poetic, is a *criollo*; its melodic inspiration comes from a *cantabile* folk song. It begins languidly, becomes more energetic and intense, and then returns to quietness. The last dance again incorporates the distinctive *malambo* rhythm, similar to the first but faster; it also makes use of other recognizable melodic strands from Argentine folk music. All the dances have an intensity, excitement, and energy that communicate directly with the listener.

---notes provided by Susan Halpern

About the Artist

Albert Cano Smit has established himself as an "artist to watch" (*Montreal Gazette*).

As a first-prize winner at the 2019 Young Concert Artist International Auditions in New York City, he appears this afternoon as the recipient of our own Performance Award. As a first prize winner in the 2017 Walter W. Naumburg Piano Competition, he made his Carnegie Hall debut in Weill Recital Hall. He also was awarded the prestigious Arthur Rubenstein Piano Prize from the Juilliard School in 2020, and had strong finishes in the 2017 Montreal and 2016 Hilton Head competitions.

A polyglot who speaks five languages, Cano Smit was born in Geneva, the son of a Dutch mother and a Spanish father who settled the family in Catalonia. He left home at age 9 to join the Escolania de Montserrat choir school, where hours of daily rehearsal strongly affected his musical development. The school also produced one of his most memorable performance experiences, a benefit for the victims of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti; he said it "had a purpose beyond music that brought us together." His serious piano studies took him to Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, England, and finally to Juilliard, where he completed his artist diploma in May 2022, under the tutelage of Robert McDonald.

Cano Smit has given recital and chamber performances across the United States; in France and Germany; in Xiamen, China; and throughout Spain. Concerto engagements have included those with the San Diego Symphony, Las Vegas Philharmonic, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Orquesta Filarmónica de Boca del Río, Barcelona Symphony, and Catalonia Symphony Orchestra.



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