Special Thanks to—

Dan Epstein, Stephen Siegel, Allen Shawn, Tom Bogdan,
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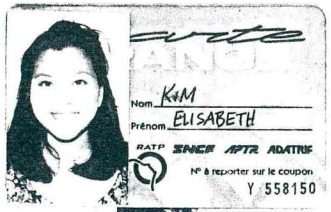
Music at Bennington Presents:

noby, elizabeth, todd



WITH SPECIAL GUESTS

Dan Epstein and Stephen Siegel

works by: Liszt, Messiaen, Thomson, Adams, Chopin, Byrd, Handel, Shawn

Monday, May 18, 1998
8:00 PM
Deane Carriage Barn

Program

Hungarian Rhapsody #12 in C#minor — Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Noby Ishida, piano

Pavana Lachrimae — William Byrd, after Dowland (1543-1623)

Todd Tarantino, piano

From "Five Songs from William Blake" — Virgil Thomson (1896-1989)

I. The Divine Image
II. Tiger! Tiger!
IV. The Little Black Boy

Todd Tarantino, baritone - Noby Ishida, piano
Stephen Siegel, speaker

From "Vingt Regards sur l 'Enfant Jésus" — Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

XI. Premiere communion de la Vierge

Todd Tarantino, piano

II: Regard de l'étoile
XVI. Regard des prophetes, des bergers et des mages

Elizabeth Kim, piano

INTERMISSION

Nixon:

Achieving a great human dream.
We live in an unsettled time.
Who are our enemies? Who are
Our friends? The eastern Hemisphere
Beckoned to us, and we have flown
East of the sun, west of the moon
Across an ocean of distrust
Filled with the bodies of our lost;
The earth's Sea of Tranquillity.
It's prime time in the U.S.A.
Yesterday night, They watch us now;
The three main networks' colors glow
Livid through drapes onto the lawn.
Dishes are wished and homework done,
The dog and grandma fall asleep,
A car roars past playing loud pop,
Is gone. As I look down the road
I know America is good
At heart. An old cold warrior
Piloting towards an unknown shore
Through shoals. The rats begin to chew
The sheets. There's murmuring below.
Now there's ingratitude! My hand
Is steady as a rock. A sound
Like mourning doves reaches my ears,
Nobody is a friend of ours.
The nations's heartland skips a beat
As our hands shield the spinning globe
From the flame-throwers of the mob.
We must press on. We know what we want.

Program Notes

Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jesus (1944), a cycle of twenty pieces for solo piano, roughly translates into English as the contemplation of the the infant Jesus by twenty different personages and symbolic beings, e.g., the Father, Virgin, Angels, Star, Cross, the Church of Joy, etc. It is widely regarded as one of the great peaks of 20th century piano writing, with its innovative use of the keyboard register and "rainbow" harmonies. In addition, the pieces also testify to the great significance rhythm played in Messiaen's works--he openly regarded himself as a "compositeur et rhythmicien" , and was profoundly influenced by ancient Greek meters and Hindu rhythms. In regard to this work, Messiaen, an intensely religious Catholic, stated: "More so than in any of my previous works, I have sought here a language of mystical love at once varied, powerful and tender, sometimes brutal, in multicolored ordering."

Regard No. XI, *Premiere communion de la Vierge* (The Virgin's First Communion) is, in the composer's words, "a tableau in which the Virgin is shown on her knees, withdrawn within herself--a luminous halo hovers over her Womb. Her eyes closed, she adores the Fruit hidden within her. This incident takes place between the Annunciation and the Nativity: it is the first and greatest of all Communions...My God, My Son, My Magnificat! -- My Unspoken Love."

Regard No. II, *Regard de l'etoile* (Contemplation of the Star) states the theme of the Star and the Cross, which appears at varying points throughout the cycle. Messiaen deliberately used the same theme to represent both the Star and Cross, claiming, "one opens and the other closes the earthly life of Jesus". Inscribed at the beginning of this piece is "The descent of Grace--the Star, surmounted by the Cross, shines on naively."

Regard No. XVI, *Regard des prophetes, des bergers et des Mages* (Contemplation of the Prophets, the Shepherds, and the Wise Men) is both celebratory and prophetic in nature. This piece strives to represent "exotic music, tam-tams and oboes, vast and nasal harmony".

Chopin's **Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 35** was composed in 1837-39. It is highly regarded by many classical pianists as immensely challenging and very beautiful. The following quotes may provide the listener with a bit more perspective on the Second Sonata, and on the art of Chopin....

The great composer Robert Schumann, also an unusually insightful and prophetic music critic of his day, was an ardent fan of Chopin's, but was perplexed by the Sonata No. 2, stating: "...A certain pitiless genius blows in our face, strikes any one who tries to stand out against him with a heavy fist, and makes us listen to the end, fascinated and uncomplaining...but also without praise, because this is not music. The sonata ends as it should have begun, in a riddle, like a mocking Sphinx."

George Sand, French novelist and Chopin's infamous Significant Other once said: "The genius of Chopin is the most profound and pregnant of feeling and emotions that has ever existed. He makes a single instrument speak the language of the infinite. He knows how to gather into ten lines that even a child could play poems of immense elevation, dramas of unequaled power...There must be great advances in taste and artistic intelligence if his work is ever to become popular...Chopin knows his strength and his weakness. His weakness is an excess of that very strength, which he cannot control. His music is full of shades and of the unforeseen. Sometimes, ... it is bizarre, mysterious, and tormented. In spite of his horror of the un-understandable, his over-powering emotions sometimes sweep him unconsciously into regions only he can know."

For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice.
Saying: come out from the grove my love & care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.

Thus did my mother say and kissed me,
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy:

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear,
To lean in joy upon our father's knee.
And they I'll stand and stoke his silver hair,
And be like him and he will then love me.

From "Nixon in China" Act. I, Scene I — John Adams

"News has a kind of mystery."

Nixon: News has a kind of mystery:
When I shook hands with Chou En-lai
On this bare field outside Peking
Just now, the world was listening.

Though we spoke quietly
The eyes and ears of history
Caught every gesture—

And every word, transforming us
As we, transfixed,—

Made history.

On our flight over from Shanghai

—the countryside
Looked drab and grey. "Brueghel," Pat said.
"We came in peace for all mankind"
I said, and I was put in mind
Of our Apollo astronauts
Simply

Chaconne in G major — George Frideric Handel/Ishida (1685-1759)

Noby Ishida, piano

From "Nixon in China" Act. I, Scene I — John Adams (1947 --)

"News has a kind of mystery."

Todd Tarantino, baritone -- Noby Ishida, piano

Piano Sonata #2 in B^{b} minor, Op. 35 — Frédéric Chopin (1810-1847)

I. Grave - Doppio movimento

Elizabeth Kim, piano

The Rainbow — Allen Shawn (1948 --)

Dan Epstein, Noby Ishida,
Elizabeth Kim, Todd Tarantino, pianos

TEXT

From "Five Songs from William Blake" Virgil Thomson

The Divine Image

To Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
All pray in their distress:
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is God our father dear:
And Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart
Pity, a human face:
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine
Love Mercy Pity Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, turk or jew.
Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.

The Tyger

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame they fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes!
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare sieze the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger, Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

The Little Black Boy

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child:
But I am black as if bereav'd of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree
And sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And pointing to the east began to say.

Look on the rising sun: there God does live
And gives his light, and gives his heat away.
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning joy in the noon day.

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love,
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.