



# THE ART OF THE RECITAL

THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 21, 2019 AT 7:30

**Daniel and Joanna S. Rose Studio**

**2019-2020**  
**50TH**  
**ANNIVERSARY**  
**SEASON**

A large, stylized number '50' in a brown color. The '5' is composed of a horizontal bar at the top and a curved bottom. The '0' is a simple, thick-lined circle.

**The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center**

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[www.ChamberMusicSociety.org](http://www.ChamberMusicSociety.org)

*This concert is made possible, in part, by **The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, and The Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts.***

*The Chamber Music Society is deeply grateful to Board member **Paul Gridley** for his very generous gift of the Hamburg Steinway & Sons model “D” concert grand piano we are privileged to hear this evening.*

# THE ART OF THE RECITAL

THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 21, 2019 AT 7:30 ▶ 4,022ND CONCERT

**Daniel and Joanna S. Rose Studio**

**MICHAEL BROWN**, piano

**ORION WEISS**, piano

**IGOR STRAVINSKY**

(1882-1971)

***The Rite of Spring for Piano, Four Hands***

(1911-13)

PART I: THE ADORATION OF THE EARTH

- ▶ Introduction (Day)
- ▶ The Omens of Spring: Dance of the Maidens
- ▶ Ritual of Abduction
- ▶ Spring Rounds (Dances)
- ▶ Ritual of the Rival Tribes
- ▶ Procession of the Sage
- ▶ Dance of the Earth

PART II: THE SACRIFICE

- ▶ Introduction (Night)
- ▶ Mystic Rites of the Maidens
- ▶ Glorification of the Chosen Maiden
- ▶ Evocation of the Ancestors
- ▶ Ritual of the Ancestors
- ▶ Sacrificial Dance of the Chosen Maiden

WEISS, BROWN

—INTERMISSION—

**OLIVIER MESSIAEN**

(1908-1992)

***Visions de l'Amen for Two Pianos*** (1943)

- ▶ Amen of the Creation
- ▶ Amen of the Stars, of the Ringed Planet
- ▶ Amen of the Agony of Jesus
- ▶ Amen of Desire
- ▶ Amen of the Angels, Saints, and Birdsong
- ▶ Amen of the Judgment
- ▶ Amen of the Consummation

BROWN, WEISS

PLEASE TURN OFF CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

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Photographing, sound recording, or videotaping this event is prohibited.

# NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

*Pianists lead lonely lives, coming home from solo performances to hours of isolated practicing. When two pianists meet in the wild and decide to play music together, it is a rare joy and a bright moment in their generally dark and solitary existences.*

*Tonight we will present two pillars of 20th-century music, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Messiaen's *Visions de l'Amen*. We're delighted to play these towering masterpieces, back-to-back, and we are also so excited to be playing together, side-by-side. We serendipitously met in the kitchen of the Pianofest House in East Hampton, way back in 2006. In our young lives, we are the oldest of friends.*

*Playing four-hands on one piano can be crowded and uncomfortable and *The Rite of Spring* goes even further: it is actually a little bit dangerous! Our own choreography for this piece requires split-second timing, tricky contortions, far-reaching jumps, hand-crossings, and a good set of nail clippers.*

*Messiaen had a great admiration for Stravinsky, particularly his use of rhythm. Messiaen composed *Visions de l'Amen* for Yvonne Loriod, one of his students and ardent champions who would later become his second wife. He wrote her an insanely hard part—piano 1 (Michael's part) is supremely virtuosic and full of cosmic birdsong—and took all of the melodies and cadenzas for himself on piano 2 (Orion's part). Look for Michael glaring jealously at Orion during his innumerable cadenzas.*

*Messiaen experienced a form of synesthesia in which certain sounds and pitch combinations were connected to very specific colors for him. We have therefore designed a lighting scheme to accompany our performance—based on Messiaen's own writings about chords and colors. Don't worry too much about this. You will just see lots of beautiful colors while we endeavor to play this titanic piece.*

-Michael Brown and Orion Weiss

## The Rite of Spring for Piano, Four Hands

### IGOR STRAVINSKY

- ▶ Born June 17, 1882 in Oranienbaum, near St. Petersburg.
- ▶ Died April 6, 1971 in New York City.

#### **Composed in 1911-13.**

- ▶ Premiered on May 29, 1913 in Paris, conducted by Pierre Monteux; the formal public premiere of the piano duet version was apparently given on November 6, 1967 in Los Angeles by Michael Tilson Thomas and Ralph Grierson.
- ▶ First CMS performance on September 20, 1981 by pianists Michael Tilson Thomas and Leonard Bernstein.
- ▶ Duration: 34 minutes

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Stravinsky's epochal *Rite of Spring* came into existence in three versions simultaneously—the full orchestral score and versions for piano solo and piano duet. As with all of Stravinsky's ballets from *The Firebird* through *Agon*, the piano reductions were created specifically for the use of the choreographer and the designer, and subsequently for the dancers' rehearsals, which, in the case of *The Rite of Spring*, stretched to more than 120 sessions. It was the keyboard versions that first stirred reports of the revolutionary nature of this phenomenal creation. The composition of the score was accomplished between the summer of 1911 and November 1912. Stravinsky allowed Diaghilev and Pierre Monteux, conductor of the premiere, their first taste of the music during the intervening April in Monte Carlo, where the Ballet Russes was giving performances of *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*. "With only Diaghilev and myself as audience,

Stravinsky sat down to play a piano reduction of the score," Monteux recalled. "Before he got very far, I was convinced he was raving mad. Heard this way, without the color of the orchestra, the crudity of the rhythm was emphasized, its stark primitiveness underlined." Diaghilev chose Nijinsky to do the choreography (though Stravinsky objected to the choice because of the dancer's inexperience as a choreographer and his lack of understanding of the technical aspects of the music), and rehearsals for the premiere were begun in Berlin by December 1912. Rehearsals proceeded through the winter and early spring, always to piano accompaniment. Stravinsky polished the piano duet version sufficiently for the Russischer Musikverlag to begin engraving it in January 1913; it was published in that form several weeks before the opening on May 29th. (The full orchestral score was not published until 1921.) It was only on May 26, 1913, just three days before the opening, that *The Rite of Spring* was finally played by a symphony orchestra.

The following summary of the stage action of *The Rite of Spring* is excerpted from *The Victor Book of Ballet* by Robert Lawrence: "The plot deals with archaic Russian tribes and their worship of the gods of the harvest and fertility. These primitive peoples assemble for their yearly ceremonies, play their traditional games, and finally select a virgin to be sacrificed to the gods of spring so that the crops and tribes may

flourish. There is a prelude in which the composer evokes the primitive past. Insistent, barbaric rhythms are heard, shifting accent with almost every bar. The first rites of spring are being celebrated and a group of adolescents appears. They dance until other members of the tribe enter. Then the full round of ceremonies gets under way: a mock abduction, games of the rival tribes, the procession of the Sage, and the thunderous dance of the Earth. The curtain falls and there is a soft interlude representing the pagan night. Soon the tribal meeting place is seen again. It is dark and

the adolescents circle mysteriously in preparation for the choice of the virgin to be sacrificed to the gods. Their dance is interrupted and one of the girls is marked for the tribal offering. The others begin a wild orgy glorifying the Chosen One and—in a barbaric ritual—call on the shades of their ancestors. Finally, the supreme moment of the ceremony arrives: the ordeal of the Chosen One. It is the maiden's duty to dance until she perishes from exhaustion. Throughout the dance, the music gathers power until it ends with a crash as the Maiden dies." ♦

## *Visions de l'Amen* for Two Pianos

### **OLIVIER MESSIAEN**

- ▶ Born December 10, 1908 in Avignon.
- ▶ Died April 28, 1992 in Paris.

#### ***Composed in 1943.***

- ▶ Premiered on May 10, 1943 at the Galerie Charpentier in Paris by Yvonne Loriod and the composer.
- ▶ This evening is the first CMS performance of this piece.
- ▶ Duration: 48 minutes

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Olivier Messiaen, one of towering figures of 20th-century French music, was born in 1908 in the ancient southern town of Avignon to Pierre Messiaen, a professor of literature noted for his translations of Shakespeare, and the poet Cécile Sauvage. Olivier entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 11 to study with composer Paul Dukas, organist Marcel Dupré, and others of that school's distinguished

faculty, winning several prizes for harmony, organ, improvisation, and composition before graduating in 1930. The following year he was appointed chief organist at the Trinité in Paris. In 1936, Messiaen joined with André Jolivet, Yves Baudrier, and Daniel-Lesur to form *La Jeune France*, a group of young French composers pledged to returning substance and sincerity to the nation's music, which they felt had become trivialized and cynical. Messiaen was appointed to the faculties of the Schola Cantorum and École Normale that same year. Called up for military service at the outbreak of hostilities in 1939, he was captured the following summer and imprisoned at Stalag VIII-A in Görlitz, Silesia. There he wrote his *Quartet for the End of Time* for the musical instruments available among his fellow musician-

prisoners (clarinet, violin, cello, and piano); the work's extraordinary premiere was given at the camp in 1941. He was repatriated later that year, resuming his position at the Trinité and joining the staff of the Conservatoire as professor of harmony, where his students came to include such important musicians as Boulez, Stockhausen, and Xenakis. In addition to his teaching duties in Paris, Messiaen gave special classes in Budapest, Darmstadt, Saarbrücken, and Tanglewood. He was a member of the French Institute, Académie des beaux-arts, Santa Cecilia Academy of Rome, and American Academy of Arts and Letters. He died in Paris in 1992.

Messiaen's life, works, and religion are indivisible. "The foremost idea I wanted to express in music, the one that's the most important because it stands above everything else," he wrote, "is the existence of the truths of the Catholic faith. I have the good luck to be a Catholic; I was born a believer and so it happens that the Scriptures have always made a deep impression on me. A number of my works are therefore intended to illuminate the theological truths of the Catholic belief. That is the first aspect of my work, the noblest, probably the most useful, the most valid, and the only one perhaps that I shall not regret at the hour of my death." Few of his compositions, however, are specifically liturgical, Messiaen having chosen rather to address the widest possible audience in the concert hall (and, with his huge music drama *Saint-François d'Assise* of 1983, the opera house) in the most varied and colorful style devised by any mid-20th-century composer. Messiaen explained: "God being present

in all things, music dealing with theological subjects can and must be extremely varied.... I have therefore... tried to produce music that touches all things without ceasing to touch God."

Soon after Messiaen was released from his war-time imprisonment late in 1941, he was appointed to the faculty of the Paris Conservatory. Though Messiaen had his freedom, Paris was then occupied by the Nazis and conditions made carrying on his creative work difficult, so he welcomed an offer from the *Concerts de la Pléiade* (Concerts of the Pleiades) the following autumn to write a large-scale composition for two pianos. The occupation had thoroughly disrupted life in Paris during those years and not least in music, since concerts were limited and tightly controlled, and performances were forbidden of works by Jews, by those who had fled the country or to the Vichy "Free Zone" in the south, and even of unpublished scores by French composers. In 1942, filmmaker Denise Tual and musicologist André Schaeffner organized the Concerts of the Pleiades for reasons almost as much subversive as musical, and scheduled the first events for spring 1943, not in a conventional hall but in the Galerie Charpentier, where admission was strictly by invitation only to exclude undesirable Germans or known collaborators. (The *Concerts de la Pléiade* managed to organize 11 programs during the occupation.) The programming was largely French and modern, including some banned compositions, and it was for the organization's third concert, on May 10, 1943, that Tual asked Messiaen to provide his new work. He began the piece early that

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## MESSIAEN WROTE THE PART FOR PIANO II FOR HIMSELF AND CONCEIVED PIANO I FOR YVONNE LORIOD, A BRILLIANT 19-YEAR-OLD STUDENT AT THE PARIS CONSERVATOIRE WHOM HE WAS TO MARRY IN 1961.

year and worked on it with inspired speed, notifying Tual on March 15 that the score was finished. Messiaen wrote the part for Piano II for himself and conceived Piano I for Yvonne Loriod, a brilliant 19-year-old student at the Paris Conservatoire whom he was to marry in 1961, following the death of his long-incapacitated wife. (Loriod came to be considered the foremost interpreter of her husband's piano works. They both mentored French pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard, who is among today's greatest champions of Messiaen's music.) Arthur Honegger attended the premiere of *Visions de l'Amen* and reviewed it for the journal *Comoedia*: "I must say that this work by Olivier Messiaen seems to me to be a remarkable one, of great musical richness and of true grandeur in its conception. The fact that it is written for two pianos lends a certain austerity... but what does this matter given the poetic power, the constantly exalted level of the musical discourse, and the quality of the musical invention that is affirmed so impressively?"

When the score was published in 1950, Messiaen wrote a detailed introductory note for it that speaks of the transcendent musical and

spiritual qualities he tried to embody in its seven vast frescoes:

"*Visions de l'Amen* was conceived and written for two pianos, demanding the maximum force and diversity of sound from these instruments. I have entrusted rhythmic difficulties, chord clusters, all that is velocity, charm, and tone quality to the first piano, and the principal melody, thematic elements, and all that expresses emotion and power to the second.

"I. *Amen of the Creation*. God said, 'Let there be light!' and there was light (Genesis). Piano I has bell sounds and complex rhythms. Piano II expresses the theme of Creation, the main theme of the work, in grand and solemn chords. The whole piece is a crescendo: it begins pianissimo, in the mystery of that primeval nebula that already contains the potential of light. All the bells quiver in this light, the light that is also life.

"II. *Amen of the Stars, of the Ringed Planet*. A savage and brutal dance. The stars, suns, and Saturn rotate violently. God called them, and they said, 'Amen, here we are' (Baruch). Piano II exposes the theme of the planets' dance. This theme begins with five notes, which are the substance of the piece. There are three developments. A varied recapitulation of the planets' dance concludes the movement.

"III. *Amen of the Agony of Jesus*. Jesus suffers and weeps. 'O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt' (St. Matthew). He accepts: 'Thy will be done, Amen.' Jesus is alone in the Garden of Gethsemane, face to face with his agony. There are three musical motifs: first, the curse of



the Father on the sins of the world that are represented by Jesus at this moment; secondly, a cry; and last, a heart-rending lament on four notes of various rhythms. The theme of Creation is recalled; then a long silence broken by pulsations evokes the suffering of this hour—an unspeakable suffering expressed only slightly by the dripping of blood.

“IV. *Amen of Desire*. There are two themes of desire. The first, slow, ecstatic, and yearning with deep passion: here the soul is torn by a terrible love that appears carnal, but there is nothing carnal about it, only a paroxysm of the thirst of Love. The two principal voices seem to merge into each other, and nothing remains but the harmonious silence of Heaven.

“V. *Amen of the Angels, Saints, and Birdsong*. Song of the purity of the Saints: Amen. The exultant calling of the birds: Amen. All the angels fell before the throne on their faces: Amen (Revelation). The song of the angels and saints, stripped of inessentials and very pure, is followed by a middle section based on birdsong, giving rise to more brilliant keyboard writing. These are true songs of nightingales, blackbirds, finches, and blackcaps mingled in a turbulent yet pleasant texture. A



## **VISIONS DE L'AMEN WAS CONCEIVED AND WRITTEN FOR TWO PIANOS, DEMANDING THE MAXIMUM FORCE AND DIVERSITY OF SOUND FROM THESE INSTRUMENTS.**

varied recapitulation of the song of the Saints is followed by a short coda based on birdsong.

“VI. *Amen of the Judgment*.

Three notes, frozen like the bell of Judgment. ‘Verily, I say to you, Accuser, get thee hence.’ An intentionally short and harsh piece.

“VII. *Amen of the Consummation*.

Consummation, Paradise. The life of the bodies in glory, in a carillon of light, ‘the shining light that shineth more and more’ (Proverbs). Amen. Piano II takes up the theme of Creation and turns it into a long chorale of glory, Piano I surrounding it (in the lowest and highest registers simultaneously) with a ceaseless carillon of chords and brilliant, scintillating rhythms, in ever-closer rhythmic canon. Jewels of the Apocalypse ring, collide, dance, color, and perfume the Light of Life.” ♦

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# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## MICHAEL BROWN

▶ Michael Brown has been described as “one of the leading figures in the current renaissance of performer-composers” (*New York Times*). Winner of a 2018 Emerging Artist Award from Lincoln Center and a 2015 Avery Fisher Career Grant, he is an artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and an alum of CMS’s Bowers Program. He makes regular appearances with orchestras such as the National Philharmonic, the Seattle, Grand Rapids, North Carolina, and Albany symphonies, and was selected by pianist Andrés Schiff to perform an international solo recital tour, making debuts in Zurich’s Tonhalle and New York’s 92nd Street Y. He has appeared at the Tanglewood, Mostly Mozart, Marlboro, Ravinia, Music@Menlo, Tippet Rise, Bridgehampton, and Bard music festivals and performs regularly with his longtime duo partner, cellist Nicholas Canellakis. A prolific composer, Mr. Brown’s Piano Concerto will be premiered in 2020 at the Gilmore Festival and by the NFM Leopoldinum Orchestra in Poland. He was the composer and artist-in-residence at the New Haven Symphony for the 2017-19 seasons and a 2018 Copland House Award winner. He is the First Prize winner of the Concert Artists Guild competition and earned degrees in piano and composition from The Juilliard School, where he studied with pianists Jerome Lowenthal and Robert McDonald and composers Samuel Adler and Robert Beaser. A native New Yorker, he lives there with his two 19th-century Steinway D’s, *Octavia* and *Daria*.

## ORION WEISS

▶ One of the most sought-after soloists in his generation of young American musicians, pianist Orion Weiss has performed with the major American orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and New York Philharmonic. His deeply felt and exceptionally crafted performances go far beyond his technical mastery and have won him worldwide acclaim. With a warmth to his playing that reflects his personality, he has performed with dozens of orchestras in North America and has dazzled audiences with his passionate, lush sound. In 2019-20 he will perform with orchestras from Austin to Milwaukee, tour with both James Ehnes and Augustin Hadelich, and perform in recital with his curated repertoire. Recent seasons have seen him in performances for the Lucerne Festival, the Denver Friends of Chamber Music, the University of Iowa, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center’s Fortas Series, the 92nd Street Y, and the Broad Stage, as well as the Aspen, Bard, and Grand Teton summer festivals. He is an alum of CMS’s Bowers Program. Highlights of recent seasons include his third performance with the Chicago Symphony, a performance of Beethoven’s Triple Concerto with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and recordings of Gershwin’s complete works for piano and orchestra with his longtime collaborators JoAnn Falletta and the Buffalo Philharmonic. Named the Classical Recording Foundation’s Young Artist of the Year in September 2010, in the summer of 2011 he made his debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood as a last-minute replacement for Leon Fleisher.

## UPCOMING EVENTS AT CMS

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### **1918: STRAVINSKY'S THE SOLDIER'S TALE**

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 5:00 PM ▶ ALICE TULLY HALL

*Works by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Smetana.*

### **1741: BACH'S GOLDBERG VARIATIONS**

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 7:30 PM ▶ ALICE TULLY HALL

*Jeffrey Kahane offers his incomparable performance as well as in-depth remarks on the variations.*

### **MASTER CLASS WITH JEFFREY KAHANE**

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 11:00 AM ▶ DANIEL & JOANNA S. ROSE STUDIO

*Jeffrey Kahane leads a master class with talented students.*

This event will be streamed live at [www.ChamberMusicSociety.org/WatchLive](http://www.ChamberMusicSociety.org/WatchLive)