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A Guest Artist Recital

Dzovig Markarian

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Markarian, Dzovig, "A Guest Artist Recital" (2012). *Printed Performance Programs (PDF Format)*. 726.
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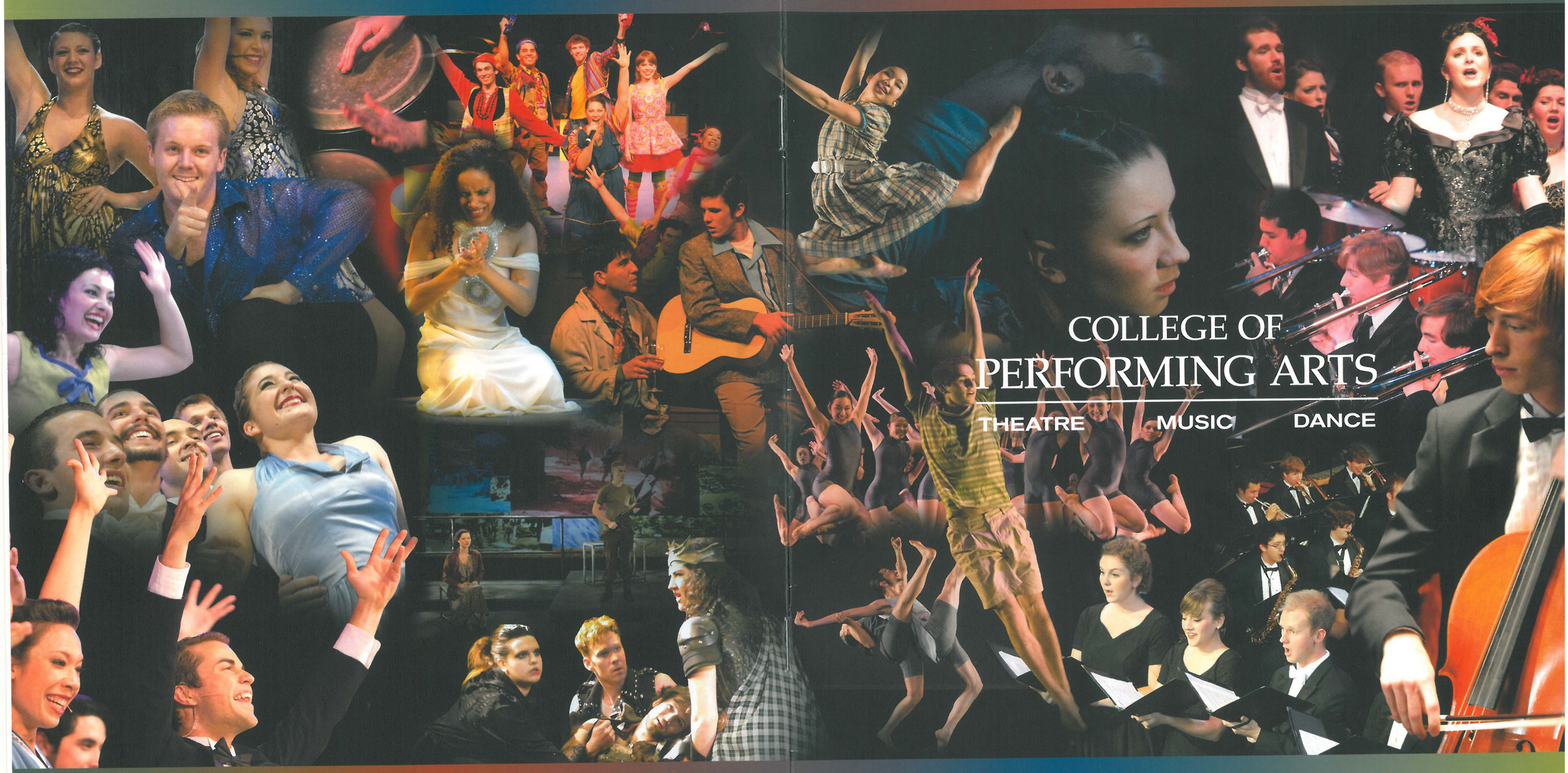

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CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

Conservatory of Music

presents

A Guest Artist Recital

Dzovig Markarian, piano

April 26, 2012 ▪ 7:30 P.M.

Salmon Recital Hall

Program

1 *Toccata,* d-moll, BWV 913 — J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

2
3
4

Miniatures (4) — T. Mansurian (b. 1939)

5
6 Delicato
7 Risoluto
8 Leggiero

Sonata, op. 1 — A. Berg (1883-1935)

9 Mässig bewegt

~Intermission~

Albumblätter (5), from *Bunte Blätter (14), op.99* — R. Schumann (1820-1869)

10 Ziemlich langsam
11 Schnell
12 Ziemlich langsam, sehr gesangvoll
13 Sehr langsam
14 Langsam

15 *Etude 2, "Cordes à vide"* — G. Ligeti (1923-2006)
Andantino rubato, molto tenero
16 *Etude 5, "Arc-en-ciel"*
Andante con eleganza, with swing

17 *Cantéyodjayâ* — O. Messiaen (1908-1992)

Program Notes

The seven Toccatas for clavier, BWV 910-916 occupy a unique place in J. S. Bach's various keyboard compositions. Unlike the more strict *Preludes and Fugues* or the *Suites*, the Toccatas present a looser form in terms of alternation of fantasia, fugue and chorale-like material. Even though a toccata is generally known to have four sections, Bach's Toccatas present great varieties within a style that never acquired a rigid form.

The term toccata was the name given since the 17th Century, to harpsichord or organ pieces, which according to the definition of the term derived from the Italian *toccare* ("to touch"), consists of a virtuosic composition mostly for keyboard instruments, sometimes for plucked instruments or others, where fast-moving passages and fugal interludes interlace.
The **d minor *Toccata*** is in three distinct movements:
1-(Introduction)- fantasy, chorale, second fantasy
2-Thema- fugato, fantasy, chorale
3-Allegro- fugato

Even though the original manuscripts in Bach's handwriting have not survived, the handwritten copies by Bach's very own pupils have. As these were expert keyboardists too, musicologists have been comparing and honoring those sketches in order to present a complete set of the seven Toccatas. It is according to these secondary copies and also to the Thematic Catalogue of the Works of J. S. Bach by Wolfgang Schmieder, that BWV 913 (d minor, before 1708) has been placed first in the set, and is followed by BWV 914 (e minor, before 1708), BWV 910 (f# minor, c1717), BWV 915 (g minor, before 1708), BWV 912 (D Major, c1710), BWV 911 (c minor, c1717), and BWV 916 (G Major, c1719).

Recently hailed from Berlin, Germany on the occasion of the premiere of his *Requiem* (Nov. 2011) for soprano, baritone, mixed chorus and string orchestra, Tigran Mansurian is Armenia's leading composer of today.

Mr. Mansurian's large body of works, which comprises film music, stage works, concerti, chamber music, vocal and choral scores, as well as instrumental solos- is characterized mainly by the organic synthesis of ancient Armenian musical traditions and contemporary European composition methods.

Originally from Beirut-Lebanon, Mansurian's family has settled in Yerevan-Armenia in 1947, a move that has contributed to the composer later becoming a close collaborator with prominent composers and performers of his era, such as Sofia Gubaidulina, Alfred Schnittke, Arvo Pärt, Edison Denisov, Andrei Volkonsky, Alexei Lubimov, Natalia Gutman, and others.

The four ***Miniatures*** for solo piano represent a unique character in Mr. Mansurian's piano writing, which is generally more lyrical and modal, and presented in classical forms, such as Sonatas and Sonatinas. Composed in 1969, these pieces are dedicated to Russian musicologist Mikhail S. Druskin (1905-1991), who was a mentor of Mansurian's and shared with the composer a deep reverence for modern music. In an interview, which I conducted on March 2012, the composer explained that these pieces, however inspired by post-Webernian tendencies, are explorations into the world of chromaticism, as it develops into diatonicism, and their ultimate goal is to present complete ideas, rather than fragmentary telegrams.

Although these miniatures present a rather abstract set of sketches, each miniature ends with a hint of the next, and each miniature that follows, resonates with a remnant of the past. The first miniature presents Schoenbergian abrupt and highly expressive gestures, while the last one is a study in Boulezian pointillism. The two in the middle are poetic essays in contrast to each other, with some resemblance to Schumann's Eusebius and Florestan.

Composer of the Second Viennese School next to Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern, Alban Berg is mostly recognized for his two operas: *Wozzeck* (1925) and *Lulu* (1937). More than a decade before the conception of his first opera, and while he was writing his more than 80 songs for voice and piano, Berg's ***Sonata op. 1*** (1907-8) already shows influences of Schumann and early Schoenberg, with tonal ambiguity and intense lyricism. Some of the thematic material in this sonata would later become identifying features in prominent themes of *Wozzeck*.
Often under-estimated as a "student work," this sonata is composed as a graduation assignment during Berg's study years with Schoenberg.

Even though it bears the nominal key signature of b minor, this sonata is highly chromatic and never really in the key of b minor, except at the first statement of the exposition, and the last statement of the coda. Other compositional features include augmented triads, quartal harmonies, note-name letter symbolism (ex: A-D-G, for ArnolD SchoenberG), etc.
There are a number of elements that clearly define this composition as a sonata, such as its exposition which is marked to be repeated, followed by a clear development, and finally a recapitulation. However, there are other elements that make this through-composed sonata highly ambiguous formally, and with clear tendencies of a "developing variation." In fact, some theorists argue, that every idea can be traced to the opening idea, a feature

that clearly contradicts the definition of a sonata where two contrasting themes are usually expected to sustain a dialogue. While thematic contrasts may not be clearly present, there are three contrasting tempi present in this piece: Tempo I- Allegro moderato, Tempo II- Più lento, and Tempo III (or closing theme)- Molto più lento.
Four sonata beginnings pre-date this complete one called op.1. The fourth fragment is called *Vierte Sonate* (Fourth Sonata), and has become the basis for the beginning of the *Symphonic Epilogue* for Berg's first opera, *Wozzeck*.

Unlike Mansurian's, the style of miniature-writing represents a large portion of Schumann's compositions for piano solo, especially also that keeping "autograph albums" was common for 19th Century German composers. *Albumblätter*, or Album Leaves, was the common name that a number of composers used to name typically shorter character pieces for piano, where each one or the set was inspired by and dedicated to a friend, lover, colleague, benefactor, nobility,etc.
While Schumann called a subset of his op. 99 by this name, *Albumblätter* is also the name of his op. 124, which is composed between 1832 and 1845, and contains 20 pieces.

Bunte Blätter, or Colored Leaves, is a collection of 14 pieces published in 1852, as Opus 99. Written between the years 1830 and 1840, shortly before the composer's final mental collapse, these pianistic character pieces provide for a great variety of styles and moods, hence the title of the collection. Schumann at first intended to call them *spreu,* or "chaff" in English, a term which stands for the protective casing of seeds of the cereal grain, which separates during threshing and becomes dry and useless.

The five pieces subtitled *Albumblätter* are preceded by three *Stücke,* and followed by six more miniatures: *Novelette, Praeludium, March, Abendmusik, Scherzo, Geschwindmarsch.* It is curious to note that the five miniatures of *Albumblätter* do not carry titles, but only tempo indications. Written mostly in duple meter, except for the third one marked *Gesangvoll,* the character of these pieces is an alternation of Schumann's signature *Eusebius* versus *Florestan,* as far as rhythm and key are concerned.

The notion of albums or album leaves, is not entirely dead today. Examples of contemporary albums include György Kurtàg's (b.1926) *Játékok,* and Artur Avanesov's (b.1980) *Albumblätter.*

Another "tradition" that is well alive and has evolved throughout the 20th Century, is the phenomenon called the ***Piano Etude***. Inspired by Scarlatti, Chopin, Schumann, Debussy, and his "own inadequacy"(in the composer's terms) in piano virtuosity, Ligeti has dedicated seventeen years to the composition of 18 Etudes (1985-2001).

Generally known for his orchestral composition called *Atmospheres (1961)*, later used in S. Kubrick's movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Ligeti's music is characterized by micropolyphony, rhythmic complexity, geometry, and *trompe l'oreille* illusions.

With dedications to friends, supporters (such as Vincent Meyer), conductors (such as Pierre Boulez) and premiering pianists (such as Louise Sibourd, Pierre Laurent-Aimard) among others, Ligeti's three books of Etudes somehow resemble the *Albumblätter*, in their auto-biographical quality.
Historically, the piano repertoire is marked first, with the Chopin *Etudes* (total of 27 Etudes, composed between 1829 and 1839), followed by *Transcendental Etudes* of Liszt (total of 12 Etudes, composed between 1826 and 1837), and finally the 12 *Etudes* by Claude Debussy (composed in 1915).
With multiple comparisons to their historical counterparts, the Ligeti Etudes combine piano virtuosity with poeticism, however, in a sound world much more cosmopolitan than the impressionistic and romantic sounds of the Etudes of his predecessors.

The two on this program, nos. 2 and 5, are not in the general character of the rather fast-paced and mostly loud and intense etudes. Instead, they represent a generally reflective sound world, with colors and harmonies reminiscent of the French Impressionists, and furthermore, those of Olivier Messiaen.

Cordes à vide (Open strings) is a study in arpeggiated open fifths, which are at times also sounded together like the open strings of the violin for example. The rhythm starts out with simple eighth notes, and spaced out accentuation, then grows to become a complex maze of cross-rhythms marked with horn calls. After the climax on *fff* at the top register, the rhythm develops further into four juxtaposed varieties: 16th note triplets and 8th note triplets in the right hand, versus 8th note and 16th note in the left. Eventually the music reaches the lowest register, and after the last horn calls are heard, the piece ends in *pp perdendosi.*

Arc-en-ciel (Rainbow) combines gentle swing tempo character of jazz pianism – something Ligeti admired in the poetry of Thelonious Monk and Bill Evans- to the harmonies of

Program Notes

Skryabin, and the bursting colors of Messiaen. Unlike no. 2, after a few appearances of the "rainbow," the etude climbs to the upper register in *pppp perdendosi.*

Messiaen's ***Cantéyodjayâ***, similar to the Berg *Sonata op. 1*, presents a formally ambiguous composition. The main opening refrain, which is called *Cantéyodjayâ,* returns many times throughout this through-composed piece, which shows tendencies of what would in the classical period be termed a *Rondo.* The appearance and reappearances of this theme and others rotate in kaleidoscopic patterns and achieve a cumulative effect.

The titles of the different rhythmic and thematic patters, among them *doubléaflorealîla, tri-anguillonouarkî, plisséghoucorbélinâ, grénouditâ, statoua,* like the very title of the work itself, are synthetic compounds of French and Sanskrit words.

Composed while teaching at Tanglewood, this work combines influences from Greek and Hindu rhythms, to Messiaen's response to the impact of Schoenberg's serialism, to thematic material from his own compositions, such as the *Turangalîla Symphony.* Besides kaleidoscopic juxtapositions of refrains and episodes, and self-quotations, the piece contains a unique section called *Modéré (modes de durées, de hauteurs et d'intensités).* According to the composer's wife Madame Yvonne Loriot, it is this experimentation with the modes started in *Cantéyodjayâ,* that has led to the second of the *Quatre Etudes de Rhythme,* or the etude called *Modes de Valeurs et d'Intensités.*

Unlike Berg's relatively small output for piano, Messiaen's output for piano solo is huge, with several large sets such as *Les Preludes (8 pcs for piano solo, 1929), Visions de l'Amen (10 pcs for two pianos, 1943), Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jesus (20 pcs for solo piano, 1944), Catalogue d'Oiseaux (7 books for piano solo, 1956-8).* While some of these sets, the second and the third, as well as most of Messiaen's other compositions are religious, *Cantéyodjayâ* and his *Quatre Etudes de Rhythme* (4 pcs for piano solo, 1949-50) are clearly secular works.

About the Artist

Currently a doctoral student at USC, **Dzovig Markarian** is an American-Armenian pianist specializing in contemporary classical music.

With two degrees in Contemporary Keyboard from the California Institute of the Arts, Dzovig has contributed to numerous festivals and premieres including the festivals of Elliott Carter, Iannis Xenakis, Sofia Gubaidulina, and New Zealand composers at REDCAT, Walt Disney Hall.

Dzovig has privately worked with such composers as Sofia Gubaidulina, Chinary Ung, Tigran Mansurian, Artur Avanesov, Vache Sharafyan, Jeffrey Holmes, Bruno Louchouarn, and Alan Shockley, among others.

Many thanks to Jeffrey Holmes, and Grace Fong, for making this event possible.

The community of Chapman Conservatory is one of friends, colleagues and great musicians for whom I have the deepest of respect.

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