

The Masters Series Concerts (2011-12)

Sundays* at 3:00pm, at Studio Hollywood (*unless otherwise noted)

Programs, Notes & Seating charts for reservations available at: www.studio-hollywood.com

Alan Murray, piano

Program	Date
Chopin – The Piano Music	
the Etudes (& sel. Nocturnes & Mazurkas)	Oct 2 the Scherzos “ Oct 30
the Preludes “ “	Oct 9 the Sonatas “ Nov 6
the Polonaises “ “	Oct 16 the Impromptus “ Nov 19*
the Ballades “ “	Oct 23 the Waltzes “ Dec 3 *
Introduction & Rondo, Fantasy, Berceuse, Barcarolle, Andante Spianato & Grande Polonaise Dec 17 *	
Schumann – The Piano Music	
Fantasy, Arabeske, Carnaval	Nov 13
Kreisleriana, Toccata, Blumenstück, Symphonic Etudes	Nov 20
Faschingsschwank aus Wien (Carnival of Vienna), Kinderszenen (Scenes fr Childhood), Romances	Nov 27
Sonata #1 in F-sharp minor, Novellette #1, Davidsbündlertänze	Dec 4
Sonata #2 in G minor, Waldszenen, Papillons (“Butterflies”), Humoreske	Dec 11
Sonata #3 in F minor (“Concerto w/o Orchestra”), Fantasiestücke, Gesänge der Frühe, Novellette #2	Dec 18
The French & Spanish Masters	
Ravel – The Piano Music	
Gaspard de la Nuit, Jeux d’eau, Sonatine, Pavane, Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, ...	Jan 8
Le Tombeau de Couperin, Sérénade Grotesque, Menuet-Haydn, Menuet Antique, Miroirs, ...	Jan 15
Debussy – The Piano Music	
the Etudes, l’Isle joyeuse, Estampes, ...	Jan 22
the Preludes (Books I & II)	Feb 5
Images, Children’s Corner, Suite Bergamasque, Pour le Piano, Arabesques, Danse, Masques, ...	Feb 12
Granados – Goyescas , El Pelele	Albéniz – Iberia , Navarra Feb 19 & Mar 4
Beethoven – The 32 Sonatas & Diabelli Variations (1wk Series; M-F at 7:00pm; S/S at 3:00)	
(1) Sonatas #1-4 Mar 18 (5) Sonatas #22-26 (d) Mar 22	
(2) Sonatas #5-10 (a) Mar 19 (6) Sonatas #27-29 (e) Mar 23	
(3) Sonatas #11-15 (b) Mar 20 (7) Sonatas #30-32 Mar 24	
(4) Sonatas #16-21 (c) Mar 21 (8) Diabelli Variations Mar 25	
<i>a) Pathétique’ b) Moonlight’, Pastoral’ c) Tempest’, Waldstein’ d) Appassionata’, Les Adieux’ e) Hammerklavier’</i>	
J.S. Bach – The Keyboard Music (1-week Series, Apr 7-14; Mon-Fri at 7:00pm; Sat/Sun at 3:00pm)	
(1) Chromatic Fantasy/Ital. Concerto/Inventions Apr 7 (5) Engl & French Sts, Partita #4/WTC25-32 Apr 11	
(2) Engl & French Suites & Partita #1/WTC1-8 Apr 8 (6) Engl & French Sts & Partita #5/WTC33-40 Apr 12	
(3) Engl & French Suites & Partita #2/WTC9-16 Apr 9 (7) Engl & French Sts & Partita #6/WTC41-48 Apr 13	
(4) Engl & French Suites & Partita #3/WTC17-24 Apr 10 (8) The Goldberg Variations Apr 14	
Brahms, Schubert & Liszt – The Major Works	
Brahms – Handel Variations & Fugue, Paganini Variations / Schubert – Sonata in A minor (D845)	Apr 22
Brahms – Sonata No. 3 in F minor / Schubert – Sonata in G, «Wanderer» Fantasy	Apr 29
Schubert – The Late Piano Sonatas: in C minor, A major, B-flat major (Op. Posth.)	May 6
Liszt – Sonata in B minor, S. del Petrarca, Vallée d’Obermann, Mephisto Waltz, Au bord d’une source	May 13
The Transcendental Etudes, Après une lecture de Dante, Hungarian & Spanish Rhapsodies, ...	May 20
The Russian & Eastern European Masters – The Major Works	
Rachmaninoff – the Preludes	May 27
Rachmaninoff – the Etudes-Tableaux & Moments Musicaux / Balakirev – Islamey	Jun 3
Rachmaninoff – the Sonatas (No. 1 in D minor; No. 2 in B-flat minor) / Szymanowski – Metopes	Jun 10
Prokofiev – Sonata No. 6 / Scriabin – Sonata No. 2 / Berg – Sonata / Janacek – Sonata 1X1905	Jun 17
Prokofiev – Sonata No. 7 / Scriabin – Sonata Nos 4&5 / Medtner – Sonata / Stravinsky – Petrouchka	Jun 30*
Prokofiev – Sonata No. 8 / Mussorgsky – Pictures at an Exhibition / Bartók – Out of Doors	Jun 24
American Masterpieces	
Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue, Barber Sonata, ... - Jul 1 Works by Ives , Copland , Carter , Bolcom , others - Jul 8	

The Masters Series Concerts (2011/12)

at Studio Hollywood, Hastings-on-Hudson

Sunday, January 8, 2012 at 3:00pm

Maurice Ravel – The Piano Music

Jeux d’Eau

à la manière de Borodine

à la manière de Chabrier

Valses Nobles et Sentimentales

Modéré

Assez lent

Modéré

Assez animé

Presque lent

Vif

Moins Vif

Epilogue : Lent – plus lent – très lent

Intermission

Sonatine

Modéré

Mouvement de Menuet

Animé

Gaspard de la Nuit

Ondine

Le gibet

Scarbo

Alan Murray, piano

The Masters Series Concerts (2011-12)

The **Masters Series Concerts (2011-12)** comprise a series of approximately 50 mostly Sunday afternoon programs at *Studio Hollywood* (www.studio-hollywood.com), spanning the cycles of piano music of most of the great composers for the instrument, from Bach and the Classical and Romantic masters, to great composers of the 20th Century. The programs are intended to provide guests with 1-2 hours of quality weekly listening in a contemplative setting, surrounded by the natural beauty that is visible from the recital hall. The performances are intended to be informal but well-prepared offerings, as an interim step toward full concert preparation.

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Ravel: Pavane, Jeux d'Eau, Sonatine, Gaspard de la Nuit

Maurice Ravel's piano works included in this program demonstrate the wide range of style and the total technical command of his piano writing. "I am not one of the great composers." he would write. "All the great have produced enormously. There is everything in their work -- the best and the worst, but there is always quantity. But I have written relatively very little... and at that, I did it with a great deal of difficulty. I did my work slowly, drop by drop. I have torn all of it out of me by pieces..." Stravinsky would call him the "Swiss watchmaker" of music composers. Fastidious almost to a fault, Ravel was nonetheless able to impart in his piano works an air of complete naturalness, even exuberance, that came from his inner mastery of the instrument and its potential.

Jeux d'Eau: After the *Pavane*, Ravel's next composition for piano solo was *Jeux d'Eau* (*Fountains*; 1901), representing a stylistic reaction against the neo-classicism of the *Pavane*. The rather different style of piano writing found in this piece recalls certain works by Liszt such as *Au bord d'une source* (Alongside a Spring) and *Les Jeux d'Eau à la Villa d'Este* (The Fountains at Villa d'Este). In his autobiographical sketch, Ravel described *Jeux d'Eau* in the following words: "This piece is inspired by the sound of water, and the musical sounds produced by fountains, waterfalls and streams; it is based on two themes, in the manner of the first movement of a sonata, although it does not stick to the classical tonal scheme." In effect, what Ravel does here is to combine bitonality with the pentatonic scale. Water is represented by sensuous arpeggio "waves" of ninth and eleventh chords, as well as seconds, Ricardo Viñes, the pianist and premier performer of Ravel's piano works, recalled that Ravel favored 'pedaling the high notes to give a blurred impression of the air vibrating, rather than letting the notes sound clearly.' Ravel prefaced *Jeux d'Eau* with a quotation: "The River-God, laughing from the water that is tickling him." The piece is dedicated to Gabriel Fauré and crystallizes the essence of his inventiveness and magical qualities. *Jeux d'Eau* contains nearly all of the harmonic, tonal, textural, and technical devices that Ravel would ultimately incorporate into his works, a fact that casts doubt on the argument at the time as to whether Ravel was a Debussy-imitator, rather than a brilliant and original musical inventor.

à la manières de Borodin / Chabrier – The early years of the twentieth century saw a growth in the popularity of literary pastiches, the conductor Alfredo Casella applied this idea to music by putting together a collection of parodies of Debussy, Strauss, Brahms, Wagner, Franck, D'Indy, Faure and Ravel. Ravel, in turn, provided two pastiches of his own on two of his favorite composers, *A la manière de Borodine* and *A la manière de Chabrier* (both dating from 1913). The first is a fast little Slavic waltz. The second goes further, taking a famous tune from Gounod's *Faust* and treating it in the ironical style of Chabrier.

Valses Nobles et Sentimentales – "After the virtuosity that forms the basis of *Gaspard de la Nuit*, I moved on to a clearer style of writing, with more solid harmonies and starker musical contours" wrote Ravel in his autobiographical sketch to describe the harmonic language of the *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* (1911), which he modeled on Schubert. The work was first performed by Ravel, but without disclosure of the composer's identity, at a concert of the *Société Musicale Indépendante*, when the audience was invited to guess its

authorship. Not many picked Ravel as the composer. Tristan Klingsor has left an account of the occasion: "He came to play for us the *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* before publishing them... He did not usually play his own music and I didn't know the new piece at all... We were immediately seduced by the music, and yet he had taken a lot of risks, at least for the period... He had taken the use of unresolved dissonances to its furthest point. What we now find very piquant was extremely daring at the time. The first bars of the *Valses* seemed quite extraordinary. Then, since there was nothing there that was not well thought out, the ear quickly grew to enjoy these pseudo-'wrong notes', and a glance at the score revealed that they had a proper harmonic justification". When Louis Aubert gave the first public performance of the work on May 9, 1911 there was a general outcry. The chains of dissonances led some listeners to think that the pianist was playing lots of wrong notes. When Durand published the work in the same year, Ravel, responding to the audience's reaction at that first performance, mischievously prefaced the score with the inscription "le plaisir délicieux et toujours nouveau d'une occupation inutile" ("The pleasure of idle occupation is delicious and ever new"), which gives a clue to the mood of the seven waltzes and *Epilogue*. They look simple, but are in fact a summation of Ravel's refined, subtle writing for the piano. Debussy assessed them succinctly when he wrote: "His is the most refined ear that has ever existed". The waltzes alternate between vigor and languor as the title suggests; the *Epilogue* brings together the varying strands in a nostalgic *resumé*.

Sonatine: Two years after *Jeux d'Eau*, Ravel returned to a rather more traditional form: the sonata, which seemed to have come to a dead end during the second half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, Ravel managed to avoid the pitfalls and clichés of the form as taught at the *Schola Cantorum*. The **Sonatine** is a finely wrought piece, reminiscent of the most refined *objets d'art* of the 18th century. Ravel limits himself mainly to the middle octaves of the piano, and imbues the work with crystalline fluidity, and light coloring/texture.

Gaspard de la Nuit: Three years later, in 1905, Ravel began to compose his triptych on poems by Aloysius Bertrand, *Gaspard de la Nuit* (*Angel of the Night*). The subtitle to the work is "Three poems for piano, two hands, after Aloysius Bertrand". The music reflects the mystery of the texts by Bertrand, an early 19th-century Romantic poet, which stimulated Ravel to create his most imaginative and pianistically brilliant composition. The three poems, titled **Ondine**, **Le gibet**, and **Scarbo**, appear in the musical score and are included in this program as an insert. The work resonates with dreams, magic and evil spells.

Bertrand's texts reveal an extreme fantastical style similar to that of E.T.A. Hoffmann (whose work greatly inspired Robert Schumann, among others), while Ravel (in his autobiographical sketch) describes *Gaspard* as "three poems of transcendental virtuosity". The shadow of Liszt seems to hover over the piano writing. Ravel set out to write a virtuosic piece "more demanding than Balakirev's famous *Islamey* or Liszt's *Twelve Transcendental Etudes*". However, the virtuosity to which he refers extends far beyond the technical difficulty of the work, to the immense range of sonorities required to impart to these three pieces magical effects of light and shade unparalleled in the piano literature.

Thus, the iridescent **Ondine**, the River-goddess represented by Ravel's melancholy melody, rising and falling like the "murmur of a sad voice singing", is a perfect representation of the opening lines of Bertrand's poem: "Listen! – Listen! – It is I, Ondine, brushing drops of water against the ringing diamonds of your window, lit by the dull moonlight; and here on her balcony is the lady of the chateau, in a dress of watered silk, contemplating the beautiful starry night and the beautiful sleeping lake." He surrounds her song with luscious, evocative arpeggios and iridescent harmonies, creating shimmering and seductive waves of sound.

After *Ondine* comes **Le gibet**, built around an octave B-flat pedal-note that persists throughout the movement, and whose static quality conjures up "the bell ringing at the city wall,

below the horizon, and the hanged man's corpse glowing red in the sunset' of Bertrand's poem. As befits the subject of the gallows, the mood is cold and desolate – a marvelously sustained portrait of the macabre, with harmonies both intricate and indeterminate.

Concluding the set is the goblin *Scarbo*, represented by some of the most hallucinatory music in the piano repertoire. Scarbo flees in an out of the textures, whose melodies are constantly interrupted by extremely rapid repeated note figures. Laughing in the shadows, reflected in the moonlight, he finally vanishes altogether. The emphasis is on rhythmic drive, diabolic virtuosity, and startling harmonies, making this work unique in the piano literature.

Notes: D.W.Eagle (*Jeux d'Eau*); Denis Herlin/Alan Blyth (*Sonatine, Gaspard de la Nuit*)



Ravel at the piano, accompanied by Canadian singer Eva Gauthier, during his American tour, March 7, 1928. To Ravel's right (standing) is conductor-composer Manoah Leide-Tedesco. At far right is George Gershwin. Source: Wikipedia.

Alan Murray has appeared as a concerto soloist with orchestras in Westchester and in solo and chamber music recitals. He holds a degree in physics and languages from Cornell, where he also received a special University award for distinguished piano soloist. The **Masters Series Concerts** represent a continuation of the **Sunrise Music Series** programs, incepted in the Sept 2010–June 2011 season. In addition to this year's **Masters Series**, Alan continues the **Sunrise Series** programs Sundays at 8:30am, with the 2011-12 series devoted to the cycle of keyboard music of J.S. Bach, which also appears in this year's **Masters Series** in April. The 2010-11 **Sunrise Series** was the subject of a Nov/2010 feature article in *The Rivertown's Enterprise*. His future plans include performances of the **Masters Series** at universities and other cultural centers here and abroad in the coming years. A specialist in the Financial Institutions capital markets group at Moody's, where he focuses on U.S., major Latin American and worldwide developing markets, Alan also provides music at the early Sunday morning services of the First Unitarian Society of Westchester, where he enjoys blending classical music with diverse world musical traditions. Alan resides in Hastings with his wife Amada and daughter Celia, where they also own and operate *Galápagos Books*, focused on world languages and literature, children's and general-interest books, local authors, and multi-media materials.