A Musical Afternoon - “Stories”

at the Berkeley Piano Club
2724 Haste St, Berkeley

Performed by

Bob Epstein and Shanti Moorjani

Saturday, November 5 at 3 PM
(Doors open at 2:30 PM)

Performing the four-hand and solo piano works of:

Astor Piazzolla
“Decarisimo”

Maurice Ravel
“Mother Goose Suite”

Anatoly Liadov
Prelude Opus 11, No 1 (Shanti Solo)

Antonín Dvořák
“Slavonic Dances” Opus 46 No 5

Bach
“Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit”, BWV 106

Frédéric Chopin
Nocturne No 5, Opus 15, No 2 (Bob Solo)

Robert Schumann
“Aufschwung”, Opus 12 No 2 (Bob Solo)

Chopin
Étude Opus 10, No 12 (Shanti Solo)

Saint-Saëns
Dance Macabre, Opus 40

Welcome

Covid may not be over but we are joyfully and safely returning to the stage. Thank you so much for coming to hear us perform. We have a lot to share with you!

About Today's Program

We have titled today's performance - "Stories". Most music is abstract and we absorb it and hopefully are moved by it. Some music is written with the intention of telling a story. Several of the pieces we have selected are designed to do just that. And like old friends, you want them to come back and visit so we have invited two of our best music friends to return.

We begin with Piazzolla. We can't help ourselves - Piazzolla is just a great way to start a performance. We then venture into an old friend, Ravel's "Mother Goose" - last played in June 2017. These are the stories of some famous children's tales. That is followed with music by Liadov, Dvořák, Bach and Chopin. We don't know if Schumann had a story in mind when he composed "Aufschwung" but we clearly hear the story of a rainy storm and intermittent clearing.

Since this performance closely follows Halloween, we have brought back another friend, Saint-Saëns' "Dance Macabre". Last heard in August of 2016, it is the story of the skeletons coming out of their coffins for a noisy dance at midnight of Halloween.

About Four-Hand Music

Four-hand music is rarely performed on the concert stage. Composers going back to Mozart created four-hand music to play in chamber settings or with their friends (or sister in Mozart's case). It creates a "20-finger" orchestra that can make musical magic with the piano.

Every phrase has one player in charge and the other following. On the music scores in front of us, we have printed many reminders of what the other player is going to do! We communicate through watching each other's finger movements, arm movements, head nodding and sometime a gentle or not so gentle nudge. Each page turn requires an analysis of who has time to make the turn.

This is our 11th performance. Thank you all for coming and listening.

Shanti & Bob

Program Notes

Astor Piazzolla - *"Decarisimo"* (1962)

We found "*Decarisimo*" in the catalogue of Kyoko Yamamoto. She has arranged all of the music of Piazzolla that we have performed to date. Surprisingly, we have not found any notes from the composer about the music. We translate the title as "very dear". There are many different arrangements of *Decarisimo* for a variety of different instruments. The music has a luxurious introduction that is ideal for the piano. It then moves into various tango beats and back to more sensual passages.

Maurice Ravel - "*Mother Goose Suite*" (1910)

Ravel's *Ma mère l'oye* (Mother Goose) premiered in 1910 in its original piano duet version. With this work, Ravel followed in the tradition of Schumann, Mussorgsky, Faure and Debussy, who also created memorable works of childhood themes.

Ravel wrote *Ma mère l'oye* as a gift for the Godebski children. Ravel dedicated the score to Mimie and Jean, in the hope that they would give the first performance, but, although, they were unusually accomplished pianists for children, they accepted the gift but declined the premiere. "To us," Jean later recalled, "it mainly meant a lot of work." Two more precocious children, Geneviève Durony and Jeanne Leleu, then only six and seven years old, premiered the suite in April 1910.
The five movements consist of:

1. *Pavane for a Sleeping Beauty*: This theme captures a sense of Sleeping Beauty from the tale written by Charles Perrault.
2. *Tom Thumb*: Also from Perrault, this is the tale of Tom Thumb leaving bread crumbs as he ventures into the forrest. At measure 51 the birds arrive and eat the crumbs. At the end we hear Tom disappearing deep into the forrest but with the major chord at the very end, he sees his home.
3. *Empress of the Porcelain Dolls*: This is an oriental tale by the Countess d'Aulnoy, a Perrault contemporary. The empress is serenaded while in her bath by her subjects: Ravel writes: "She undressed and went into the bath. Right away little dolls sang and played music. Some had lutes made of walnut shells; others had violins made of almond shells." Sounds representing tiny bells and large gongs can be heard. The primo piano part is written entirely for the black keys, producing melodies in the pentatonic scale, conjuring up the Orient.
4. *Conversations of Beauty and the Beast*: In this familiar story by Beaumont, the Beast asks Beauty to marry him. When she refuses, he sinks dying at her feet. The princess is overcome by compassion and accepts him. The glissando in the music signals the Beast's transformation into a handsome prince.
5. *The Enchanted Garden*: The vision is a stately garden. The middle section is quiet and contemplative and played in the higher registers. It transitions into a soft melody where Diane has written into our music "breaks your heart". It ends in dramatic fashion.

Anatoly Liadov - Prelude Opus 11, No 1 (1885) - Shanti Solo

The two pieces Shanti is playing tonight, the Liadov Prelude and the Chopin Étude couldn't be more different yet they both speak to the longing of the soul for peace and justice. Both pieces express emotions that are deep and difficult to express in words. Liadov's prelude is quiet, delicate and detached from the pains of the world.

Antonín Dvořák - "Slavonic Dances" Opus 46 No 5 (1878)

The Slavonic Dances holds a special place in our hearts as they are the music that Shanti and Bob first played together. The Slavonic Dances were the first music published by Dvořák. Most people are probably familiar with the orchestral versions of the Slavonic Dances that were developed after the original 4-hand piano version.

Bach - *"Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit", BWV 106 (1708)*

Much of the music we perform originate in suggestions from you, our friends and audience. Rick Diamond send us a link to a youtube video of a transcription of the Cantata "Actus Tragicus". It was arranged by György Kurtag and played by him and his wife Marta. The first thing one notices in the video is the primo plays the part with their hands crossed. The melody is in the right hand but is played an octave below the counter melody in the left hand. In addition to being a beautiful piece of music, it makes a nice interlude in the middle of the concert

Frédéric Chopin - Nocturne No 5, Opus 15, No 2 (1834) - Bob solo

Chopin wrote 21 Nocturnes. For Bob, this is the 12th Chopin nocturne he has studied. He selected it because of its remarkable contrast between the delicately slow theme followed by a "double speed" middle section. It is written in the rarely used key of F# major which adds to the interest in learning the piece.

Opus 15 consists of three nocturnes written between 1830 and 1833 and dedicated to Ferdinand Hiller, a German composer, conductor and pianist.

Robert Schumann - "Aufschwung", Opus 12 No 2 (1837) - Bob Solo

Bob originally had a different piece he was learning for this concert but by chance, he was listening to Joyce Yang's CD "Wild Dreams" while driving back from Kirkwood and when "Aufschwung" appeared he became totally engaged in the music. The German translation of "Aufschwung" is "uplift" or "upswing" or "lift". "Auf" means upward and "Schwung" signifies swing or sweep. Bob thinks of it as a crashing storm - dramatically bringing the return of rain to California. The storm is in outbursts followed by opening of the clouds and beautifully colored sky and peaceful interludes. Of course we need a lot of rain and the rains do occur several times and the piece ends with the rain returning. Hopeful!

Opus 12 is known as the "Fantasy Pieces" with a variety of different moods. You can find many interpretations of "Aufschwung". The opening bars in B-flat minor cause a great tension, followed by release in F minor and ending in A-flat major.

Frédéric Chopin - Étude Opus 10, No 12 (1831) - Shanti Solo

Chopin's Opus 10 No 12 is nicknamed (not by Chopin) the "*Revolutionary Étude*" and was inspired by the 1831 Russian attack on Warsaw during the November uprising. Chopin dedicated his Opus 10 to his friend Franz Liszt. Shanti views this music as meeting the demons of the world full head-on; prepared for battle, strong and invincible. Together with the Liadov prelude, the two pieces are at once sad yet not defeated.

Camille Saint-Saëns - Dance Macabre, Opus 40 (1874)

A friend and disciple of Franz Liszt, Saint-Saëns adapted many of the Hungarian trailblazer's new ideas to his own compositional voice. One such innovation was the symphonic poem — a form in which musical ideas followed a narrative, emotional structure rather than traditional patterned musical constructs. Saint-Saëns penned four symphonic poems. The third of these would become the most famous: the short, lively *"Danse Macabre."* In this case, the composer was working from an actual poem, by Henri Cazalis.

Danse Macabre (Dance of Death) by Henri Cazalis.

Zig, zig, zig, Death in cadence,
Striking a tomb with his heel,
Death at midnight plays a dance-tune,
Zig, zig, zag, on his violin.

The winter wind blows, and the night is dark;
Moans are heard in the linden trees.
White skeletons pass through the gloom,
Running and leaping in their shrouds.

Zig, zig, zig, each one is frisking,
You can hear the cracking of the bones of the dancers.
A lustful couple sits on the moss
So as to taste long lost delights.

Zig zig, zig, Death continues
The unending scraping on his instrument.
A veil has fallen! The dancer is naked.
Her partner grasps her amorously.

The lady, it's said, is a marchioness or baroness
And her green gallant, a poor cartwright.
Horror! Look how she gives herself to him,
Like the rustic was a baron.

Zig, zig, zig. What a saraband!
They all hold hands and dance in circles.
Zig, zig, zag. You can see in the crowd
The king dancing among the peasants.

But hist! All of a sudden, they leave the dance,
They push forward, they fly; the cock has crowed.
Oh what a beautiful night for the poor world!
Long live death and equality!

So effectively did the composer capture the image of skeletons dancing and devilish playfulness, that *"Danse Macabre"* was initially rejected by the public as too dark and demonic. *"Danse Macabre"* has since become the composer's most-performed work. The dance begins at the stroke of midnight (perhaps Halloween) in a graveyard. Listen for the 12 strokes of the distant bell quietly tolling at the beginning. Soon the skeletons arise from their graves and begin dancing to the devil's unearthly tune. They are having fun dancing! The devil does his work and the frenetic and frenzied dancing goes faster and faster until it stops abruptly and we hear a rooster crow from the primo piano. The night is almost over; dawn is arriving and all scurry back into the depths away from the coming light of the sun while the devil mournfully finishes his tune and slinks away. While the original composition was for orchestra, Saint-Saëns composed a version for two pianos. We are playing an arrangement adapted for 4-hand piano.

Thanks

Since Shanti and Bob's first meeting in March 2011, they have been music partners encouraging each other to grow their musical skills. Our families have been very supportive and we want to thank our spouses Lachu & Amy for their encouragement. We practice a lot so they heard these pieces many, many times but never complain.

Early on, we decided to take lessons and were lucky to find our music teacher, Diane Hidy. We have been studying with her since July 2013. During the pandemic we all learned how to take and teach lessons remotely. Fortunately, the last year and a half have been back to normal. She works with us almost every week and has guided our efforts. We are very grateful. Thank you Diane.

During the pandemic, Joyce Yang, one of our favorite pianists, made herself available for piano sessions over zoom. Since September 2020, we have had monthly sessions with Joyce. She has provided us with ideas from her extensive experience as a performer. It has been a joy for us and a unique experience.

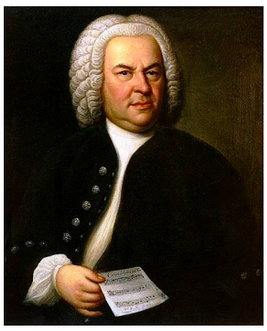
Shanti Moorjani and Bob Epstein

About Us

Shanti Moorjani received her Bachelor's degree in music education from Crane School of Music at Potsdam University in upstate New York, working under Arthur Frackenpohl, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Howard Hansen. Shanti was inspired by her two piano professors, Helga Hulse in high school and James Ball, head of the piano department at the Crane School of Music. She went on to receive her Master of Performance in Organ at San Francisco State University in California. She holds a graduate certificate in Kodaly music from Holy Names University and an Orff music credential. She has taught general music in the schools, directed choirs and programs and recently retired as music director from the Arlington Community Church. She continues her 40-year career of private piano instruction. Her interests in performing and four-hand piano have deepened since playing with Bob and training with Diane.

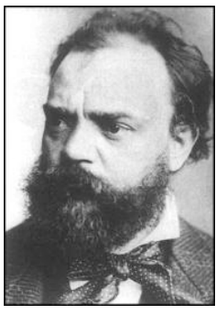
Bob Epstein started piano at 7, trumpet at 10 and played through college. He also arranged music for the Cal Band. He was briefly a music major at Cal but ended up with a PhD in Engineering. After a period of over 20 years when he rarely played, his son Harris bought him some new music; his son Colin later bought him a recording session as a birthday present; he met Shanti and then Diane told him he could be good. Now he is hooked.

About the Composers



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750) was born in Germany and during his 65 years, he wrote over 1,000 original compositions including cantatas, masses, oratorios, chorales, songs and arias, concertos, suites, sonatas and fugues. He grew up and was educated in a musical family. Bach enriched established German styles through his use of counterpoint, harmony and motifs. In the 18th century Bach was primarily known as an organist and for some of his keyboard music including *"The Well-Tempered Clavier".* In the 19th century there were major biographies written and all of his known music was published. Mendelssohn, Liszt, Brahms and others promoted and built upon his music. In the 20th century, Pablo Casals was the first major performer to record the cello suites. As a recent tribute, the Voyager Golden Record, sent on the Voyager mission to the outer planets and beyond the sun's gravity, includes three pieces by Bach.

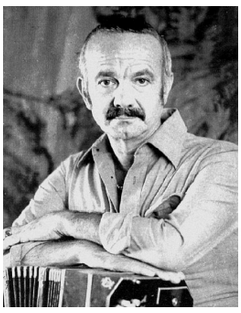
Frédéric Chopin (1810 - 1849) was born in Poland and became a leading virtuoso pianist of the Romantic era. Chopin was invited at an early age to play at private soirées, and at eight he made his first public appearance at a charity concert. Three years later he performed in the presence of the Russian tsar Alexander I, who was in Warsaw to open Parliament. At seven he wrote a Polonaise in G Minor, which was printed, and soon afterward a march of his appealed to the Russian grand duke Constantine, who had it scored for his military band to play on parade. Other polonaises, mazurkas, variations, ecossaises, and a rondo followed, with the result that, when he was 16, his family enrolled him at the newly formed Warsaw Conservatory of Music. At the age of 21 he settled in Paris and eventually became a French citizen. All of Chopin's compositions include the piano and almost all are for solo piano. He gained and has maintained renown worldwide as one of the leading musicians of his era. His keyboard style is highly individual and often technically demanding; his own performances were noted for their nuance and sensitivity.



Antonín Dvořák (1841 - 1904) was born in the Bohemian village of Nelahozeves, near Prague (then part of Bohemia in the Austrian Empire, now Czech Republic), where he spent most of his life. By the time he was 18 years old, Dvořák was a full-time musician. Throughout the 1860s he played viola in the Bohemian Provisional Theater Orchestra. The constant need to supplement his income pushed him to give piano lessons. It was through these piano lessons that he met his wife. After he married, Dvořák left the National Theatre Orchestra, in which he had been playing for 11 years, and secured the job of organist at St. Adalbert's Church in Prague. This provided him with financial security, higher social status, and enough free time to focus on composing. In 1877, the critic Eduard Hanslick informed him that his music had attracted the attention of the famous Johannes Brahms, whom Dvořák admired greatly. Brahms had a huge influence over Dvořák's work.

Anatoly Liadov (1855 - 1914) was born in St. Petersburg, into a family of eminent Russian musicians. He was taught informally by his conductor step-father Konstantin Liadov and then in 1870 entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory to study piano and violin. He soon gave up instrumental study to concentrate on counterpoint and fugue, although he remained a fine pianist. His natural musical talent was highly thought of by, among others, Modest Mussorgsky, and during the 1870s he became associated with the

group of composers known as The Five. He entered the composition classes of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. He wrote extensively for the piano.



Astor Piazzolla (1921 – 1992) was born in Argentina and his father gave him his first bandoneon[1] at age 8. Four years later he studied classical piano and learned to love Bach. By age 17 he was playing in Tango orchestras and developed a deep love for Tango. He became a composer and started to do musical scores for movies. In 1953, he won a music competition which gave him the opportunity to study in Paris. There he discovered how to combine sophisticated music and Tango. His oeuvre revolutionized the traditional tango into a new style termed nuevo tango, incorporating elements from jazz and classical music. A virtuoso bandoneonist, he regularly performed his own compositions with a variety of ensembles. In 1992, American music critic Stephen Holden described Piazzolla as "the world's foremost composer of tango music".

Maurice Ravel (1875 – 1937) was a French composer known especially for his melodies, orchestral and instrumental textures. Along with Claude Debussy, he was one of the most prominent figures associated with Impressionist music. A slow and painstaking worker, Ravel composed fewer pieces than many of his contemporaries. Among his works to enter the repertoire are pieces for piano, chamber music, two piano concertos, ballet music, two operas and eight song cycles; he wrote no symphonies or church music. Many of his works exist in two versions: a piano score and later an orchestration.

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 - 1921) was a French composer, organist, conductor and pianist of the Romantic era. Saint-Saëns made his concert debut at the age of ten. By the time he reached his 20th birthday, Camille Saint-Saëns was already known internationally as a composer and pianist. During the first half of his 84-year life he was also a champion of new musical forms. After studying at the Paris Conservatoire he followed a conventional career as a church organist, first at Saint-Merri, Paris and La Madeleine, the official church of the French Empire. After leaving the post he was a successful freelance pianist and composer.As a young man, Saint-Saëns was enthusiastic for the music of Schumann, Liszt and Wagner, although his own compositions were generally within a conventional classical tradition. Saint-Saëns held only one teaching post, at the École de Musique Classique et Religieuse in Paris. It was nevertheless important in the development of French music: his students included Gabriel Fauré, among whose own later pupils was Maurice Ravel. Both of them were strongly influenced by Saint-Saëns, whom they revered as a genius.

Robert Schumann (1810 - 1856) was a German composer, pianist and influential music critic. A hand injury ending his hopes of performing on piano and he turned his attention to composition. In addition to composing for the piano he wrote symphonies, an opera and music for voice. In 1840 he married pianist Clara Wieck. The Schumann's maintained a close relationship with Brahms. Until 1840, Schumann wrote exclusively for the piano. Later, he composed orchestral works, and many Lieder. His best-known works include Carnaval, Symphonic Studies, Kinderszenen, Kreisleriana, and the Fantasie in C.

[1] The **bandoneon** is a type of concertina - a free-reed musical instruments that looks like a miniaturized accordion, with keys and switches on both sides of the device.