

A Musical Afternoon - “Relationships”

at the Berkeley Piano Club
2724 Haste St, Berkeley

Performed by

Bob Epstein and Shanti Moorjani

Saturday, July 22, 2023 at 3 PM
(Doors open at 2:30 PM)

Performing the four-hand and solo piano works of:

Astor Piazzolla - “Adiós Nonino”

Valery Gavrilin - “Sketches”
Chimes, The Clock, Tarantella

Christoph Gluck/Greg Anderson
Ballet from Orpheus and Eurydice

Pyotr Tchaikovsky - “The Seasons”
“February” (Bob Solo)

Frédéric Chopin
Nocturne No 16, Opus 55, No 2 (Bob Solo)

Carlos Gardel
“El Día Que Me Quieras”

Ottorino Respighi - “Notturmo”
(Shanti Solo)

Claude Debussy - Arabesque No 1
(Shanti Solo)

Edvard Grieg - “Norwegian Dances” Opus 35
Allegro marcato, D minor
Allegretto tranquillo e grazioso, A major (AKA I can’t dance)
Allegro moderato alla Marcia, G major
Allegro molto, D major

About Today's Program

We have titled today's performance - "Relationships". We chose this theme because four of the pieces we are playing are about relationships, and the music deeply expresses those feelings. Piazzolla's "Adiós Nonino" expresses his loss after the sudden death of his father. Gardel's "The day that you loved me" speaks for itself. "Orpheus and Eurydice" is the tale of love so profound that Orpheus travels to the underworld to try to bring his love, Eurydice, back to life. And finally, with a lot of humor, Grieg's Opus 35 number 2 received unexpected lyrics from comedian Alan Sherman. It becomes the tale of two awkward pre-teens trying to dance.

The other pieces are not necessarily about relationships, but they create very strong emotions for us which we describe in the program and express in our playing. Gavrilin's "Sketches" are little gems that are fun to play and to visualize the subject of the music. We previously performed "Norwegian Dances" at the conclusion of our first internet broadcast during Covid in Fall 2020. We bring it back today so we can play it with an audience in the same room. It is our way of acknowledging that while Covid will be with us for a long time, its emergency status is gone. Hurrah!

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 was also common to present orchestral music for piano in days before recording was common. Instead, we have 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 sometimes a gentle or not so gentle nudge. One unexpected arm movement and you can knock your partner's hand off the keys. Each page turn requires an analysis of who has time to make the turn.

Thank you all for coming and listening to our 12th performance.

Shanti & Bob

Program Notes

Astor Piazzolla - “*Adiós Nonino*” (1959)

“Adiós Nonino” (Farewell, Granddaddy) was written by Astor Piazzolla in memory of his father, Vincente “Nonino” Piazzolla. It was composed a few days after his father’s fatal bicycle accident. We found the music in the catalogue of Kyoko Yamamoto who arranged all of the music of Piazzolla that we have performed to date. The music is based on Piazzolla's earlier tango *Nonino*, composed in Paris in 1954, in which he kept the rhythmic part and re-arranged the rest with some additions. It would prove to be one of Piazzolla's most well-known and popular compositions. It has been recorded many times with many different arrangements and with various instruments.

Bob is dedicating this piece to his own father, Herb Epstein, of blessed memory. He played trumpet and encouraged Bob’s interest in music. While it has been several years since his passing, music is one way to keep his memory alive.

Valery Gavrilin - “Sketches” (1970s)

Bob first heard about “Sketches” by Russian composer Gavrilin from Anna Smigelskaya, a pianist whom he and Amy sponsored during the Merola Opera 2021 summer program. She is from Saint Petersburg and knows her modern Russian composers. The rest of us have probably never heard of Gavrilin. His “Sketches” is a collection of 18 short pieces - each one evoking a specific image. The three we have chosen are “Chimes”, “The Clock” and “Tarantella”. The Chimes start out bright and lively and then two sets of chimes are heard quietly in the distance, until the big chimes arrive. The clock is sitting on the mantle, the old timepiece diligently clicking out the seconds - its age showing. Tarantella is a on a fast pace with nothing getting in its way.

Christoph Gluck/Greg Anderson - Ballet from *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1762)

In the opera “Orpheus and Eurydice”, Cupid tells Orpheus that he may go to the underworld and return with his wife Eurydice, but he may not look at her until they are back on earth. The opera, which has never left the standard repertory, showed the beginnings of Gluck's reforms. His idea was to make the drama of the work more important than the star singers, who performed it, and to do away with dry recitative (recitativo secco, accompanied only by continuo) that broke up the action. Orpheus uses this ballet music to seduce the Furies who are blocking his path. Pretend you are one of the Furies and see if the music moves you to let Orpheus

pass. Pianist Greg Anderson composed this arrangement for 4-hand. It is one of his first compositions for the duo of Anderson and Roe.

Pyotr Tchaikovsky - "The Seasons - February" (1876) (Bob Solo)

Tchaikovsky wrote a collection of solo piano music called "The Months" in Russian - one piece for each month of the year. Each piece describes a specific activity. For "February", the theme is Carnival. The composer quotes Russian poet Pyotr Vyazemsk: "At the lively Mardi Gras soon a large feast will overflow." Why the English title is called "The Seasons" is a mystery. Bob received a copy of "October" from Shanti for his birthday. He is gradually working his way through all 12 months. The "Carnival" starts out with the excitement of the activities and goes from one booth to the next. In the middle, there is a big feast.

Frédéric Chopin - Nocturne No 16, Opus 55, No 2 (1844) (Bob Solo)

Chopin wrote 20 Nocturnes and Bob & Shanti have performed many of them at their musical afternoons. Most of the Nocturnes are in an A-B-A form with a soft, delicate beginning followed by an anxious, fast-paced middle followed by a return of the initial theme. This Nocturne doesn't follow the structure that is common in the early Nocturnes. It leaves room for a lot of interpretation and after seven months of playing the music, Bob is still exploring different tempos as the melody keeps changing each time it comes back.

Carlos Gardel - "El Día Que Me Quieras" (1934)

"El día que me quieras" (The day that you love me) is an Argentine tango with music by Carlos Gardel and lyrics by Alfredo Le Pera. Originally featured in the 1935 film of the same name, sung by Gardel himself, it became a recorded tango standard, even by artists outside of the realm of tango.

*La noche que me quieras
Desde el azul del cielo
Las estrellas celosas
Nos mirarán pasar
Luciérnagas curiosas
Que verán
Que eres mi
Consuelo*

*The night you love me
From the blue of the sky
The jealous stars
They will watch us pass
Curious fireflies
What will they see
What are you my
Comfort*

Shanti & Bob "discovered" the music by accident. In their constant search for quality 4-hand arrangements of Piazzolla's works, they ordered a copy of "Tango Tango - from La cumparsita to Piazzolla." In the middle of that history is this beautiful work by Gardel. It became part of the program after the first sight reading.

Ottorino Respighi - “Notturmo” (1903-1905) (Shanti Solo)

“Notturmo” is the 3rd of a set of 6 pieces written by Respighi for solo piano. The pieces have various musical forms and were composed separately and later published together under the same title for editorial reasons. Five of the six pieces including “Notturmo,” are derived from earlier works by Respighi. “Notturmo” in G-flat major, represents one of Respighi's finest piano compositions and is often featured as a stand-alone piece in recitals. For Shanti, Notturmo evokes the happy nostalgia of a warm summer day in nature with flowers in bloom. The heart opens like the flowers in a slow timeless way. Shanti thanks Kara Scheunes and Diane Hidy for bringing this piece to her attention.

Claude Debussy - Arabesque No 1 (1888) (Shanti Solo)

Although quite an early work, Arabesque No 1 contains hints of Debussy's developing musical style. It is one of the very early impressionistic pieces of music, following the French visual art form. The arabesque was common in baroque music. Debussy wrote: “That was the age of the ‘wonderful arabesque’ when music was subject to the laws of beauty inscribed in the movements of Nature herself.” The Arabesque is an old friend of Shanti's. Her first year at Crane School of Music was altered when her dear piano professor and head of the music department, James Ball, had a stroke that paralyzed one side of his body. This followed a spell binding piano concert he had given where his fingers floated over the keys and each note was a jewel. His stroke kept him away for the rest of the year. Debussy's Arabesque was the one piece that gave Shanti hope that he would return, and he did. Professor Ball's inspiration for music touched Shanti's life and is one of the reasons she continued in the grueling music program for the next four years.

Edvard Grieg - “Norwegian Dances” Opus 35 (1881)

In these technology-dominated times, when every piece of music is on YouTube, it's easy to forget how few opportunities existed in the past to hear public concerts of orchestral works. Musicians usually gained familiarity through arrangements for 4-hand piano. Grieg wrote “Norwegian Dances” for 4-hand piano and used old folk tunes from a collection published by the musician and researcher Ludvig Mathias Lindeman as his inspiration. Bob first heard the second dance, “Allegretto tranquillo e grazioso” as a child with the title “I Can't Dance” by comedian Alan Sherman. It was sixty years later that he learned the music was by Grieg and was written for four-hand piano. Sherman starts singing “I can't dance. I can't dance. Besides I'm 2 feet shorter than the girls are!” For Shanti and Bob, the music transports them to a happy gathering in the countryside.

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 have 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. Our first lesson was on August 2, 2013 and we didn't know if she would take us as students. We value her as a teacher and a friend. No matter how well we play at our lessons, she tells the next thing we can do to make it even better. Ten years later we are still very grateful for how she has helped us grow musically.

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 over zoom. She has provided us with ideas from her extensive experience as a performer. It has been a joy for us and a unique experience. Our only wish is that she lived closer to us.

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 schools, directed choirs and programs, and last year retired as music director from the Arlington Community Church. She continues her 41-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



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. His keyboard style is highly individual and often technically demanding; his own performances were noted for their nuance and sensitivity.



Claude Debussy (1862 - 1918) was a French composer. Along with Maurice Ravel, he was one of the most prominent figures associated with Impressionist music, though he disliked the term when applied to his compositions. In fact, in a letter of 1908 he wrote: "I am trying to do 'something different' — an effect of reality... what the imbeciles call 'impressionism', a term which is as poorly used as possible, particularly by the critics." Debussy was one of the most influential composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



Carlos Gardel (1890 - 1935) - was a French-born Argentine singer, songwriter, composer and actor, and a prominent figure in the history of tango. He was one of the most influential interpreters of world popular music in the first half of the 20th century. He was notable for his baritone voice and the dramatic phrasing of his lyrics. Together with lyricist and long-time collaborator Alfredo Le Pera, Gardel wrote several classic tangos. Gardel went on tour throughout South America and Europe. As his popularity grew, he made a number of films for Paramount in France and the U.S. including “Cuesta abajo” (1934) and “El día que me quieras” (1935). Gardel died in an airplane crash at the height of his career, becoming an archetypal tragic hero mourned throughout Latin America.



Valery Gavrillin (1939 - 1999) - was born in Vologda, Russia. When he was 3, his father died while serving as a volunteer during the Siege of Leningrad. His mother was imprisoned when he was 10 and Gavrillin was sent to an orphanage in the village of Kovyrino near Vologda. At the age of 11, Gavrillin entered a school of music. At age 14 he entered music school at the Leningrad Conservatoire. In 1967 he was awarded the State Russian M.I. Glinka Prize for the cycle “Russian Notebook” - the youngest laureate to receive the prize. He is the composer of four ballets, music for many theatre performances and films, multiple pieces for voice and symphonic suites. He wrote numerous pieces for solo and 4-hand piano.

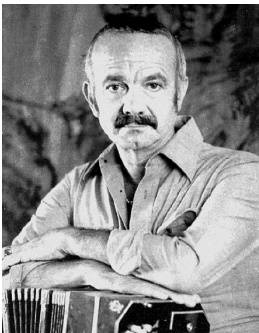


Edvard Grieg (1843 - 1907) was born in Norway and took piano lessons from age six from his mother. He studied at the Leipzig Conservatory where he was influenced by the traditions of Mendelssohn and Schumann. In 1861, Grieg made his debut as a concert pianist in Karlshamn, Sweden. In 1863 Grieg moved to Copenhagen and learned about northern folk tunes from a friend. His

use and development of Norwegian folk music in his own compositions brought the music of Norway to international consciousness, as well as helping to develop a national identity, much as Jean Sibelius did in Finland and Bedřich Smetana did in Bohemia.



Christoph Gluck (1714 - 1787) - was a composer of Italian and French opera in the early classical period. He gained prominence at the Habsburg court at Vienna. There he brought about the practical reform of opera's dramaturgical practices. With a series of radical new works for the 1760s, among them “Orfeo ed Euridice” and “Alceste”, he broke the stranglehold that opera seria had enjoyed for much of the century. Composers like Mozart, Schubert, Berlioz and Wagner revered Gluck.



Astor Piazzolla (1921 – 1992) was born in Argentina and his father gave him his first bandoneon¹ 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".



Ottorino Respighi (1879 - 1936) was an Italian composer, violinist, teacher, and musicologist and one of the leading Italian composers of the early 20th century. His compositions range over operas, ballets, orchestral suites, choral songs, chamber music. His best known and most performed works are his three orchestral tone poems which brought him international fame: Fountains of Rome, Pines of Rome , and Roman Festivals. Respighi showed little interest in music until he was almost eight. Shortly after Respighi began formal violin lessons, he quit abruptly after his teacher hit him on the hand with a ruler when he played a passage incorrectly. He resumed lessons several weeks later, this time with a more patient teacher. His piano skills, too, were a hit-and-miss affair initially, but his father arrived home one day and was surprised to find his son performing the Symphonic Studies by Robert Schumann; Respighi had learned to play the piece in secret.



Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840 - 1893) - was a Russian composer of the Romantic period and the first Russian composer whose music would make a lasting impression internationally. Tchaikovsky wrote some of the most popular concert and theatrical music in the current classical repertoire, including the ballets Swan Lake and The Nutcracker, the 1812 Overture, his First Piano Concerto, Violin Concerto, the Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasy, several symphonies, and the opera Eugene Onegin.

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.