

Brandeis  
FALL 2023

# CONCERT SERIES

Slosberg Music Center

## QUATTRO MANI: Rounding the Keys



**SUSAN GRACE** and  
**STEVEN BECK**, *pianos*

**Friday, September 22, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.**

Slosberg Music Center | Brandeis University

# QUATTRO MANI: Rounding the Keys

Susan Grace and Steven Beck, *pianos*

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Slosberg Recital Hall

## PROGRAM

***En blanc et noir*** (1915)

**Claude Debussy**  
(1862-1918)

***I. Avec emportement***

*Qui reste à sa place  
Et ne danse pas  
De quelque disgâce  
Fait l'aveu tout bas*

He who stays in his place  
And does not dance  
Quietly admits to a disgrace.  
- J. Barbier & M. Carré  
*Romeo et Juliette*

***II. Lent. Sombre***

*Prince, porté soit des serfs Eolus  
En la forest ou domine Glaucus.  
Ou privé soit de paix et d'espérance  
Car digne n'est de posséder vertus.  
Qui mal voudroit au royaume de  
France.*

*Prince, may the bright-winged brood of Æolus  
To sea-king Glaucus' wild wood cavernous,  
Bear him bereft of peace and hope's least glance,  
For worthless is he to get good of us,  
Who could wish evil to the state of France!*  
- Francois Villon  
*Ballade contre les ennemis de la France.*

***III. Scherzando***

*"Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain."*

*"Winter, you are nothing but a villain."  
Charles d'Orléans*

***Otherworldly Resonances (Tableaux, Book II)*** (2005)

**George Crumb**  
(1862-1918)

*I. Double Helix*

*II. Celebration and Ritual*

*III. Palimpsest*

- INTERMISSION -

**Music for Two Pianos** (1985)

**George Walker**  
(1922-2018)

**Figures de Résonances** (1970)

**Henri Dutilleux**  
(1916-2013)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Rounding the Keys** (2022)

**Eric Chasalow**  
(b. 1955)

*World Premiere*

**Seven Pieces from *Mikrokosmos*** (2005)

**Béla Bartok**  
(1881-1945)

1. *Bulgarian Rhythm*
2. *Chord and Trill Study*
3. *Perpetuum Mobile*
4. *Short Canon and Its Inversion*
5. *New Hungarian Folk Song*
6. *Chromatic Invention*
7. *Ostinato*

## ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Susan Grace and Steven Beck form one of the most dynamic piano duos before today's concert-going public. Giorgio Koukl's *EarRelevant* review of their latest CD, *Hallelujah Junction* says "...their incredible array of capacities is strong enough to place them precisely on the top of the piano duos of today." Quattro Mani's performances and recordings, as well as the duo's collaborations with important composers of our time has led to numerous dedications and premieres of new repertoire, including pieces by George Crumb, Paul Lansky, Tod Machover, Poul Ruders, Tania León, Paul Moravec, Michael Daugherty, Ofer Ben-Amots and Fred Lerdahl. QM's recent CDs, *Lounge Lizards* (BRIDGE 9486) and *Restructures* (BRIDGE 9496) were released to widespread critical acclaim, featuring new works by American and European composers. A third recent disc of Stefan Wolpe's two-piano works, had *Fanfare's* Robert Carl writing that "Quattro Mani is one of the most enduring and leading keyboard duos anywhere".

Following Quattro Mani's premiere of Paul Lansky's double concerto, *Shapeshifters* and Fitkin's *Circuit* with the Austin Symphony, the *Austin Chronicle* cited their orchestra's performance with Quattro Mani as one of the *Top 10 Classical Treasures*. Recent QM performances include the Alabama Symphony, Colorado College Intermezzo Series and Summer Music Festival, Colorado Symphony Drum Show, as well as Subculture, Bargemusic, National Sawdust, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and Steinway Hall, all in NY, La Laboratoire Cambridge, and Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. This fall you can hear them at Brandeis University, University of Massachusetts - Amherst and Lehigh University. Quattro Mani records for and is managed by Bridge Records. Quattro Mani's next recording of music by Fred Lerdahl is due this fall.

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A New York concert by pianist **STEVEN BECK** was described as "exemplary" and "deeply satisfying" by Anthony Tommasini in the *New York Times*. He is a graduate of the Juilliard School, where his teachers were Seymour Lipkin, Peter Serkin and Bruce Brubaker.

Mr. Beck made his concerto debut with the National Symphony Orchestra and has toured Japan as soloist with the New York Symphonic Ensemble. His annual Christmas Eve performance of Bach's Goldberg Variations at Bargemusic has become a New York institution. He has also performed as soloist and chamber musician at Alice Tully Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Library of Congress, Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Hall, and Miller Theater, as well as on WNYC; summer appearances have been at the Aspen Music Festival and Lincoln Center Out of Doors. He has performed as a musician with the New

York City Ballet and the Mark Morris Dance Group, and as an orchestral musician he has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, the New York City Ballet Orchestra, and Orpheus.

Mr. Beck is an experienced performer of new music, having worked with Elliott Carter, Pierre Boulez, Henri Dutilleux, Charles Wuorinen, George Crumb, George Perle, and Fred Lerdahl. He is a member of the Knights, the Talea Ensemble, Quattro Mani, and the Da Capo Chamber Players. His discography includes George Walker's piano sonatas, for Bridge Records, and Elliott Carter's "Double Concerto" on Albany Records. He is a Steinway Artist and is on the faculty of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, as well as the Colorado College Summer Music Festival and the Sewanee Music Center.

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Grammy nominated pianist and Steinway Artist, **SUSAN GRACE** has performed solo and chamber recitals in the United States, Europe, the former Soviet Union, Korea, India and China. She has also performed in the Aspekte Festival in Salzburg, St Paul Chamber Orchestra's new-music series Engine 408, Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., the Grand Teton Festival, the Cape Cod Music Festival, Festival Mozaic, Concordia Chamber Players, Music at Oxford, and the Helmsley Festival in England.

Grace's recording on the Bridge label of Stefan Wolpe's violin and piano music was listed in the *London Sunday Times* as one of the top 10 contemporary recordings and was also included on the *Fanfare* "Critics Want List". Other recordings can be found on *Albany*, *Klavier* and *Nova*.

Grace is associate chair, artist-in-residence, and senior lecturer in music at Colorado College. She is also music director of the renowned Colorado College Summer Music Festival, now in its 40th season. She was awarded the Christine S. Johnson Professorship of Music at Colorado College and the city of Colorado Springs presented Grace with the *Spirit of the Springs* award for her work with the Colorado College Summer Music Festival. Colorado College Alumni Association awarded her the Gresham Riley Award in 2020 for her contribution to the life of the college and in 2023 she received the Colorado College President's Leadership award.

## PROGRAM NOTES

Claude Debussy, ***En blanc et noir***

Debussy wrote his famous two-piano work, *En blanc et noir*, in the summer of 1915 when he was suffering from cancer (which kept him out of World War I)

and worrying about the effects and meaning of the war on his life and country. That summer, which should have been melancholy, paradoxically turned into one of great musical productivity. Still, some of the music that he composed reflected the vicissitudes of his life and time.

Debussy had long been interested in painters and felt that music and the visual arts had expressive properties in common. One of the most notable was color. And in many of Debussy's earlier works, for both orchestra and piano, musical color is among the most distinctive qualities; so it is curious that he now wrote a work titled, in effect, "In White and Black." And in fact, one year after he composed the three movements of *En blanc et noir* he wrote that "these pieces need to draw their color, their emotion, simply from the piano, like the 'grays' of Velasquez, if you understand me." This often-quoted comment has made critics wonder if he was alluding to the black and white keys of the piano, or to the subtle use of grays in the work of Velasquez in comparison to the delicate colors of many of his French contemporary painters.

The work is in three movements that are wonderfully idiomatic for the piano. One can often sense in the music the colors of Spain- the home of Velasquez, the artist Debussy cited directly in his own comments on the work. Each of the three movements is diverse in character and each is prefaced by a quotation. The first is from the libretto of an opera on Romeo and Juliet by Gounod:

<i>Qui reste à sa place</i>	He who stays in his place
<i>Et ne danse pas</i>	and does not dance
<i>De quelque disgrâce</i>	quietly admits to a disgrace.
<i>Fait l'aveu tout bas.</i>	

Could Debussy have been thinking of his inability to fight for France in the war, or was he just thinking of the suffering of the two lovers? The movement opens with two themes that seem to rain down hopefulness until they devolve into a jagged, martial motif. These themes become more and more compressed until closing with a giant C major chord.

The second movement is dedicated to a soldier who was killed in the war and prefaced by an antiwar quotation from an earlier French poem by François Villon:

<i>Prince, porté soit des serfs Eolus</i>	Prince, may the bright-winged brood of Æolus
<i>En la forest ou domine Glaucus.</i>	To sea-king Glaucus' wild wood cavernous,
<i>Ou privé soit de paix et d'espérance</i>	Bear him bereft of peace and hope's least
<i>Car digne n'est de posséder vertus.</i>	glance,
<i>Qui mal vouldroit au royaume de</i>	For worthless is he to get good of us,
<i>France.</i>	Who could wish evil to the state of France!

After a rather serene opening, the work quotes the powerful melody of a bellicose German hymn (“A Mighty Fortress is our God”). Could Debussy have been thinking of the dreadful war France was fighting with Germany? This suggests how troubled he was over the impact of the war on his country.

The third movement is prefaced by a short and simple line that equates his national melancholy to the darkness of winter:

“Yver, vous n’êtes qu’un villain.”

“Winter, you are nothing but a villain.”

Although there are some playful passages in this movement, the D minor key constantly reminds us of Debussy’s morose feelings about the war.

### George Crumb, ***Otherworldly Resonances***

George Crumb’s reputation as a composer of hauntingly beautiful scores has made him one of the most frequently performed “modern” composers in today’s musical world. From Los Angeles to New York, from Madrid to Moscow, and from Scandinavia to South America, festivals devoted to the music of George Crumb have taken place with increasing frequency. Crumb’s beguiling music often juxtaposes contrasting musical styles. The references range from music of the western art-music tradition, to hymns and folk music, to non-Western musics. Many of the composer’s works include programmatic, symbolic, mystical and theatrical elements, which are often reflected in his beautiful and meticulously notated scores. George Crumb was born in Charleston, West Virginia on 24 October 1929. After studies at Mason College of Music in Charleston, the University of Illinois, and the Hochschule für Musik, Berlin, he received his D.M.A. from the University of Michigan where he studied with Ross Lee Finney. In 1965 he began a long association with the University of Pennsylvania. In 1983 Crumb was appointed the Annenberg Professor of the Humanities, and in 1997 he retired from teaching.

George Crumb’s music has been highly honored, with the Pulitzer Prize (1968) and a Grammy Award (2001) among a long list of honors. His music is published by C.F. Peters and has been recorded on a wide range of labels in the USA and Europe.

*Otherworldly Resonances*, (Tableaux, Book II) was completed in the current revised version in 2005. It was composed for Quattro Mani. The following program notes are extracted from Steven Bruns’ more thorough essay written for the release of the CD. *Otherworldly Resonances* is headed with the direction: “Very slowly, with a Zen-like intensity of concentration.” The work does in fact demand extreme precision in its rhythmic and timbral nuances and all the various techniques of the “extended piano,” which have characterized Crumb’s piano writing for years.

In the third movement, *Palimpsest*, Crumb superimposes three different levels: Gamma Music on the bottom, a “shadowy, ghostly” series of chords played at an almost subliminal volume; in the middle “Beta Music” which contains pale and distant reminders of the familiar hymn tune “Bringing in the Sheaves”; and on top, “Alpha Music”, which the clearest and most vivid. In Bruns’ words, “the overall effect is an uncanny, sonic haze that is truly otherworldly.”

### George Walker, *Music for Two Pianos*

George Walker’s professional accomplishments so overshadow his reputation that one wonders why he is not more of a household name. His achievements might be characterized as a series of “firsts,” beginning with the Pulitzer Prize (he was the first African American to achieve this coveted honor). Before that, however, he was the first black student to receive a full scholarship at the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music, followed by his first concert at Town Hall in New York. Soon, he was the first black performer signed by a major management. He garnered a huge number of fellowships and commissions by many of the major orchestras in the U.S. and beyond, and was on the faculty of Curtis, Oberlin, Peabody, Wellesley, Williams and the University of Colorado.

It is noteworthy that he pursued careers as both a performer (as a pianist who performed solo concerts throughout the United States and Europe) and as a composer. *Music for Two Pianos* reveals his superior talents in this dual role. To start with, one can always hear his mastery as a pianist. This work is full of pianistic idioms, here divided between two performers. But perhaps more important is the musicality of the work itself. In a basically modern and atonal style, it has striking textures, rhythmic complexity, exciting interplay between the two pianos, and engaging appeal in both sensual and technical ways.

### Henri Dutilleux, *Figures de Résonances*

French composer Henri Dutilleux (1916-2013) was influenced by his better-known contemporaries, yet implemented his own, unique style. His *Figures De Résonance*, a duet for two pianos published in 1980, is made up of four movements. It is a virtuosic and modern work, with detailed pedaling included throughout. Dutilleux’s *Figures De Résonance* remains popular to this day and is a sublime, highly complex piece for performers and audiences alike.

In the composer’s notes “this collection of four short pieces explores resonance and interactive sonority between two pianos.” In his childhood, Dutilleux would sit at a piano and try to imitate the sound of the town carillon in Douai; the completion of these pieces in his sixtieth year is perhaps an expression of that early interest in bell-like sonorities. Clearly influenced by Debussy, especially in terms of the generally modal language and ear for color, these pieces also



owe something to the brevity of Webern and the general character of Eastern philosophies such as Zen Buddhism. Experimentally focusing on acoustic, timbral and harmonic parameters, they are based on a conception of piano sound that is fundamentally sensual. Dutilleux uses unusual pedal techniques and silently depressed chords and clusters to create sympathetic vibrations between the pianos.

### Eric Chasalow, ***Rounding the Keys***

Notes by the composer: "My father was already working on the top-secret submarine defense project that would occupy his entire career when, in 1959, he packed us into the Studebaker for the trek to Key West. We loved exploring the creaky termite-ridden Victorian that the Navy had rented for us. The garden was occupied by aging and overgrown fruit trees. Guava, papaya, and fig attracted an array of wild creatures, including the possum that hid under the expansive porch. We felt at home. We learned how to pronounce conch (everyone knows the ch is hard – like "k"). We combed the beach, scooping up hermit crabs and polished sea-glass. Being red-headed and fair, my skin quickly turned a painful shade and stayed that way through that year, but I didn't care. There were new things to discover, like floating out on that impossibly blue water to magically pull up a sand shark, followed, perhaps, by a big ugly grouper. There was one of the few times I can remember being out alone with my dad – riding out to the naval air station to see the 7th Voyage of Sinbad. I was only four, and the Cyclops and dueling skeletons were totally frightening, but that night was cool and humid and special. We were so very sad to leave the next year."

"In 2022, I was honored to be awarded a three-week residency at The Studios of Key West on Eaton Street and was able to return to the Keys for the first time since my childhood. I did not arrive with a plan for what I would work on, but I woke up on my first morning hearing the opening of this piece and wrote the six minutes quickly. There is an alternate version for two marimbas. The nautical phrase of the title is a double musical pun. Yes, keys are islands and also part of the piano, but in addition, the music is almost entirely canonic – in other words, a "round" – Rounding the Keys."

### Béla Bartók, ***Seven Pieces from Mikrokosmos***

In the 1940s, when Béla Bartók and his wife Ditta Pásztory fled war-torn Europe and came to the United States, they needed new sources of income. Both were outstanding pianists, so Béla decided to use these talents professionally. Certainly, the most famous piece that supported the Bartóks in the U.S. was his Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, which they performed in Town Hall in 1940. It was so successful that the composer decided to create

more two-piano works for him and Ditta.

The collection of pedagogical piano works known as *Mikrokosmos* were well-known and seemed like an ideal source for new compositions. So he arranged seven of these for two pianos (four hands) and published them in 1940. The original set included 153 short works for solo piano arranged, in theory at least, in a progression of increasing difficulty to keep young students challenged. The seven used for the two-piano set are mostly from later in the series and assumedly the more difficult works. This would be appropriate for two professional piano virtuosos like Ditta and himself. And to keep the interest of the audience alive, each work has a fresh and distinctive character.

In the words of Robert Cummings (a prominent Bartók scholar), the first work in the set, "Bulgarian Rhythm", is "a lively piece whose attractive repetitive bass rhythm colorfully underpins an appealing Hungarian folk tune of exotic character. It is one minute of driving energy in typically Bartókian keyboard writing."

The second piece in the set is titled "Chord and Trill Study". We encounter a melody in the higher register and chords with a distinct rhythmic figure in the lower range. As the title might imply, there are unrelenting trills. The third piece, "Perpetuum Mobile", is a wild motoric drive which rushes up and down the keyboard producing wild colors and thrilling virtuosity for about three-quarters of a minute.

The fourth piece, "Canon and Inversion", is equally exciting but a bit more learned in its use of countermelodies to go along with the main theme. And one can hear, from time to time, some canonic variation between the two pianos.

The fifth piece, "New Hungarian Folksong", is an adaptation of one of the four folk song arrangements in *Mikrokosmos*. Marked *ben ritmico*, this moderately paced movement features a lovely, melancholy theme which sounds exotic and which grows in intensity as the movement progresses.

The sixth piece, "Chromatic Invention," is full of driving energy and a sense of desperate urgency. There are some chromatic passages that lend intensity.

The seventh and last work is titled "Ostinato", a somewhat misleading title since there is no repeated ostinato bass in the traditional sense. There is a rhythmic figure which Bartok described as "oriental." The work is wildly rhythmic and breathless throughout most of its two-and-a-half minutes, and exhibits the intense character that we hear in much of Bartok's music. This is certainly the most artistically substantive of all the works in the set.

## ABOUT THE BRANDEIS CONCERT SERIES

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**Marquee Concerts:** An exceptional series of professional performances that feature faculty and visiting artists, including the legendary Lydian String Quartet and the internationally acclaimed musicians of MusicUnitesUS.

**Student Concerts:** Outstanding student ensembles and music majors perform music ranging from the renaissance and early Baroque eras to improvisational jazz and the rhythms of Ghana.

**Music at Mandel:** The Department of Music and the Mandel Center for the Humanities (MCH) host 5-7 FREE lunchtime concerts throughout the year in the stunning MCH Atrium.

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FALL 2023

# CONCERT SERIES

Slosberg Music Center

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### MARQUEE CONCERT:

**Davy Rakowski's 65th Birthday!**

Sunday, October 1st, 3 p.m.

### MARQUEE CONCERT:

**Annual Iring Fine Tribute Concert**

Saturday, October 7th, 7:30 p.m.



### MARQUEE CONCERT:

**Julia Glenn & Mika Sasaki: Folk Tales and Fantasies**

Friday, October 27th, 7:30 p.m.

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### MARQUEE CONCERT:

**Lydian String Quartet**

Saturday, November 11th, 7:30 p.m.



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