



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Department of Music

**American Liszt Society Festival and Conference 2025
“Liszt and Women”**

Program and Program Notes

- SESSION 5 - Women Shaping Modern Music
- EVENING CONCERT PART 1 - Liszt and the Modern Muse
- SESSION 9 - Women Composers of the American Liszt Society

DAY 1 - THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23

3:00-3:35 p.m.

SESSION 5 - Women Shaping Modern Music

Germaine Tailleferre: Deux Valses (1928)

I. Valse lente

II. Valse brillante

Tailleferre: Toccata (1957)

Happy Dog Duo (Nathan Cheung and Eric Tran, piano)

Ivette Herryman Rodriguez: Let's Talk Cuba (2019)

José Raúl López, piano

Tania León: Satiné (1999) for Two Pianos

I. Entrada

II. Satin

III. É

Alyssa Conde and Aleksandra Velgosha, piano

Emily Koh: sang de glacier (2025) World Premiere

I. Pink Hour Sparkles

II. The Calving [at least

III. Shards of Bio-Glass

Liza Stepanova, piano

Germaine Tailleferre: Deux Valses (1928)

Composed in 1928, Tailleferre's *Deux Valses* for two pianos showcases her characteristic blend of elegance, wit, and rhythmic vitality. The first waltz, a lyrical and introspective movement, flows with a melancholic grace, revealing her gift for melodic invention. In contrast, the second waltz is lively and virtuosic, full of rhythmic energy and sparkling textures that highlight the pianists' interplay. Together, the two movements reflect Tailleferre's neoclassical style, balancing refinement with playful exuberance, and offering a charming glimpse into the vibrant French musical landscape of the early 20th century.

Germaine Tailleferre: Toccata for Two Pianos (1957)

Composed for the renowned American piano duo Gold and Fizdale, to whom it is dedicated, Germaine Tailleferre's *Toccata for Two Pianos* is a vibrant display of rhythmic energy and inventive counterpoint. The work features two main motives: a rapid passage of widely spaced intervals alternating between the two pianos, and a playful, bi-tonal "taxi"-like figure that recurs throughout. After a slower, rhythmically irregular section with Stravinskian polytonality, the opening material returns in a lively fugato, propelling the piece to an exhilarating conclusion.

Ivette Herryman Rodriguez: Let's Talk Cuba (2019)

Let's Talk Cuba is a joint commission by the Music Teachers National Association and Illinois State Music Teachers Association (ISMTA), as a result of my winning the 2019 edition of the ISMTA Composer Commissioning Program. The starting point for the composition of this piece was to emulate at the piano a very common rhythmic pattern played by the congas (*tumbadoras*) when accompanying the Cuban genre *son*. The piece starts by playing bits of this pattern. The rhythms used in most of the remainder of the work are variations of what was presented in the introduction, with the exception of a few sections in which new rhythmic material is introduced. The harmonic language of the piece combines three main types of chords: those derived from a whole-tone scale, along with seventh chords – favoring dominant seventh chords- and altered chords. Another important element of the composition is the presence of *tumbao*-like gestures that appear as thematic, transitional, and closing material. Finally, the formal structure resembles a first movement of a sonata form, containing an exposition, a development and a recapitulation.

Tania León: Satiné (1999) for Two Pianos

Satiné for two pianos derives its title from the name of a tree native to French Guiana, Brazil, Peru, Panama, and Venezuela. Written in 1999 for the pianists Mirta Gómez and Gustavo Romero, it was recorded by Susan Grace and Alice Rybak on the 2008 Bridge Records album *Singin' Sepia*. Throughout the piece, extended ostinati used as clave-like patterns form the work's structural foundation. These repeated rhythmic patterns are contrasted with rapid-fire, fractured unison runs and sections of relative motionlessness.

Emily Koh: sang de glacier (2025) World Premiere

sang de glacier (French for 'glacial blood') is the phenomenon of alpine snow turning pink or red due to blooms of snow algae (such as *Chlamydomonas nivalis*), which use pigments to protect themselves from ultraviolet light, potentially accelerating melting. As a non-French speaker, I read this also as 'sang the glacier', which imagines the swansong a glacier might/will sing as it nears its end. *Sang de glacier* is commissioned by Liza Stepanova.

DAY 1 - THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23

7:30-9:15 p.m.

EVENING CONCERT PART 1 - Liszt and the Modern Muse

Franz Liszt: Ave Maria S. 20/2

Greyscale

Matthew Potterton, choir director

Ruth Schönthal: Five Oceanic Preludes for Piano (2000)

Oceanfront at Sunset

Khalil Ghazala

The Seagull's Slow Ascent and Descent

Emma Switzer

Beaches Whales

Justyna Maślanka

Sirens

Emrik Butterfield

Dolphins at Sunset

Csanád Barbarics

Tamar Muskal: They Are Mine (2017)

Gila Goldstein, piano

Libby Larsen: Gavel Patter (2004)

Marissa Mathia and **Louisa Peng**, piano

Asiya Korepanova: Con Brio (1996-2021)

Asiya Korepanova and **Jeffrey LaDeur**, piano

Ruth Schönthal: Five Oceanic Preludes for Piano (2000)

Five Oceanic Preludes were inspired in part by an article in *The New York Times*, in which prominent concert pianist Ursula Oppens reflected on the scarcity of engaging music for piano students, written using avant-garde techniques. Motivated by this observation, Schönthal sought to create works that combined modern compositional methods with imaginative, expressive potential for young pianists. The Prelude *Oceanfront at Sunset* employs multiple twelve-tone rows, inviting the performer to explore a palette of colors and textures. Each Prelude encourages students to draw upon their own imagination and life experiences to evoke the moods suggested by the titles. In this piece, the use of abundant pedal creates a “wet” sound, reminiscent of the ocean itself. Low glissandi on the strings suggest the power and roar of the waves, while high glissandi, sudden screeches, and swooping gestures depict the playful flights of seagulls. Glissandi on the piano keys mimic the swift, graceful movements of dolphins in the surf. Through these techniques, Schönthal invites performers and audiences alike to immerse themselves in a vivid seascape, blending avant-garde innovation with evocative, programmatic imagery.

Tamar Muskal: They Are Mine (2017)

They Are Mine, a piece for solo piano, was written in 2017 for pianist Gila Goldstein. About five minutes in length, it is based on a seven-note phrase from Did You Really Say No, a song by Oren Lavie performed with Vanessa Paradis. This phrase recurs throughout the piece in varied forms, both melodically and harmonically. The work reflects themes of pain and unconditional love, and at the time of its composition I felt these emotions were best expressed through a tonal language.

Libby Larsen: Gavel Patter (2004)

Gavel Patter, for four-hand piano, results from the investigation I have been making of finding musical form in American language traditions. Finding unusually strong rhythm and flow in American auctioneering patter, it occurred to me to compose music which uses auctioneering patter as its musical material. Gavel Patter uses auctioneers' styles, pitches, timing, and complex rhythms to propel it. I have also incorporated a 'run to the close' in which the auctioneer, with the help of a partner placed out on the auction floor, plays two bidders off against each other at high speed in order to drive the bidding up to the close with the loud rap of the gavel.

Asiya Korepanova: Con Brio (1996-2021)

Con Brio is a scherzo for two pianos, based on music from an early sonatina for solo piano that I composed when I was 12 years old. The main thematic material of Con Brio comes from the primary theme, the bridge, and the second theme of the sonatina's exposition. During the pandemic, while going through my archives, I revisited the sonatina and felt that the themes deserved more elaborate development. I expanded and reworked them, changing the piece's instrumentation in the process. Completed in 2021, the piece was premiered in February 2022 as a part of a recital with Ilya Kazantsev for Dranoff Two Piano Foundation series in Miami, Florida.

DAY 2 - FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24

10:05-10:45 a.m.

SESSION 9 - Women Composers of the American Liszt Society

Shu Tran: Page 123 - It is not God
Because I can Change

Shu Tran, piano

Judith Neszlényi Pfeiffer: Duo for Violin and Piano (1977)
Song and Dance

Avita Duo (**Katya Moeller**, violin, **Ksenia Nosikova**, piano)

Judith Neszlényi Pfeiffer: *Cantata* 1956 - Epilogue (1962)
Judith Neszlényi Pfeiffer, piano

Nadejda Vlaeva: Sonata (2021)
I. Allegro appassionato
II. Andante teneramente
III. Allegro vivace
Nadejda Vlaeva, piano

Shu Tran: Page 123 - It is not God

Lyrics:

Whenever you are worried,
Whenever you are sad,
Whenever you are anxious,
Whenever you are mad,
It is not God.

It is not God; it is the light of God turned inside out, clashing as if it were against itself,
As directed by your own egocentricity.

Whenever you're impatient,
Whenever you're distressed,
Whenever you are angry,
Or full of self-pity,
It is not God.

It is not God; it is the light of God turned inside out, clashing as if it were against itself,
directed by your ego.

Let go of your ego.

God is one joyous dance, not at war, as you, with anyone or anything.

God is one joyous dance, even if you believe it otherwise.

The lyrics to "It is not God" are adapted from words written by Shu's soulmate, Robert Parker; taken from page 123 in a collection of channeling that Robert received from the 1970's until today. After being one of the two surviving members of an ambushed U.S. military unit during the Vietnam war, and becoming a physician in Guadalajara, Mexico, Robert experienced what some refer to as a "near death experience" (NDE). Robert refers to it as the "near life experience", in which he went through the tunnel of light and was shown his whole life until that moment, all of his accomplishments and mistakes through the eyes of pure, loving consciousness. This opened gifts of insight and prophesy which lead people to pronounce him as a "healer", and to his working with orphans in Mexico and post-revolutionary Romania, as well as Roman Catholic nuns in France, and healing centers in the U.S., Mexico, and Brazil. Robert has always kept his writings private. Now, Shu has the honor of setting selections of them to music and presenting them to whomever is meant to listen. They are challenging messages for humanity, sometimes scathing, leaving us choice and a potential future of infinite possibilities, currently believed to be beyond our wildest dreams.

Shu Tran: Because I Can Change

Lyrics:

The man stood up, and the judge spoke out, "Guilty! Charged with murder in cold blood. What do you have to say for yourself?"

The man stood still in silence,
And he smiled, and he said,

"I used to believe that my life was doomed to take or be taken.

And it's taken me a while to know I'm no longer doomed,

Because I can change."

The flight of the bird only occurs when death dies to the overwhelming joy of life in
dominion of the skies -

A life not yet lived, as beautiful as the horizon,

that learns from its mistakes to make an all the more beautiful now, and now, and now!

I used to believe that love was not enough to defeat the temptation of lies, the pull of greed, the imminence of cynicism, and eventually death.
I used to believe that I would be a slave, and sacrifice, and give up my life for the ideal of love - a tragic hero who could never win in this world.
And then, I realize that god of this world is not God at all,
And I can defeat, I can live, I can love, I can fly,
Because love looked me in the eye, because I believed,
Because I can change.

"Because I can Change" was inspired by a convict (here called M) whom Shu met in her prison program, "Music Between Bars", that Shu ran from 2017 until Covid19 shut it down in 2020. M had been deployed in the war in Afghanistan as a special ops member of the U.S. military six times, and finally broke when commanded to shoot a child. Following this event, M fell into addiction and was dishonorably discharged from the military. M continued to spiral downwards with poverty, homelessness, abusive relationships, and eventually resorted to criminal activity, which landed her in prison. M told Shu that she was not sad about ending up in prison because she "needed a time out," and in M's own words, "I have a chance to live a better life now, because I know I can change." M is now out of prison and living her dream building sets in Hollywood. She inspires everyone around her with her joyful heart and great sense of humor. Shu wrote this piece as part of a song cycle called "Who is Miranda?" - a set of five songs loosely tied to the Miranda Rights, but mostly about the experiences of women in prison and the lessons we can all learn from them.

Judith Neslény: Duo for Violin and Piano (1977)

The duo was written in memory of the composer's father Ede Pfeiffer, - 1909-1976 - who was a well-known violinist of his time, in the 1930-es and '40-es. A former pupil of Jenő Hubay and friend of Ferenc Vecsey and Dohanyi, he was professor of String instruments at the Hungarian Nemzeti Zenei - National Conservatory of Music. He also established music schools in the country - Gyula, Orosháza, Hódmezővásárhely - He emigrated to the USA in 1957, and held teaching position in California and Georgia.

The Duo 's first movement Song is a melancholic Fantasie, and the Dance is a Csárdás inspired praise to life, written for the Women Composers' Forum at Cal. State University Los Angeles in 1977 where Judith was teaching and was Artist in residence at that time.
The work has been inspired by several poems at their performances.

Judith Neszlényi Pfeiffer: *Cantata 1956* - Epilogue (1962)

The EPILOGUE is a March, the Theme song of the cantata: ODE to 1956, depicting history in music, the happenings of the Freedom fight of Hungarians in the Fall of 1956 against the Communist rule. The 15-movement oratorical work is composed for SATB choir and Soloists, piano with orchestra, using the mixolydian and aeolian mode, in a Transylvanian „falling" Ia-pentanone, combined with original folk elements. The story is told by the *Regős* - the narrator - and the Soloists. The work received great receptions since 1982, when it received the Gold Medal from the Cleveland Academy of Arts, and the Hungarian Premiere in 2016 in the Royal Palace of Buda in Budapest. The Epilogue here receives its first presentation for solo piano, introducing the song itself and its choral arrangement to a Finale.

"From defeated fights they grow, Victoriously the Magyar Go!"
into a free Hungary since 1989 to the present.

Nadejda Vlaeva: Piano Sonata No. 1 (2021)

I. Allegro appassionato

II. Andante teneramente

III. Allegro vivace

This sonata was born from a deeply personal and poetic impulse, an emotional landscape shaped by the music of Sergei Bortkiewicz, whose works have been a luminous refuge for me in recent years. His romantic voice, tender yet impassioned, offered a kind of spoken island of beauty amid the noise of the world. My *Piano Sonata No. 1* is written in that spirit: expressive, dramatic, and rich in inner life.

The first movement, *Allegro appassionato*, opens with a surge of passion, waves of arpeggios and chords that rise and fall like tides in the human soul. The first theme is stormy and expansive, evoking elemental forces and emotional urgency. In contrast, the second theme offers a moment of prayerful stillness: introspective, lyrical, and quietly radiant. A left-hand cadenza emerges in the development, inspired by my love for left-hand repertoire, including Bortkiewicz's *Piano Concerto No. 2 for the Left Hand* and his *Étude "Le poète"*, Op. 29 No. 5, as well as Brahms's transcription for the left hand of Bach's *Chaconne*. These works shaped my understanding of the left hand as a voice of depth and drama. Within the movement, a melodic fragment from the Bulgarian folk song *Dilmano Dilbero* is woven into the texture. This flirtatious harvest song from the Shoppe region playfully asks, "Beautiful Dilmana, how do you plant a pepper so that it blossoms and bears fruit?" The answer: „You poke the ground and plant it there" is both literal and metaphorical, a symbol of growth, sensuality, and folk wisdom.

The second movement, *Andante teneramente*, is a tender, lyrical meditation, an intimate love letter spun from notes. It sings with warmth and vulnerability, unfolding like a whispered confession. The melodic lines are woven, as if each phrase were a thread in a tapestry of longing and grace.

The third movement, *Allegro vivace*, is a tarantella in minor, bursting forth with fiery energy, a whirlwind of cascading passages and rhythmic drive. Though the tarantella dances in minor, its spirit is exuberant and defiant. Double thirds and chromatic flourishes heighten the intensity, while the full range of the piano is explored. It's as if the sound itself wants to burst beyond the instrument, like a bird poised to take flight. The movement ends in triumph: major prevails, casting light over the shadows. This gesture echoes Bortkiewicz's *Piano Sonata No. 2*, where the final movement in minor resolves into a radiant major coda, a moment of transcendence that has long inspired me.

When I was a child visiting Belgium, I once heard a car pass by playing a tune like a musical box. Years later, in New York, I heard a similar sound: mechanical, whimsical, and strangely enchanting. That fleeting moment rekindled a forgotten wonder. I've tried to infuse a hint of that magic into the sonata: a crystalline echo of something precious and romantic, shimmering even in the bustle of a great city. A little musical crystal that preserves the enchantment of the past.

Since its composition in 2021, the *Piano Sonata No. 1* has been performed in Los Angeles (American premiere), New York, Geneva, Sofia, throughout Germany and the Netherlands

