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Daniel Lessner

Pianist/Composer



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BIOGRAPHY

Daniel Lessner has thrilled audiences around the world with his dazzling performances and poetic interpretations of the great masterworks of the piano repertoire. Critics have hailed his playing as "brilliant and blazing" and have called him "a musician of pristine artistic taste and discernment."

Daniel began his piano studies at the age of four in Miami, Florida, where he performed his first public recital at age eleven. By the time he turned eighteen he had won over a hundred local and national prizes, including the Irene Muir Scholarship Award for the top young talent in the state of Florida and the First Prize award at the acclaimed Interlochen Music Camp's Concerto Competition, where he performed the Macdowell Concerto #2 in D minor and Rachmaninoff Concerto #2 in C minor. He entered the Juilliard School of Music in New York City on scholarship to study with the renowned teacher Adele Marcus, herself a student of Josef Lhevinne and Artur Schnabel. While at Juilliard he won the school's Tchaikovsky Concerto Competition, and performed it with the Juilliard Orchestra in Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, under the baton of Massimo Freccia. After receiving his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in music, Lessner was chosen as a candidate for Juilliard's Doctoral program. He remained at Juilliard as an Assistant Faculty Member for two seasons.

Lessner has toured extensively in the United States and abroad, performing solo and chamber works in cities which include New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Salt Lake City, Boston, Detroit, Washington DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Miami, Palm Beach, Helsinki Finland, and Stockholm Sweden. He has garnered top prizes in competitions including the Maryland International, the Gina Bachauer International, the Interlochen Concerto Competition, Mieczyslaw Munz, the Grand Rapids International, and the Van Cliburn Scholarship Award. He has also appeared as soloist with the Florida Philharmonic, the Miami Beach Symphony, the Queens Symphony, the Maryland Symphony, the Berkshire Symphony Orchestra and the Interlochen Orchestra.

A winner in the sixth Palm Beach International Piano Competition, he was the only American to reach the finals. Lessner was recognized there for most outstanding performance in the works of Chopin and Liszt, and also performed the Goldberg Variations of Bach. As a result, the Orchestra de San Luis contracted him for a special concert tour throughout Argentina and South America, performing the Beethoven Concerto #4 in G.

Other career highlights include a solo performance in New York's Carnegie Hall, in a concert with pianists such as Byron Janus, in the memory of their former teacher, Ms. Marcus. Lessner toured South America with the New York Philharmonia, performing solo and orchestral concerts in Brazil on a Cunard Line cruise down the Amazon River and along the Caribbean Islands. He appeared as a soloist with the California Philharmonic at the Pasadena Arboretum and at the Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, where he played Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini. He has performed solo recitals in Los Angeles' Taper Auditorium, where he played Liszt's transcription of Wagner's Overture to Tannhauser. He has appeared twice at Chapin Hall in Massachusetts playing the Rachmaninoff Third Concerto with the Berkshire Symphony and conductor Ronald Feldman, as well as the Goldberg Variations. In 2008, Mr. Lessner was a soloist with the Pasadena Symphony, conducted by Rachael Worby, at Descanso Gardens in Pasadena, CA, playing Bernhard Herrmann's Piano Concerto from the film Hanover Square, as well as Chopin's Nocturne in C minor. Later that year, he appeared in Santiago, Chile, with the Orchestra Classique and conductor Elian Ortiz, playing the Rachmaninoff Third in the Teatro Oriente. He also gave master classes at the University of Chile and the School of Modern Music. He has been invited to return there in the 2009-2010 season.

Mr. Lessner has been on the faculty at the University of Southern California as Professor of Piano. He also teaches privately in Los Angeles and gives Master Classes.

He can currently be heard on United Airlines' award-winning national advertising campaign performing Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue in more than 10 ads.

On his website, DanielLessner.com, many of Daniel's live concert appearances can be heard and seen, and future performance dates are listed. Lessner's recordings are available on iTunes and CDBaby.com.

In addition to performing, Mr. Lessner enjoys a successful career composing music for film and television for his company Skanda Music. He has also worked as a record producer and as an Artist and Repertoire Representative for EMI Records.

Mr. Lessner is a Steinway Artist.

Critical Acclaim

“The fine pianist was Daniel Lessner.”

(New York Times)

“Lessner is a brilliant technician. His keyboard dexterity and sheer speed is striking... More importantly, he is a musician of pristine artistic taste and discernment.”

(Lawrence Budman of The Miami Herald)

“It was one of those transcendent moments that can only happen between a gifted musician and a symphony audience.”

(Kyle Moore, Toluca Times)

“I was won over by the freshness and individuality... The audience was thrilled, and he was called back for encores... one can only admire his individuality and his willingness to take risks. In this way he is like a visitor from the past.”

(Michael Miller, Berkshire Review)

Concerto Repertoire

Rachmaninoff nos. 2, 3, and Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

Tchaikovsky no. 1

Brahms no. 2

Prokofiev nos. 2, 3

Schumann

Chopin nos. 1, 2

Liszt no. 1

Saint-Saëns no. 2

Beethoven nos. 3,4,5

Mozart nos. 20-27

Herrmann Concerto Macabre

Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue, Concerto in F

MacDowell no. 2

Mendelssohn nos. 1, 2

Bartok nos. 2, 3

Shostakovich

Bach no. 1

Grieg

References

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Former Assistant Conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra under John Williams
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Sample Programs

SOLO RECITAL PROGRAM 1

Goldberg Variations

Bach
(1650-1710)

Intermission

Nocturne in F min. Op.55, no. 1
Scherzo no. 3 in C-Sharp min., Op. 39

Chopin
(1810-1849)

Prelude in G Op. 32 No.5
Etude-Tableau in E-Flat min., Op. 39, no. 5
Prelude in G min., Op. 23, no. 5

Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Carmen Variations

Bizet – Horowitz
(1838-1875) (1903-1989)

SOLO RECITAL PROGRAM 2

Sonata in F minor Op. 57 "Appassionata"
Allegro assai
Andante con moto - attacca
Allegro ma non troppo - Presto

Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Evening Star from Tannhauser
Overture to Tannhauser

Wagner-Liszt
(1818-1883) (1811-1886)

Intermission

Images Bk. 1
Reflets dans l'eau
Homage a Rameau
Movement

Debussy
(1862-1918)

Sonata no. 7 in B-flat Op. 83
Allegro inquieto
Andante caloroso
Precipitato

Prokofiev
(1891-1953)

SOLO RECITAL PROGRAM 3

Six Sonatas

Scarlatti
(1685-1757)

Faschingsschwank aus Wien

Allegro

Romance

Scherzino

Intermezzo

Finale

Schumann
(1810-1856)

Intermission

Four Songs

Schubert-Liszt
(1797-1828) (1811-1886)

Three Movements from Petrushka

Danse russe

Chez Petrouchka

La semaine grasse

Stravinsky
(1882-1971)