



# fun · with · intervals



J.S. BACH

4 Duets, BWV 802-805 | Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring



LUIGI DALLAPICCOLA

Quaderno Musicale Di Annalibera



RICHARD ATKINSON

13 Canons at Each Interval



STEFAN WOLPE

Passacaglia



**andrew rangell** piano



STEINWAY & SONS

## fun with intervals

Yes, the title is partly ironic. We'll come back to that. The pieces on this program can be said to constitute a sort of family, perhaps even a slightly forbidding one... Wolpe's Passacaglia, in its subtitle, explicitly labels itself a "study", but all the other works are studies as well, concentrating on particular contrapuntal practices. Intervals being the building blocks of counterpoint. One such practice, rather severe and centuries old, is the canon, to which the Bach and Atkinson pieces here are seriously devoted. Dallapiccola's and Wolpe's works are predicated upon "rows" of selected pitches (thus, intervals): a 12-tone row for Dallapiccola, an "all-interval" row for Wolpe. Here, then, is a generalized observation applying to all of these pieces: each contains a carefully chosen set of intervals which is then subject to various types of replication. (Damn, that's a mouthful!) But, going back to our mischievous little title, it is winking at us, and hinting that the music at hand is actually quite serious, even austere and cerebral. And, listener, so it is! And while Atkinson's canons and Bach's duets surprise us with their immediate elegance and eloquence, Dallapiccola and Wolpe supply the kind of meaning and beauty requiring more sustained attention. And when this is provided, it is my conviction that these pieces (even the fierce and inexorable Wolpe) yield much in the way of color, wit, sensuality, and poignancy.

### JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH: **Four Duets, BWV 802-805** (1739)

In the course of a long and immensely productive life, Bach took the trouble and expense to have certain highly valued keyboard creations engraved. Thus, in different installments between 1731 and 1742, the Six Partitas, Italian Concerto, B minor French Overture, and Goldberg Variations were published, under the general title "Keyboard Practice". A volume devoted to organ works (1739) included the 4 Duets, extended and quite sophisticated 2-part inventions, which, in their spare counterpoint, seem (to me) more closely related to certain harpsichord preludes and suite movements than to his organ music. In any case, the Duets translate well to the modern piano. One and four, in minor keys, are pointedly chromatic and filled

with piquant dissonance. The other two are bouncy and upbeat. The wonderful, defining feature of these Duets is the presence of canonic passages embedded in them, imparting a new and offbeat wrinkle. These canonic fragments certainly foreshadow the astonishing utilization of canons, shortly to follow, in monuments of Bach's last decade: the Goldberg Variations, Art of Fugue, Musical Offering, etc.

### **BACH: Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring**

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring is the English title of the chorale from Cantata 147, here transcribed by Myra Hess. This beloved chorale-prelude appears twice on this recital, first as a welcome change of sonority from the counterpoint of the Duets, and again as a kind of concluding benediction following the harsh intensity of Wolpe's Passacaglia. It is a gem of polyphonic mastery: that of the single voice (cantus firmus) framed and accompanied by joined voices presenting independent material.

### **LUIGI DALLAPICCOLA: Quaderno Musicale di Annalibera (1952)**

An homage to Bach, written in the spirit of that composer's intimate musical notebooks for family members (Anna Magdalena, Wilhelm Friedemann) Dallapiccola inscribed this delicate, lyrical, intricately contrapuntal 12-tone work to his young daughter, Annalibera. It comprises a sequence of 11 short, contrasting movements, the first of which sets a tone of mysterious portent and unexpected sensuality, while intoning the pitches of Bach's name (B flat, A, C, B) and also presenting, indirectly, the work's operational row of 12 tones. It is a quiet tour de force. Movements 3, 5, and 7 display strict (row-based) canons: simple, inverted, and retrograde. The row itself, in its different formats, is heard melodically at certain moments, but felt as a vertical (i.e.harmonic) presence at others, this shifting audibility giving the work a unity almost akin to that of a theme and variations. The concluding movement (Quatrain) touchingly presents, in sequence, four simple statements of the row (as a gently accompanied song): inversion, retrograde, retrograde-inversion and, finally, the original row.



## RICHARD ATKINSON: **Thirteen Canons at Each Interval** (2003)

Beginning with a canon at the unison, and ending with a kind of canonic fantasy at the octave, Richard Atkinson's work is a cleverly connected set of bagatelles using canons at progressively expanding intervals. Surprising tonal bridges assist, here and there, in transition. Changes of mood and character are very effectively established (especially considering the constraints of 2-part counterpoint!) Complexities added in the final movement (Inversion, augmentation, stretto) give it the needed heft for a dramatic conclusion.

## STEFAN WOLPE: **Passacaglia: Study on an All-interval Row in conjunction with 11 Basic Rows** (1936/1971)

In exile from Nazi-occupied Berlin, Wolpe was living in Palestine in 1936 when the Passacaglia was written, the last of four "studies". The all-interval row, in Wolpe's subtitle, is an ascending progression of intervals, from minor second through major seventh. Pitted against this row, throughout the piece and in increasingly complex ways, are rows (11 in all) consisting of single intervals (again, all intervals are covered). This interaction, abstract in such a description, nonetheless underpins both the language and the architecture of the work. Its overall design is symmetrical, an exposition and coda on the flanks, a long soulful meditation at the center, surrounded on each side by turbulent, even violent, action. A very darkly serious creation, almost possessed, one might say. Analysis, though often very productive, can never do full justice to the most powerfully imagined creations. And this is one. Wolpe has here fashioned a gripping "mechanism", mysteriously alive and enthralling, at times almost unbearable in intensity. An enormously challenging piece, one which might be described (in Wallace Stevens' words) as "almost resisting the intelligence".



Photo by Bill Fried

Pianist **Andrew Rangell's** interpretation of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, book 2, released in 2022, brought to completion this pianist's long, loving and comprehensive survey of Bach's major keyboard works. Over several decades Mr. Rangell's embrace of Bach has run parallel with other deep involvements, beginning with Beethoven, but also exploring repertoire ranging from Sweelinck, Gibbons, and Farnaby to Ives, Nielsen, Enescu, Schoenberg and a host of other 20th century voices. The pianist's most recent release, Waltz Inventions, featured a gallery of diverse and captivating Waltzes. During these winter months, Mr. Rangell plans to vacation in the sunny climate of Scarlatti Sonatas with the hope of filing his "report" in the summer of 2024.

Andrew Rangell made his New York debut as winner of the Malraux Award of the Concert Artists' Guild, and has since performed and lectured throughout the United States, and in Europe, Israel, and China. He has also

taught on the faculties of Dartmouth, Middlebury, and Tufts University. In the 1980s, already recognized as a distinctive recitalist and collaborative artist, Mr. Rangell gained national attention – and the award of an Avery Fisher Career Grant – for his vivid traversals of the complete Beethoven sonata-cycle in New York, Boston, Cleveland, Rochester, Denver, and other U.S. Cities. A hand injury sustained in 1991 forced Mr. Rangell to gradually alter the trajectory of his career, and eventually to place his highest priority on recording. In recent

years he has created several DVDs for children – integrating his special talents as author, illustrator, narrator, and pianist. These DVDs are included in his albums, Bach 4 Kids and Beethoven 4 Kids, Volumes 1 and 2.

## **fun with intervals**

Recorded July 30 and August 31, 2023 at the Shalin Liu Performance Center, Rockport, Massachusetts.

Producer: Andrew Rangell

Recording/Mastering/Editing: Luke Damrosch

Piano Technician: Len Richardson

Piano: Steinway Model D #586518 (New York)

Executive Producer: Jon Feidner

Art Direction: Jackie Fugere

Design: Cover to Cover Design, Anilda Carrasquillo

Project Coordinator: Renée Oakford

**These Intervals are for Luke and Jaz.**



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## JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

### Four Duets, BWV 802-805 (1739)

1. Duet No. 1 in E minor, BWV 802 2:49
2. Duet No. 2 in F major, BWV 803 3:00
3. Duet No. 3 in G major, BWV 804 2:29
4. Duet No. 4 in A minor, BWV 805 2:23
5. **Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring**  
(arr. Myra Hess) 3:37

## LUIGI DALLAPICCOLA

### Quaderno Musicale di Annalibera (1952)

6. I. Simbolo. Quasi Lento 2:34
7. II. Accenti. Allegro con fuoco 0:26
8. III. Contrapunctus Primus. Mosso; scorrevole 1:02
9. IV. Linee. Tranquillamente mosso 0:42
10. V. Contrapunctus Secundus. Poco allegretto;  
"alla Serenata" 0:25
11. VI. Fregi. Molto lento; con espressione parlante 0:58
12. VII. Andantino Amoroso e Contrapunctus Tertius  
Resolutio. Dolce; sempre parlante 0:59
13. VIII. Ritmi. Allegro 1:06
14. IX. Colore. Affetuoso; cullante 1:15
15. X. Ombre. Grave 2:44
16. XI. Quartina. Molto lento; fantastico 1:49

## RICHARD ATKINSON

### Thirteen Canons at Each Interval (2003)

17. I. Recitativo. Canon at the unison 0:43
18. II. Alla Marcia. Canon at the minor second 0:28
19. III. Comico. Inversion canon at the major second 0:51
20. IV. Sognando. Modulating canon at the minor third 0:36
21. V. Waltz Burlesque. Canon at the major third 0:37
22. VI. Agitato. Canon at the perfect fourth 1:07
23. VII. Allegro sarcastico. Canon at the tritone 0:47
24. VIII. Grave. Canon at the perfect fifth 1:07
25. IX. Scherzando. Canon at the minor sixth 0:43
26. X. Tranquillo. Canon at the major sixth 0:51
27. XI. Tumultuoso. Retrograde canon at the minor seventh 0:27
28. XII. Misterioso. Augmentation canon at the major seventh 0:49
29. XIII. Recitativo. Allegro furioso. Canon

## STEFAN WOLPE

30. **Passacaglia: Study on an All-Interval Row,  
in Conjunction with 11 Basic Rows** 14:30 (1936, rev. 1971)

## BACH/HESS

31. **Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring** (alternate take) 3:42

Playing Time: 59:03



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