

# A Note From *Bill's Desk*

McCarter

*Get a behind-the-scenes glimpse via Bill Lockwood, Director of Special Programming at McCarter, about how and why he brings phenomenal artists to our McCarter stages. This week, he spotlights upcoming performances at McCarter.*

January 26, 2022

Jennifer Koh, violin

Thomas Sauer, piano

How many artists can you name who took advantage of the opportunity presented by the pandemic to create a raft of new music? Instead of lamenting the loss of concerts when the pandemic shut down the classical music industry, violinist Jennifer Koh (February 18) took an entirely different track: she set out to add to the repertoire for her instrument by asking several established composers to create a short work for solo violin with no compensation – essentially for free. But she went one step further: she asked each candidate to nominate an emerging composer to also write a piece, for a modest commission to be paid by her Foundation, ARCO Collective. The result: a double-hit of 40 (!) new works, collectively called *Alone Together*, none longer than five minutes, and ranging in mood from contemplative to anxious and even angry. One of her “collaborators” was the pianist and composer Vijay Iyer, a major force in today’s jazz world and frequent McCarter visitor, who will be represented on her McCarter program by his *Bridgetower Fantasy*, which represents another of Koh’s programmatic scenarios in which she asked composers like Iyer to write a work exploring the relationship between the violinist and the instrument, reflecting the meaning of 21<sup>st</sup> century virtuosity. But she hasn’t neglected her classical base either, and we will also get to hear not one but a pair of Beethoven Sonatas: his first (no. 1) and his penultimate and most famous, No. 9 (the “Kreutzer”).

---

Seong-Jin Cho, piano

When you think about pianists from Asia, the first name that probably pops into your head is probably that of Lang Lang, but he is not the only keyboard superstar from the far east. In fact, South Korea’s Seong-Jin Cho (March 7<sup>th</sup>) is even more popular in his native land than his colleague from China, and his concerts sell out in minutes, as if he were a pop star. Born in 1994 in Seoul, Seong-Jin was already on my radar even before his McCarter debut in 2019, and his star has been rising ever since. As you might expect, he is a Chopin specialist after winning the Gold Medal at the 2015 Chopin Competition in Warsaw (joining a distinguished lineage including Argerich and Pollini), and his CD of the competition highlights sold an unprecedented 150,000 copies – in South Korea alone! So you might expect that his McCarter program will include a generous dose of Chopin, and it does: all four *Scherzos*. But if that isn’t in itself a sufficient challenge, the catalog of heights for pianists to scale doesn’t get much higher than Ravel’s *Gaspard de la Nuit*. And just for good measure, we’ll also get to hear something one rarely encounters on recital programs: Janacek’s only solo piano sonata which he designated as “No.1.X.1905”

## Pam Tanowitz Dance & Simone Dinnerstein, piano

When is a dance concert more than just a dance concert but also a music recital – a true collaboration between two performing arts genres. When you attend a dance performance, the music is normally recorded, and that is what you expect. There are exceptions, of course, like big ballet companies (the New York City Ballet, ABT) and Mark Morris, who has made live music a trademark. But what makes this collaboration so unique, in which a brilliant choreographer (Pam Tanowitz) and a brilliant pianist (Simone Dinnerstein) join forces (on March 11<sup>th</sup>) in a work that sent the critics exhausting their superlatives? Their *New Work for Goldberg Variations* is an evening-length creation based on Bach's keyboard masterpiece, which has long been a Dinnerstein specialty (including her best-selling 2007 CD) but played live as the pianist is surrounded by Pam Tanowitz' dancers, whose vocabulary echoes and converses with Bach's iconic score, swerving and mirroring from the music's structure in unpredictable and delightful ways. As the dancers move through space to the music, the result is an interplay of rhythm, style, and idiosyncrasy in which Tanowitz' contemporary dance forms seem to reflect *Goldberg's* musical architecture. How to describe it in one sentence? A choreographer meets Bach, and it's a perfect match in which both win – as will you in watching and listening.

—William W. Lockwood, Jr.  
Director of Special Programming

