

Bruce Levingston

Pianist Bruce Levingston has performed in prominent venues throughout the world, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden. *The New York Times* has praised his "mastery of color and nuance" and *The New Yorker* has called him "a force for new music." Levingston's solo recordings have received notable acclaim. *Heavy Sleep* was selected among *The New York Times* "Best Classical Recordings of the Year." *Gramophone* praised his "masterly" playing and *The American Record Guide* called him "a pianist's pianist." With over 30 million streams on Spotify and Apple Music, Levingston ranks as one of today's most frequently-streamed classical artists. Founder of Premiere Commission, a foundation devoted to championing living composers and their music, Levingston has frequently collaborated with many noted cultural figures including Philip Glass, Brooklyn Rider, Herman Cornejo, Michael Cunningham, Jorma Elo, Alessandra Ferri, Ethan Hawke, and Colin Jacobsen. He has also presented innovative programs in partnership with MoMA, Whitney Museum, Aspen Festival, Aspen Institute, FIAC and SFMoMA. Levingston is a longtime advocate for human, civil and animal rights. He performed to assist Soviet "refuseniks"; played at the United Nations to honor Denmark's wartime heroism and performed Sacred Spaces at the opening of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. Born in the Mississippi Delta, Levingston has been active in the preservation and support of arts and education in his home state. He authored *Bright Fields: The Mastery of Marie Hull*, a comprehensive biography of the Mississippi artist, and in 2025, established an endowment to preserve the piano, home and artifacts of William Faulkner. Levingston divides his time between Oxford, MS and New York City.



Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)
Le Sapin (The Spruce Tree), Op. 75, No. 5

If I could express the same thing with words as with music, I would, of course, use a verbal expression. Music is something autonomous and much richer. Music begins where the possibilities of language end. — Jean Sibelius. Interview with *Berlingske Tidende*, June 10, 1919. Sibelius held a lifelong love for the natural beauty of his native Finland. Nowhere is that love more tenderly expressed than in *Le Sapin*, the closing piece of his piano suite *The Trees*, Op. 75. The majestic spruce reflects the concept embodied in the Finnish word "sisu": resilient, courageous, unwavering. Beneath the music's simplicity lies a subtle grandeur; the harmony of peace that Sibelius called "the logic beneath dissonance." *Le Sapin* is an intimate love-song to Finland, a fierce, proud country that remains free and strong through its storied existence.

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)
Sonata IX, 1905, "From the Street"

With its staccato rhythms and sharply inflected gestures, Janáček's music celebrates the language and speech of the Czech people. It also embraces nature, ingeniously incorporating distinct sounds of natural life. This near-impressionistic approach finds sublime expression in his elegiac Sonata. In 1905, an unarmed worker, František Pavlík, went to the then German-dominated capital of Brno to plead for a university in his own Czech language, only to be brutally killed. Horrified by this senseless act of violence, Janáček wrote this gripping work to memorialize the tragic event. In two movements, "The Presentation" and "The Death," the impassioned score reflects the composer's deep love of Czech culture, and embodies a profound commitment to universal freedom.

Augusta Gross (b. 1945)
Solace

Born to a family of distinguished scientists and intellectuals, Augusta Gross trained and practiced as a psychologist before devoting herself solely to composition. A musician of rare interiority, her singular, probing voice reflects a searching spirit that connects deep into the psyche. Her *Solace* is both elegy and offering—composed for a friend approaching death, yet also an act of self-healing. Built from spare, lucid textures, the piece explores stillness as its own form of courage; the heart learning to rest, to breathe, to allow regeneration to begin. In its restraint and quiet resolve, *Solace* suggests that nature's strength often lies in patience—its capacity to endure, recalibrate, and continue.

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)
Étude pour les arpèges composés
Prélude: *La fille aux cheveux de lin*
Clair de lune from *Suite Bergamasque*

The quintessential French impressionist, Debussy fused music and poetry into a language of light. *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, inspired by Leconte de Lisle's verse, flows with pastoral grace—an image of innocence suspended in time. The later *Étude pour les arpèges composés*, dedicated to the memory of Chopin, is a more abstract affair. Debussy's étude transforms virtuosity into color, with scintillating arpeggios conjuring sounds of guitar and harp. The unexpected use of Spanish flavor and texture harkens back to the Scarlatti sonatas, forerunners of these exquisite pieces. *Clair de lune*, drawn from Verlaine's eponymous poem, reveals Debussy's mastery of chiasmus: light dissolving into shadow, reflection into dream. Together, these works form a triptych of transformation—line becoming texture, texture becoming atmosphere—each movement a study in transfiguration.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)
Fantasy in D minor, K. 397

Mozart's Fantasy in D minor stands at the threshold of improvisation and design. Its opening, austere and questioning, recalls the Baroque fantasies of J. S. Bach, while its intense chromaticism looks forward to the daring developments of the Romantic Age. A series of contrasting episodes unfolds with theatrical spontaneity, as if discovering form through feeling. The dramatic flourishes and restive, syncopated passages foreshadow Mozart's own Concerto in D Minor, K. 466, that so inspired Beethoven. The final Allegretto—graceful, luminous, and playfully ironic—restores balance without erasing the preceding shadows. In this music, clarity and freedom coexist: order born not from rule, but from the heart's own instinct for harmony.

Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757)
Sonata in D minor, K. 213
Sonata in A minor, K. 54

Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas are miniature marvels of invention, each a world contained within a few minutes. Composed during his years in the Iberian Peninsula, they draw upon Spanish dance rhythms, guitar sonorities, and bold harmonic turns that anticipate Chopin and Debussy. First known as *Essercizi*, these richly ornamented works represent the pinnacle of the Italian Baroque, displaying an astonishing array of innovative keyboard and compositional techniques. The inward-looking D-minor Sonata K. 213 is spare, haunting, and tinged with melancholy. The A-minor Sonata K. 54, taut, dark and brilliant, features crossed-hand patterns that flash like light on water. Together, these elegant works reveal Scarlatti's paradoxical art—virtuosity bound to restraint, exuberance tempered by poise.

Missy Mazzoli (b. 1980)
The Elastic Heart of Youth

Mazzoli's *The Elastic Heart of Youth* was commissioned to celebrate the seventy-fifth birthday of author Ron Chernow. Written in a turbulent era, this work radiates a feeling of exuberant joy and strength. Its title, drawn from Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*, evokes a similar sense of freshness and resilience heard in Sibelius' *Le Sapin*. In this sparkling music, Mazzoli interlaces classical clarity with futuristic rhythms: the propulsive *moto perpetuo* outer sections frame an exultant dance of shifting meters and radiant harmonies. The work closes in a swirling constellation of notes that dissolve midair, a final, playful gesture of motion and release—and vivid affirmation that, in music as in nature, vitality endures through change.

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Executive Producer - Collin J. Rae
Piano Technician - Brandon Lewis
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