



# JENNY LIN

## GLASS REFLECTIONS

ANNENBERG CENTER DEBUT // #GLASSFEST

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### PROGRAM

*Étude No. 1*  
*Étude No. 1 Pour les cinq doigts*

Philip Glass  
Claude Debussy

*Étude No. 6*  
*Études-Tableaux Op.33 No.4 in D Minor*

Philip Glass  
Sergei Rachmaninoff

*Étude No. 2*  
*Étude transcendante No. 11 "Harmonies du soir"*

Philip Glass  
Franz Liszt

*Étude No. 13*  
*Étude No. 1 "Désordre" (1985)*

Philip Glass  
György Ligeti

### INTERMISSION

*Mad Rush*  
*Impromptu No. 3 in G-flat major*

Philip Glass  
Franz Schubert

*Distant Figure (Passacaglia for Solo Piano)*  
*Prelude and Fugue Op. 87 No. 24 in D-minor*

Philip Glass  
Dmitri Shostakovich

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**Thursday, March 5 @ 7:30 PM**

Egypt Upper Gallery, Penn Museum

**The Philadelphia Inquirer**

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The Philadelphia Inquirer.

## PROGRAM NOTES

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### **Philip Glass' Piano Études and Other Works for Solo Piano**

Philip Glass is perhaps the most famous American composer since Aaron Copland, having garnered three Academy Award nominations for films such as *The Hours* and *Notes on a Scandal* and recently being awarded the Glenn Gould Prize, Japan's Praemium Imperiale, the National Medal of Arts and 2018 Kennedy Center Honors. Glass is also one of the more prolific composers of our time, creating 25 operas, 11 symphonies, 13 concertos, eight string quartets, 35 film scores and all sorts of unclassifiable theatre works, over a period of two decades. Glass also created two volumes of piano works containing some of his most intimate and personal music.

Glass composed his first set of 10 études for himself with a dual purpose: a pedagogical intent to make him a better pianist, but also to create repertoire for his concerts as a touring pianist. His second volume of 10 piano études are, for the most part, pieces written beyond his ability as a pianist. Enter pianists like Jenny Lin.

Glass closely guarded this music, keeping it just for himself and not publishing it, but starting in 2012, he started to perform concerts of the complete set of 20 études with full-time, professional pianists. The music itself wasn't published until 2014, and in the past five years, Lin has performed this music with Glass on tour in some of the world's most prestigious concert halls including a recent performance at the Kennedy Center. She is one of the very small group of pianists from various musical backgrounds that Glass chose to tour with to bring different sensibilities to the music.

Lin, a Steinway Artist, recorded the complete set of twenty études and released it this past year on the Steinway & Sons label with the composer's blessing, having almost unequalled proximity to the composer. In this context, Lin represents the performance tradition of the Central European masters and the 20th Century virtuoso tradition bringing a technical brilliance and facility to Glass's lyrical and rhythmically demanding music.

### **Glass/Ligeti**

Rounding out the first half of tonight's program is music by two very different composers, Philip Glass and György Ligeti. With these pieces, an immediate association is made: the clarity of juxtaposing this orderly music with disorderly music. Or at least that is the first impression.

Glass (b.1937) composed his two volumes of piano études between the years 1994 and 2012. The first volume, from which two of tonight's pieces were chosen, consists of generally easier piano pieces meant to improve the composer's own abilities as a pianist and serve as repertoire for his touring concerts at the piano. However, the inherent pianism of the works leaves great room for a professional pianist such as Lin to interpret.

Glass's études have become, along with Ligeti's, perhaps the two most performed and revered modern collections for the instrument. While with Glass' *Étude No. 1* you will hear solid chord sequences, with a theme played by the right hand, then transferred to the left, over an established unwavering chord pattern (within Glass' well-known sound and style,) the first étude by Ligeti gives the listener nothing of the sort.

Composed between 1985 and 2001, György Ligeti (1923-2006) composed 18 études for piano split into three volumes. The three volumes stand as a modern Mount Everest of piano technique. At less than half the length of Glass' first étude, Ligeti's first étude is called *Désordre* (disorder) and frantically rips through hundreds of notes per minute. In any split second, the listener may think they are hearing jazz, high modernism. While it is called "disorder," it is nothing but. Ligeti cleverly disguises all the music in brilliant technique creating an illusion. In truth, the piece is the controlled fury of a nuclear explosion. The cleanliness and order set up in Glass' work is destroyed by the unrepentant magical anarchy that Ligeti creates.

### **Glass/Shostakovich**

*Distant Figure* (*Passacaglia for Solo Piano*) (2017) is Philip Glass' latest work for solo piano and his first piece in five years since his *Étude No. 20* in 2012. The piece can be thought of as the second

half of a diptych with *Mad Rush* from 1979. Glass' music up to that time had possessed a quality of musical elements turned on their heads: background being foreground and music which sounded fast with millions of swirling arpeggios was actually very slow process music. All this permitted the architecture of the piece to appear in a different time space than was conventional.

A passacaglia is nothing more than an old musical form and name of a street dance. It is most simply understood as a piece in triple meter, like 3/4 for example, with a repeated ground bass over which variations are composed. *Distant Figure* started as a short piano piece Glass composed for the retirement party of the head of Nonesuch Records, Robert Hurwitz, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. On that same program, frequent Nonesuch artist and Glass collaborator Kronos Quartet was performing and was preparing to ask Glass for a contribution to their "50 for the Future" project. Kronos Quartet liked the piece very much and Glass obliged and adapted the piece, with some re-composition, for the medium of string quartet, giving it the name *Quartet Satz*. Oddly, after spending so much time with the material, more than usual, Glass began to feel as if the work had more to say in a different form and set about creating a much larger piano work of double the length.

*Distant Figure (Passacaglia for Solo Piano)* is a pure piano piece. After a tranquil opening, it boils over into passages of arpeggios and scales which are purely pianistic. The inherent emotionalism of the piece, that wonderful kind of Glass music where melancholy meets conviction, is the commonality with *Mad Rush*. The difference lies in *Mad Rush* being a piece without time, something of that internal engine of the universe which keeps on going even after the music stops, whereas *Distant Figure* is a terrestrial creation, a late-piece which very much represents acceptance at the end of a journey.

The finality of this end of a journey connects with Shostakovich's *Prelude and Fugue No. 24* from Op. 87 written in 1950/51. With Bach as his spiritual model and his *Well-Tempered Clavier* as a literal model, Shostakovich set about composing a prelude and fugue for each major and minor key of the chromatic scale. While this is a purely musical composition, Shostakovich was inherently a dramatist (as most great composers are) despite being pushed out of opera by Stalin. Without doubt, Shostakovich envisioned complete performances of his opus 87 preludes and fugues, and purposefully gave them a musical trajectory. So, it is no mistake that Shostakovich ended his cycle with a prelude and fugue in D minor. D minor is the key of so many great masterpieces of farewell and finality including Beethoven and Mahler's ninth symphonies, and, more relevantly, it's the key of the final fugue from Bach's *Art of the Fugue*. The connection from Glass, who was himself a master student in the music of Bach with three years of intense study with Nadia Boulanger in France, to Shostakovich, perhaps the last greatest composer of the 20th century, serves as a brilliant punctuation to this program.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

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### Jenny Lin

Lin is one of the most respected young pianists today, admired for her adventurous programming and charismatic stage presence. She has been acclaimed for her "remarkable technical command" and "gift for melodic flow" by *The New York Times*. *The Washington Post* praises "Lin's confident fingers... spectacular technique" and notes she is "surely one of the most interesting pianists in America right now." *Gramophone* has hailed her as "an exceptionally sensitive pianist." Her orchestral engagements have included the American Symphony Orchestra, NDR and SWR German Radio orchestras, and Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI. Her concerts have taken her to Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center's Great Performers, SFJAZZ Center, MoMA, Stanford Live and National Gallery of Art, appearing at festivals such as Mostly Mozart, Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival, Spoleto Festival USA, Kings Place, Chopin Festival and Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival.

Since 2000, Lin's discography includes more than 30 recordings on Steinway & Sons, Hänssler Classic, eOne, BIS, New World and Albany Records. She is also the central figure in *Cooking for Jenny* by Elemental Films, a musical documentary portraying her journey to Spain. Other media appearances include CBS Sunday Morning, NPR's Performance Today and *Speaking for Myself*, a film

about Manhattan as seen through the eyes of eight contemporary artists by filmmaker Bert Shapiro. Born in Taiwan and raised in Austria, Lin studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna, the Peabody Institute in Baltimore and the Fondazione Internazionale per il pianoforte in Como, Italy. She holds a bachelor's degree in German literature from The Johns Hopkins University.

Highlights of her 2019/20 season include performances throughout North America and Europe; continuing "Melody's Mostly Musical Day" children's concerts; the release of the complete piano music of Artur Schnabel, *The Études Project Volume One* and music of Philip Glass. Since 2014, she has joined Glass in his ongoing world tour of his études. Lin is a Steinway Artist.



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