

Jeanne Golan www.jeannegolan.com

With *American Hand Stands*, pianist Jeanne Golan continues her active involvement in the fostering of works by new composers and discovering relatively unknown musical treasures. Described by the *New York Times* as "technically polished and superbly expressive" and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as having the "gift and ability to clarify the core of music," Ms. Golan has performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe. She has worked with the Philip Glass Ensemble and been featured on such contemporary series as the Brooklyn Philharmonic Chamber Players, Theodore Wiprud Productions, Cantori New York, MATA and the Lark, Caviari and Cassatt Quartets. As part of her diverse work with singers, the recent CD release of *Innocence Lost: The Berg/Debussy Project* presents ten of today's leading composers writing response songs for her and Mary Nessinger. As a soloist, her appearances include the American Symphony Orchestra.



Photo: Christian Steiner



Photo: Peter Schaafl

Ms. Golan earned her Masters and Doctorate from the Eastman School of Music and her BA from Yale University. She's a professor at SUNY/Nassau, where she has received the Distinguished Faculty and SUNY Chancellor's Awards, and has a studio in Manhattan. Other solo and collaborative CDs appear under the Albany, Artsis, Capstone and Newport Classic labels.

Pianist **Christopher Oldfather's** eclectic career on all keyboard instruments has taken him as far as Moscow and Tokyo. The New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, MET Chamber Players and Ensemble Moderne in Germany have all presented him as soloist, and he is a longtime member of Boston's acclaimed Collage New Music ensemble.



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Jeanne Golan, piano
with Christopher Oldfather

American Handstands

Works by
COMPOSER-PIANISTS

Del Tredici, Moe, Cipullo and Ornstein

American Handstands

Piano Music of Del Tredici, Moe, Cipullo and Ornstein

Pianists are a singular lot. They grow up with a wealth of music at their fingertips that celebrates the expansiveness, the color and dynamic range as well as the pedaling possibilities that the instrument developed through the 18th and 19th centuries. That the inherent richness of the instrument allows for a solo repertoire unlike any other makes for a private affair; the pianist synthesizes his relationship with music and instrument alike in the act of playing.

The great romantic repertoire is the stuff of childhood dreams. Written by composers who were accomplished pianists, these scores are hands-on (!) sound-narratives that capture sights, stories and emotional states, with the composer's tangible, physical presence as the basis for the specific pianism. To play Brahms is to understand how his body must have moved as he went through his *Intermezzo*. The young Brahms would look to Beethoven in a similar guise, as the young Beethoven would look to Handel.

With this legacy, it's not surprising that today's composer-pianists approach writing for their instrument through sweeping physical gesture and musical language that harkens to the Romantics. That this source of inspiration might swim against the tide of what had been currently in vogue speaks to the daring of such a calling.

In this regard, linking David Del Tredici, Eric Moe, Tom Cipullo and Leo Ornstein on this disc is especially intriguing to me. All are American composer-pianists

who understand and write beautifully for the piano. Whether the pieces are tonal or not, polyrhythmic or polyphonic, they are both accessible and provocative, together making a collection that ranges from the virtuosic to the introspective.

The Del Tredici, Moe and Cipullo works, all written within the last 10 years, may be considered neo-romantic, a movement that Del Tredici spearheaded in the 1970's. As these men share each other's friendship in life, so their pieces make apt companions. The three derive obvious inspiration from or pay homage to past masters, though the results are as varied as their personae. Each composer maintains his boyhood passion for playing the piano and can be heard regularly in concert.

Pulitzer Prize winner David Del Tredici's "gym-work" is modeled after Erik Satie's set of three pieces, each referencing someone or something close to him. He describes a *gymnopedie* as "a slow, solemn dance in three-quarter time, evocative of ancient Greece." For *My Goldberg*, he was drawn to make the stepwise, descending bassline of Bach's Goldberg Variations theme the foundation of this bittersweet movement, saving a brief quote of the lovely soprano melody for the very end. *My Re* is a harp-like delicate dance in C major named for the two-bar phrases that always end on the note D (re), and dedicated to his life-partner, Ray Warman. Del Tredici alludes to a Wagnerian love-motive at its most tender moment before the coda. *My Loss* is an *in memoriam* for his dear teacher and

friend, Robert Helps. It's not so much a dance as a dirge, with the various episodes eliciting different states of grief. Exploring the interval of the perfect fifth, melodic lines spaced two octaves apart are alternately supported or disturbed by bass chords of surprising dissonance, much like a Greek chorus. Tonality barely enters the picture until the coda and, with it, the arrival of G-sharp minor and its poignant conclusion.

Eric Moe is a composer of what the *New York Times* calls "music of winning exuberance." That he had spent time practicing on my lovely Steinway O shortly before conceiving *Legend of the Sad Triad* seems palpable to me in the ballad's sound. *Legend* is a tone-poem of sorts, built on a sound-world of simultaneously-heard triads located a half-step apart. As it unfolds, it travels between agitation and intimacy. Moe describes this work as one that "consciously follows in the footsteps of the great Romantic composers. A quotation from Brahms' *Horn Trio* is found near the geographical and musical heart of the piece." The title comes from a Samuel Goldwyn remark after hearing a 1940's film score, banishing "sad triads" (minor chords) from his movie soundtracks.

Tom Cipullo is widely known for his art songs, which *The New York Times* called "haunting," and *The Boston Globe* "literally sparkled with wit." His *Meditations* are vocal in essence, with beautiful melodic lines that hover and soar in an eerie realm of luscious bi-tonality. Water Lilies was first imagined in front of the Monet painting which Cipullo apparently spent hours absorbing while trying to escape an unbearably hot, humid July day. The experience put him in a "sadistic" mood, which he vented by "concocting textures that were seemingly at odds with the initial directions—*presto possibile, sempre legghiemente, non forte sempre*. Thus ascending

octave scale passages abound, as do complex arpeggio figures marked "floating." Both impressionistic and jazzy, its clusters are largely consonant while the constantly changing meter gives the piece an edge.

Leo Ornstein's remarkable life, spanning three centuries and 80 years of composition, is finally enjoying a long overdue revival. His father a cantor, Ornstein at 10 years old was discovered by Josef Hoffman to be a piano prodigy. Destined to become one of the great virtuosi of the 20th century, he was immediately enrolled at the Petrograd Conservatory. He continued his studies at the old Juilliard School after the family fled to America and settled in New York City's Lower East Side. Despite such severe classical training, Ornstein's early radical works took himself by surprise as much as they scandalized the concert-goer. The London Standard declared that "M. Schoenberg and M. Scriabine are poor futurists next to M. Ornstein." With this reputation, his later choice to fold Russian Romanticism and modality back into his musical palette was seen as a betrayal by much of the avant-garde.

Ornstein's *Sonata for Two Pianos* heralded this change in his composing. It is the two-piano version by the composer of his 1925 *Piano Concerto*, which he premiered with Leopold Stokowski conducting The Philadelphia Orchestra shortly before Ornstein gave up all public performance. Upon hearing it, Olin Downes in the *New York Times* wrote "So organic, so powerful and in many places so beautiful... [it] should be heard again and soon." This commanding and sonorous work is a dazzling amalgam of sweeping romanticism and 1920's modernism. It has rarely been performed in either version since it's conception.

—Program Notes © Jeanne Golan

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Jeanne Golan • American Handstands • Works by Del Tredici, Moe, Cipullo & Ornstein

American Handstands

Works by Del Tredici, Moe, Cipullo & Ornstein

Jeanne Golan, pianist

Sonata for Two Pianos, Ornstein
The two performers complemented each other perfectly. Oldfather excelled in the sonata's more neurotic moments, and I thought smoke might actually start coming out of his ears during the almost unbearably aggressive finale. Golan played with similar energy but seemed more intent on bringing out the music's lyricism. Together, they gave us everything the music had to offer.

-Boston Herald

WITH GRATITUDE TO THE ORNSTEIN FAMILY.

TRACK TIME

David Del Tredici [b 1937] *Three Gymnopedies (2003)*

- 1 No. 1 - My Goldberg 3:54
- 2 No. 2 - My Re 4:50
- 3 No. 3 - My Loss 8:30

Eric Moe [b 1954] *Ballade: Legend of the Sad Triad (2004)**

- 4 10:15

Tom Cipullo [b 1957] *Two Meditations (2006-08)**

- 5 No. 1 13:45
- 6 No. 2 3:47

Tom Cipullo *Water Lilies (1995)**

- 7 7:26

Leo Ornstein [1892-2002] *Sonata for Two Pianos, Op. 89 (1925)*

- (Adapted by the composer from the Piano Concerto)
- 8 Con moto- Allegro, ma non troppo 17:52
- 9 Andante 8:23
- 10 Finale: Allegro 10:42

with Christopher Oldfather, pianist

Total time: **78:54**

*World-premiere recordings *Written for Ms. Golan*

PRODUCED BY CHRISTOPHER OLDFATHER, TOM CIPULLO, AND JEANNE GOLAN
RECORDED, EDITED AND MASTERED BY JOEL GORDON
RECORDED AT MECHANICS HALL, WORCESTER, MA, JULY 14 & 15, 2008 | ©2009 JEANNE GOLAN
LINER NOTES: JEANNE GOLAN | DESIGN: FASSINO/DESIGN | PRINTED IN USA



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