

Sunday, November 9, 2025

CLAYTON STEPHENSON, PIANO

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (1723)

J.S. Bach (1685–1750), arr. Myra Hess

Impromptus, Op. 90, D. 899 (1827)

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

- I. Allegro molto moderato
- II. Allegro
- III. Andante
- IV. Allegretto

INTERMISSION

Trois mouvements de Petrouchka (1921)

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

- I. Danse russe
- II. Chez Pétrouchka
- III. La semaine grasse

Iberia, Book 1 (1905)

Isaac Albéniz (1860–1909)

- I. Evocación
- II. El Puerto
- III. Fête-dieu à Séville

Rhapsody in Blue (1924)

George Gershwin (1898–1937)

This program is performed in memory of Willona Sinclair.

ISABELLA
SEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM

NOTE FROM THE CURATOR

Only recently graduated from Harvard and the New England Conservatory, pianist Clayton Stephenson is already making a splash. We are thrilled to welcome him to Calderwood Hall so early in his ascent to stardom. I am particularly looking forward to hearing him tackle Albéniz's glittering and atmospheric *Iberia* and Stravinsky's blazing *Petrouchka* movements. *Petrouchka* began in Stravinsky's mind as a piano concerto; these three virtuoso showpieces make clear what he had envisioned.

—George Steel, *Abrams Curator of Music*

ABOUT THE ARTIST

American pianist **Clayton Stephenson's** love for music is immediately apparent in his joyous charisma onstage, expressive power, and natural ease at the instrument.

Hailed for "extraordinary narrative and poetic gifts" and interpretations that are "fresh, incisive and characterfully alive" (*Gramophone*), he is committed to making an impact on the world through his music-making.

Growing up in New York City, Clayton started piano lessons at age 7, and the next year was accepted into the Julliard School's Music Advancement Program—a full scholarship program for disadvantaged students—where he lingered to watch student recitals and fell in love with music. Clayton practiced on a synthesizer at home until he found an old upright piano on the street. For the next six years that would be his practice piano, until, at the age of 17, he received a new piano from the Lang Lang Foundation.

He credits the generous support of community programs with providing him musical inspiration and resources along the way. As he describes it, the "Third Street Music School jump-started my music

education; the Young People's Choir taught me phrasing and voicing; Juilliard's Music Advancement Program introduced me to formal and rigorous piano training, which enabled me to get into Juilliard Pre-College; the Morningside Music Bridge validated my talent and elevated my self-confidence; the Boys' Club of New York exposed me to jazz; and the Lang Lang Foundation brought me to stages worldwide and transformed me from a piano student to a young artist."

Highlights of his 2025–26 season include a performance of the Brahms Concerto No. 2 with the Cincinnati Orchestra and performances of Gershwin's Concerto in F with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Saratoga Arts Festival, Festival Internazionale Palermo (Italy), Boston Pops, and Sarasota Orchestra. He will play the Ravel Concerto in G major with the Nashville and Portland (Maine) symphonies as well as the Stuttgart Philharmonic (Germany). In addition he gives recitals at the Jacobins Festival (Toulouse, France), Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (Boston), and Crystal Bridges Museum (Arkansas). Clayton finishes his season in spring 2026 on tour with the Stuttgart Philharmonic in Italy.

Recent seasons have included concerto performances with the Houston, North Carolina, Virginia, and Cincinnati symphonies; festival appearances at Grand Teton, Grant Park, and Tippet Rise Art Center; recitals at the Kennedy Center for Washington Performing Arts and the 92nd Street Y in New York City; and gala performances with the New York and Las Vegas philharmonics. He also served as the 2024–25 Artist-in-Residence at the Hartford Symphony.

Clayton graduated from the Harvard-New England Conservatory (NEC) dual degree program in spring 2023 with a BA in economics from Harvard and a master's degree in piano performance from NEC under Wha Kyung Byun. In addition to being the first Black finalist at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2022, he has been a recipient of a 2024 Avery Fisher Career Grant, won the inaugural Nina Simone Piano Competition in 2023, and received a Sphinx Medal of Excellence in 2025.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES:

**SASHA COOKE, MEZZO-SOPRANO
WITH MYRA HUANG, PIANO**
Sunday, November 16

MICHELLE CANN, PIANO
Sunday, November 23

HOLIDAY MUSIC IN THE COURTYARD
Wednesday, December 3, at 7 PM

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum resides on the homelands of the Massachusetts Tribe, who belong to this place and continue to regard these lands and waters as sacred.

Music at the Gardner is supported by Nora McNeely Hurley / Manitou Fund. The Museum thanks its generous concert donors: The Coogan Concert in memory of Peter Weston Coogan; Fitzpatrick Family Concert; James Lawrence Memorial Concert; Alford P. Rudnick Memorial Concert; David Scudder in memory of his wife, Marie Louise Scudder; Wendy Shattuck Young Artist Concert; and Willona Sinclair Memorial Concert. The piano is dedicated as the Alex d'Arbeloff Steinway. The harpsichord was generously donated by Dr. Robert Barstow in memory of Marion Huse, and its care is endowed in memory of Dr. Barstow by The Barstow Fund. Music at the Gardner is also supported in part by Barbara and Amos Hostetter, Nicie and Jay Panetta, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which is supported by the state of Massachusetts and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Kindly turn off all electronic devices during the concert and refrain from any photography or filming in the hall. Also, please note the location of the emergency exit doors: across the hall from the doors through which you entered.