

Jonathan Biss - 2016-17 long biography (853 words)

Jonathan Biss is a world-renowned pianist who shares his deep musical curiosity with classical music lovers in the concert hall and beyond. Over nearly two decades on the concert stage, he has forged relationships with the New York Philharmonic; the Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Philharmonia orchestras; the Boston, Chicago, and Swedish Radio symphony orchestras; and the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Budapest Festival, and Royal Concertgebouw orchestras, among many others. In addition to performing a full schedule of concerts, the 36-year-old American has spent ten summers at the Marlboro Music Festival and has written extensively about his relationships with the composers with whom he shares a stage. A member of the faculty of his alma mater the Curtis Institute of Music since 2010, Biss led the first massive open online course (MOOC) offered by a classical music conservatory, *Exploring Beethoven's Piano Sonatas*, which has reached more than 150,000 people in 185 countries.

This season Biss continues his latest Beethoven project, *Beethoven/5*, for which the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra is co-commissioning five composers to write new piano concertos, each inspired by one of Beethoven's. The five-year plan began last season, with Biss premiering Timo Andres's "The Blind Banister," which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Music, and which Biss plays with the New York Philharmonic in the spring of 2017. This season he premieres Sally Beamish's concerto, paired with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1, with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, before performing it with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. In the next three years Biss will premiere concertos by Salvatore Sciarrino, Caroline Shaw, and Brett Dean.

In addition to his involvement at Marlboro, Biss spends the summer of 2016 as the Artist-in-Residence at the Caramoor Center, where he performs chamber music, a solo recital, and the Andres and Beethoven concerto pair with the Orchestra of St. Luke's. He also gives recitals at the Aspen and Ravinia summer music festivals as part of his ongoing concert cycles to perform all the Beethoven sonatas.

In 2016-17 he begins examining, both in performance and academically, the concept of a composer's "late style," and has put together programs of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Britten, Elgar, Gesualdo, Kurtág, Mozart, Schubert, and

Schumann's later works, both for solo piano and in collaboration with the Brentano Quartet and Mark Padmore, which he will play at Carnegie Hall, San Francisco Performances, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, London's Barbican Centre, and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw. A previous Biss initiative, *Schumann: Under the Influence*, was a 30-concert exploration of the composer's role in musical history, for which he also recorded Schumann and Dvořák Piano Quintets with the Elias String Quartet and wrote an Amazon Kindle Single on Schumann, *A Pianist Under the Influence*. This season Biss also gives masterclasses at Carnegie Hall in connection with the idea of late style and publishes a Kindle Single on the topic in January.

Biss has embarked on a nine-year, nine-disc recording cycle of Beethoven's complete piano sonatas, and in early 2017 he releases the sixth volume, which includes the monumental "Hammerklavier" sonata. Upon the release of the fourth volume, *BBC Music Magazine* said, "Jonathan Biss will surely take his place among the greats if he continues on this exalted plane." His bestselling eBook, *Beethoven's Shadow*, published by RosettaBooks in 2011, was the first Kindle Single written by a classical musician, and he will continue to add lectures to his extraordinarily popular online course, *Exploring Beethoven's Piano Sonatas*, until he covers all of them.

Throughout his career, Biss has been an advocate for new music. Prior to the *Beethoven/5* project, he commissioned *Lunaire Variations* by David Ludwig, *Interlude II* by Leon Kirchner, *Wonderer* by Lewis Spratlan, and *Three Pieces for Piano* and a concerto by Bernard Rands, which he premiered with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has also premiered a piano quintet by William Bolcom.

Biss represents the third generation in a family of professional musicians that includes his grandmother Raya Garbousova, one of the first well-known female cellists (for whom Samuel Barber composed his Cello Concerto), and his parents, violinist Miriam Fried and violist/violinist Paul Biss. Growing up surrounded by music, Biss began his piano studies at age six, and his first musical collaborations were with his mother and father. He studied at Indiana University with Evelyne Brancart and at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia with Leon Fleisher. At age 20, Biss made his New York recital debut at the 92nd Street Y's Tisch Center for the Arts and his New York Philharmonic debut under Kurt Masur.

Biss has been recognized with numerous honors, including the Leonard Bernstein Award presented at the 2005 Schleswig-Holstein Festival, Wolf Trap's

Shouse Debut Artist Award, the Andrew Wolf Memorial Chamber Music Award, Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, the 2003 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award, and the 2002 Gilmore Young Artist Award. His recent albums for EMI won Diapason d'Or de l'année and Edison awards. He was an artist-in-residence on American Public Media's *Performance Today* and was the first American chosen to participate in the BBC's New Generation Artist program.

For more information, please visit www.jonathanbiss.com.

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