



Pianist Yael Weiss brings her *32 Bright Clouds* project, featuring two World Premieres, back to D.C. on March 19 at the National Museum of Asian Art

The project pairs Beethoven sonatas with newly commissioned works by composers from countries where conflict and instability create challenges for artists, including Afghanistan, South Africa, Iran, and Syria

With her ongoing project *32 Bright Clouds: Beethoven Conversations Around the World*, pianist **Yael Weiss** seeks to respond to current social and political environments in the U.S. and worldwide by harnessing music's ability to convey messages of unity and peace. The project pairs Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas with 32 newly commissioned short piano pieces from 32 composers in 32 different countries spanning the globe. On **March 19, 2020 at 7:30pm**, Weiss will present six commissions from *32 Bright Clouds* at the **National Museum of Asian Art's Meyer Auditorium**, introducing two World Premieres by composers from Afghanistan and South Africa. There will be a pre-concert talk at 7pm with Weiss and composer **Malek Jandali** of Syria. Tickets are \$6 in advance at [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com); remaining tickets are distributed free of charge at Meyer Auditorium beginning one hour before the performance. This recital is presented in celebration of Beethoven's 250th anniversary and in conjunction with the museum's ongoing exhibition *Age Old Cities: A Virtual Journey from Palmyra to Mosul*.

On **March 21, 2020 at 2pm**, also at Meyer Auditorium, Weiss and three of the commissioned composers—**Milad Yousufi** (Afghanistan), **Sidney Boquiren** (Philippines), and Jandali—will engage in a discussion and demonstration of their new music and its links to contemporary issues in their respective countries.

At the March 19 recital, Weiss will give the world premieres of pieces by Yousufi and **Bongani Ndodana-Breen** (South Africa). Ndodana-Breen's piece, *Isiko: An African Ritual for Ancestral Intercession*, connects with Beethoven's Sonata No. 29 in B-flat Major, Op. 106, "Hammerklavier." It is dedicated to Uyinene Mrwetyana and other victims of femicide in South Africa. Yousufi's piece, *Willow*, is inspired by Beethoven's Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13, "Pathetique." It is dedicated to Yousufi's mother and family, and to all Afghan refugees who have suffered under Taliban rule. In addition to the musical score, Yousufi's composition includes a corresponding poem and a painting.

Also on the program are four previously performed *32 Bright Clouds* commissions: *The Hunt for Peace* by Jandali; *Après...* by Aida Shirazi (Iran); *Unheard Voices* by Sidney Boquiren; and *Ninni (Lullaby)* by Aslihan Keçebaşoğlu (Turkey). Interspersed throughout are selected movements from the Beethoven sonatas that inspired the new commissions, including the "Pathetique," and a complete performance of Beethoven's Sonata No. 28 in A Major, Op 101. See full program information below.

32 *Bright Clouds* engages composers hailing from countries of conflict and unrest, celebrating the wealth and richness of the creative spirit everywhere. Each of the new compositions responds to material from a specific Beethoven Sonata, while also offering an expression of the composer's local musical language. Many of the composers have chosen to dedicate their pieces to a specific cause that holds particular significance in their country. A single "peace" motif from the final section of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* appears in every composition, creating a cohesive cycle of works. The motif was selected because of Beethoven's compelling inscription "A Call for Inward and Outward Peace" above the notes, which expresses the overall essence, purpose, and character of 32 *Bright Clouds*.

Full program:

Beethoven: Sonata no. 7 in D Major, Op. 10 No. 3; Presto

Sidney Marquez Boquiren (Philippines, b. 1970): Unheard Voices (2018)

Milad Yousufi (Afghanistan, b. 1995): Willow (2020, World Premiere)

Beethoven: Sonata no. 8 in c minor, Op. 13 "Pathetique"; Rondo: Allegro

Aida Shirazi (Iran, b. 1987): Après... (2018)

Malek Jandali (Syria, b. 1972): The Hunt for Peace (2018)

Intermission

Bongani Ndodana-Breen (South Africa, b. 1975): Isiko: An African Ritual for Ancestral Intercession (2019, World Premiere)

Aslihan Keçebasoglu (Turkey, b. 1994): Ninni (2019)

Beethoven: Sonata no. 28 in A Major, Op. 101 (Complete)

About Yael Weiss

A captivating presence on the concert scene, award-winning Israeli-American pianist Yael Weiss has been hailed by many of today's greatest musicians and critics for visionary interpretations of surpassing depth, immediacy and communicative power. Following a recent recital, the *Washington Post* portrayed her as "a pianist who delves deeply and tellingly into that cloudy area where fantasy morphs into improvisation, inventiveness being common to both."

Ms. Weiss has performed across the United States, Europe, Japan, Korea, New Zealand and South America at such venues as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, Benaroya Hall, Moscow's Bolshoi Hall and London's Wigmore Hall. Ms. Weiss has appeared as soloist with many international orchestras, including the Prague Chamber Orchestra, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony, Santa Fe Symphony, Israel Chamber Orchestra, and the Brazil National Symphony, to name a few.

A significant part of Ms. Weiss's current touring schedule is devoted to her international commissioning and performance project, "32 Bright Clouds: Beethoven Conversations Around the World". This groundbreaking endeavor brings together composers from 32 countries of conflict and unrest throughout the world, joined together in sending a message of oneness and peace. Each new composition is inspired by one of Beethoven's 32 Piano Sonatas, and the entire cycle of new works is unified by a single "peace motif" from Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. This season Ms. Weiss is presenting "32 Bright Clouds" recitals in Korea, Cuba, Austria, Canada and in venues throughout the US.

Weiss's discography encompasses piano and chamber works by over a dozen composers for the Koch International Classics and Bridge Records labels. Her CD releases include: "Robert Schumann: Piano Works", "88 Keys to Joy" — a curated collection of piano pieces, "An American Tour" featuring world premiere recordings of piano trios by Auerbach, Chen Yi and Schoenfeld, and CDs with premieres of works by Ler Dahl, Chihara and Lansky.

Ms. Weiss tours worldwide with violinist Mark Kaplan and cellist Peter Stumpf as the *Weiss-Kaplan-Stumpf Trio*. Their recordings of complete Beethoven Piano Trios will be released in the fall of 2020 on Bridge Records.

Connecting with new audiences online, Ms. Weiss created and recorded “Classical Minutes”, a popular series of daily podcasts available on iTunes. Born in Israel, she currently makes her home in New York City.

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