

## **DUO Stephanie and Saar** **Stephanie Ho and Saar Ahuvia, pianists**

Pianists Stephanie Ho and Saar Ahuvia collaborate as **DUO Stephanie and Saar** in performances noted for their artistic versatility, elegance and intellectual curiosity.

To launch the 2015-16 season, the duo's performance at the Sarajevo Chamber Music Festival featured George Crumb's dazzling *Celestial Mechanics* for amplified piano and other cutting-edge American works to international acclaim by Radio Sarajevo. "Stephanie and Saar's last night's performance once again recalled all the epithets of elegant and innovative, that have been following them throughout their career."

In celebration of György Kurtág's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, DUO Stephanie and Saar is touring with "Hommage à J.S.B.", a program that features Kurtág's *Játékok* alongside selections from Bach's *Art of Fugue*. The current season also features the daring four hand transcription of Ludwig van Beethoven's Quartet in C Major, Op. 59 No. 3 "Razumovsky," part of the duo's ongoing project to perform and record the complete Beethoven string quartets.

Recent performances include Mozart's Concerto for Two Pianos, K. 365 with Musikkreis Horgen (Switzerland), *PianoForte Salon Live* on Chicago's WFMT 98.7, Dranoff 2 Piano Foundation's "Film Goes Classical: A 2 Piano Celebration of the Movies" at Miami's Coral Gables Arts Cinema and a live concert on All Classical Portland's *Thursdays @ Three*.

As probing recording artists, the duo explores repertoire with concomitant classical and contemporary sensibilities. *Beethoven Dialogues*, their 2014 album featuring Beethoven Quartets Op. 18 Nos. 1, 4 and 6 in rarely heard four hand arrangements, was performed in its entirety at New York City's *(le) poisson rouge* and chosen as *Album of the Week* on WQXR. *Bach Crossings*, the duo's 2012 album featuring György Kurtág's illuminating transcriptions of Bach, continues to receive acclaim. *International Piano Magazine* states, "It is clear from the precision and elegant phrasing on this disc that this is a tight partnership between pianists who have developed an implicit understanding of each other's musicality." The *New York Times* praised their "beautifully understated performances" of selections from the disc.

Highlights from their eclectic programming include a jazz-inspired concert at the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center featuring the world premiere of *Fantasia de Très Mondos* by Cuban-American jazz pianist Martin Bejerano. In celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Igor Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, DUO Stephanie and Saar toured *Rite* in four-hand, two-piano and mixed ensemble arrangements. Multiple collaborations with Michael Linville and the New World Symphony Percussion Consort featured Linville's own arrangement of Igor Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* and André Boucourechliev's aleatoric fantasy piece *Archipel I*. The duo takes special pride in a performance at the residence of the United States Ambassador in Berlin, Germany, featuring works by Henry Martin (US), Avner Dorman (Israel) and Felix Mendelssohn.

DUO Stephanie and Saar are the artistic directors of *Makrokosmos Project*, a new music festival in Portland, Oregon dedicated to American music and performances by Oregon-based performers and composers. The 2015 inaugural festival featured standing-room performances of George Crumb's *Makrokosmos I & II* and music by Kenji Bunch and David Crumb. Oregon Arts Watch frankly states "It was one of 2015's peak Oregon musical moments."

While pursuing graduate studies at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, Stephanie and Saar were inspired by Leon Fleisher to explore the Beethoven string quartets in a duo piano setting. Saar Ahuvia, a native of Israel, studied at Israel's Tel Aviv Academy and Switzerland's Schaufhausen Conservatory before coming to the United States to pursue a Graduate Performance Diploma with Leon Fleisher at Peabody Institute. Stephanie Ho, of Taiwanese descent, grew up in Portland, Oregon before obtaining degrees from Oberlin College and Northwestern University. She received a Graduate Performance Diploma from Peabody Institute, under the direction of Julian Martin.

Stephanie and Saar, who are married to each other, reside in New York City.