



# piano pieces

Gary Goldschneider

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Steinway Piano

Gary Goldschneider – composer, pianist, producer

Stefka Majdrakova – tonmeister

Valentin Ivanov – editor

Rumen Enchev – engineer

Petya Simeonova – project coordinator

Paul Tingen – production assistant

Jan Tuender, Studio 7 Amsterdam – mastering, audio consulting

Florin Popescu – artwork and design

Iwan Baan – CD design, photography

Berthe Meijer – art director

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Gary Goldschneider

Born May 22, 1939 in Philadelphia, PA, USA

## THE WELL-TEMPERED PIANIST

Composed in the spring of 1984 at the home of Dr. Ted Lyon in Nevada City, California, these 48 pieces for the piano were written for the Bach tri-centenary in 1985 and premiered that year at the J.S. Bach festival in Groningen, Netherlands. The composer followed Bach's plan which begins with two pieces in C major, followed by two in C minor, and then follows the chromatic series through C sharp (D flat), D, E flat, etc. However, where Bach wrote only a prelude and fugue in each key, Goldschneider found it interesting to write in each of the many forms of music, both classical and popular, which



attracted him over his many years of study and performance as a pianist. Thus the composer began with a prelude in C major followed by a polonaise in that key, then an invention in C minor followed by a toccata. The titles of the works presented on this CD will illustrate some of the scope of this series. As the dates indicate, the pieces were composed chronologically in the order of the series of 12 major and minor keys, sometimes at the rate of one per day.

### **C major Prelude – to Paul Tingen, April 15**

The Prelude begins with the first two notes of Bach's prelude in that key and features a recurring unit, which characterizes most piano preludes. C major is the gateway key and often is used in introductions to musical series. This prelude ends with an ascending set of tones which form the overtone series of the tone C.

### **E minor Elegy – to Sadashiv, June 8**

The Elegy is written in the mournful key of E minor, symbolizing the moon and deep emotion. An ostinato melody

characterizes the piece set off by hard and soft harmonic dissonances.

### **E flat major Promenade – to Leila and Julius Ward, May 22**

The key of E flat major is the golden, radiant key of music, symbolizing the blazing heat of the sun. This composition uses the sustained characteristics of E flat major in its long-held tones.

### **E flat minor Tango – to Josh, May 24**

This piece is at once typical of the tango but is also a bit of a spoof on it. The key is traditionally a serious, even religious one, but is used here in a more light-hearted way.

### **B major Manifesto – to Mikis Theodorakis, 28 July**

Not really written in a key, but rather a mode, this composition unfolds over a drone on the tone B. Its rhythms and melodies suggest Balkan and Middle Eastern influences. It is politically defiant.

**F major Pastorale – to Swami Kriyananda (Donald Walters), June 12**

This meditative piece was influenced by the spiritual practices of the Ananda community in North San Juan, California. It is a modal composition unfolding over a repetitive figure on an F bass.

**C minor Invention – to Arthur Cohen, April 21**

Bachlike, the Invention adds each voice in turn until its four-part structure is realized. The final bars convey the inexorable and fatal characteristics of this key.

**D major Capriccio – to Kriseda, May 14**

D major is the key of joy, used by Handel in the Halleluiah Chorus and by Bach in the Gloria of his B minor Mass. It suggests celebration and brilliance. The composition closes with the tolling of London's Big Ben.

**D major Rondo – to Ariana, May 15**

The companion piece to the Capriccio, it recalls Mozart. Its

sudden modulations bring an unpredictable element to the normally predictable rondo form.

### **Gymnopedie in C sharp minor – to Jane Chang, April 28**

To Goldschneider the Gymnopedie was not just the name of pieces by Eric Satie, but also of a marvelous form which Satie invented, being in a slow three with an accent always on the second beat (the oom-pah being a bass tone followed by a higher chord), a lyric melody, written in two sections with a long pause in between. C sharp minor is the key of blackness and death.

### **Infernale in F minor – to Barbara Mark, June 17**

Found in the stage work Call Me Ishmael as a riotous ballet below the decks of the Pequod, this piano piece shows the torment aspects of they key of F minor, constantly seeking to balance and right itself.

### **Kyrie in B minor – to Bill West, July 29**

Also used in the Ishmael music-theater piece when the hero emerges as the only survivor of the wreck, borne up on

Queequeg's coffin. Although a piano piece, it was written with the words Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison (God have mercy on us, Christ have mercy on us) in mind.

### **Acceptance in B minor – To Donald Mark and Arnie Fisher, July 29**

The final of piece of the 48 symbolizes a need to accept the inevitable. Its rising and falling anticipations and resolutions usher in the Luther-like chorale which ends the composition.

### **For Isak**

The composer's first composition, it took shape at the end of the sixties and proceeded through several improvisational stages before finally being written down in the mid-seventies. It describes a child chasing a butterfly over a hill and was written for his son, Isak.

### **Waltz for Sara**

Written in 1980 in Dunedin New Zealand at the YMCA one night when the composer couldn't sleep, this jazz waltz was created for his daughter Sara.

## **Piano Sonata – Dedicated to Terry Riley**

This four movement work was written in Amsterdam in 1986. Its first movement, Like a River, is based on a minimalist statement repeated in ever-shifting time signatures of 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 eighth notes. It is written in a kind of sonata form (an exposition, development, recapitulation, coda) featuring a bravura section in the development section with cluster dissonances and several internal loops). It is meant to describe the never-ceasing motion of the Yuba River in California, that flows by Terry Riley's Sri Moonshine ranch.

The second movement, Promenade, is written in the key of Moussorgsky's famous Promenade (B flat major) which opens his Pictures at an Exhibition. The quasi-improvisatory middle section features Japanese scales.

The third movement, Camel Walk, recreates a Sahara-like mood, complete with caravanserai and bells.

The last movement, written entirely in 10/8 time and largely in octaves, is an unsettling statement showing the influences of Prokofieff and Bartok.

## Selections from The Well-Tempered Pianist (1984)

- |                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1 – Prelude (C major)           | xx'xx |
| 2 – Elegy (E minor)             | xx'xx |
| 3 – Promenade (E flat major)    | xx'xx |
| 4 – Tango (E flat minor)        | xx'xx |
| 5 – Manifesto (B major)         | xx'xx |
| 6 – Pastorale (F major)         | xx'xx |
| 7 – Invention (C minor)         | xx'xx |
| 8 – Capriccio (D major)         | xx'xx |
| 9 – Rondo (D major)             | xx'xx |
| 10 – Gymnopedie (C sharp minor) | xx'xx |
| 11 – Infernale ( F minor)       | xx'xx |
| 12 – Kyrie (B minor)            | xx'xx |
| 13 – Acceptance (B minor)       | xx'xx |

### Early Pieces

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|----------------------------|-------|
| 14 – For Isak (1976)       | xx'xx |
| 15 – Waltz for Sara (1980) | xx'xx |

### Piano Sonata (1986)

- |                     |       |
|---------------------|-------|
| 16 – I Like a River | xx'xx |
| 17 – II Promenade   | xx'xx |
| 18 – III Camel Walk | xx'xx |
| 19 – IV Relentless  | xx'xx |

