

TSOY AND KOLESNIKOV

PROGRAM NOTES FOR THE FIVE CONCERTS IN THEIR MARFA RESIDENCY

Thursday, 18 September 2025

STARDUST

Stardust Motel

19:15

Here, on this spot, there used to be a motel called The Stardust. People came and went, enjoying drinks, watching the sunset, chatting, dancing, and listening to music. Now, little remains to remind us of those times. Patches in the grass mark the position of the building's foundation. The sign by the road still stands, and the line of the horizon remains unchanged. This is enough for us to recall what we never actually witnessed. With the sounds of an old waltz, the happy memories flow back, and the old motel comes alive once more—just for tonight! Welcome to the Stardust, welcome to a ballroom beneath the sign of Cygnus! As the night deepens and the stars shine brighter, the sounds of the pianos intertwine and flicker, revealing deeper meanings and hidden connections. What happens here will never be repeated. Cinderella may have lost her slipper long ago, but there is still one last waltz to dance—or maybe a thousand waltzes!

Reynaldo Hahn (1874–1947)

Le Ruban Dénoué: Douze Valses pour Deux Pianos, No. 3: "Souvenir... Avenir..."

Johann Strauss II (1825–1899)

Frühlingsstimmen-Walzer (Voices of Spring), Op. 410

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Suite Bergamasque, L. 75: Clair de Lune

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

Cinderella, Op. 87: Quarrel

Arrangement for two pianos by Mikhail Pletnev

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Suite No. 1 for Two Pianos, Op. 5 "Fantaisie-Tableaux": I. Barcarolle

Reynaldo Hahn (1874–1947)

Le Ruban Dénoué: Douze Valses pour Deux Pianos, No. 3: "Souvenir... Avenir..."

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)

Waltz in E minor, Op. posth.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

Cinderella, Op. 87: Finale

Arrangement for two pianos by Mikhail Pletnev

— Intermission —

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor, Op. 27 No. 2 “Moonlight”

- I. Adagio sostenuto
- II. Allegretto
- III. Presto agitato

Leonid Desyatnikov (b. 1955)

Du côté de chez Swan

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

La Valse: Poème chorégraphique

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Friday, 19 September 2025

IN THE LANDSCAPE

Sonic Experience

11:30

This spot on the edge of the Marfa golf course may seem unremarkable on its own. But ahead of you, unobstructed, lies Marfa’s arguably most spectacular panorama.

Every landscape is, in a way, invisible.

The view is always there, but can we truly grasp it, can we fully see it? Like the horizon line, a landscape remains an ephemeral and elusive sum of infinite parts.

How can one apprehend something so complex?

We invite you to take it in deeply—to observe, study, feel, and remember. Embrace its subtle colors and essential shapes, its softness and harshness, its anguish and joy.

Only then will you begin to hear its melody and harmony, as if emerging from nowhere, carried by a gentle wind. What is this place, if not the “desert of pure feeling”?

John Cage (1912–1992)

In a Landscape

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787)

Mélodie from Orfeo ed Euridice (Dance of the Blessed Spirits)

Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992)

*Visions de l'Amen: Amen du Jugement
/ Amen of the Judgment*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Piano Concerto No. 21 in C major, K. 467: II. Andante

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INVISIBLE MONUMENTS

Bullroom {The converted cattle auction shed}
20:00

We probably drove past the Bull Room five or six times before we saw it. At first glance, it looked like little more than a massive pile of rubble by the roadside. Inside, however, we were met with an extraordinary surprise: a powerful, monumental space, untouched and waiting to be rediscovered—and reinterpreted—after years of neglect.

This was an amazing discovery that we made together with the Ballroom team. Eight months later, the primeval, universal architecture of the space is now ready for everyone to admire. For this momentous occasion, we are bringing together three of the most extraordinary works of *sound architecture*—three invisible monuments—spanning three centuries.

The reclusive and uncompromising Galina Ustvolskaya, a Soviet composer nicknamed “the lady with a hammer” for the extreme power and austerity of her music, created works as impressive as they are bewildering. Her work stand in complete isolation, as if no music had ever existed before her. Ustvolskaya was an unapologetic perfectionist and wrote only 21 pieces in her lifetime. None of her works were allowed to be performed in the Soviet Union, so she only heard her music played publicly at the end of her life, after the collapse of the regime. By then, she had stopped composing, claiming that she had completed her mission.

Her final Sonata, written in 1988, is a brief and blazing, unforgiving work of unparalleled intensity and precision—a monolith of burning passion and restraint.

Ludwig van Beethoven began losing his hearing in his early twenties, a realization that drove him to the brink of suicide. Yet, this condition—normally seen as completely incompatible with music making—may have played a pivotal role in his development as a profoundly trailblazing artist, one of the few truly avant-garde figures in history. By the age of forty-five, Beethoven was completely deaf. Freed from the physicality of sound, his work transcended the limits of purely musical composition. His late works are thought and feeling made audible through the audacious architecture of sound. The last Sonata (1821/22) is a work of immense complexity and emotional intensity, rising from

the depths of despair to the metaphysical heights of understanding and acceptance. It is, without a doubt, one of the greatest pinnacles of art.

Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, likely written in the late 1730s, remain shrouded in mystery. Almost everything about this astonishing piece is either unknown or speculative. To this day, the exact circumstances and purpose of its creation, as well as its possible meanings, remain completely obscure.

The piece begins and ends with the Aria, a melody of heavenly purity and simplicity. In between, it is transformed into thirty variations, each with a different mood and character. In these transformations, Bach employs the most complex contrapuntal techniques with such ease and flair that each variation shines like a precious jewel—a miracle of musical engineering.

The *Goldbergs* may have been commissioned by a Russian ambassador, Count Keiserling, who suffered from insomnia, to entertain him during sleepless nights. However, there is no clear evidence to support this story. The highly unusual architecture of the piece suggests that every element was rigorously calculated and perfected with almost superhuman precision. This leads some to believe that there is a narrative, perhaps even a code or secret meaning embedded within. Many hypotheses abound, including numerological and alchemical interpretations, though none are fully proven. The most plausible theory seems to be that the *Goldbergs* are intended to offer a glimpse into the divine architecture of the world. The listener's soul is taken on a metaphorical journey where the mechanics of the universe are revealed through sound. At the end of this epic journey, an astonishing twist awaits the listener: before the Aria returns, the final variation is quoting a simple family song, popular in Bach's time. This familiar tune is transformed in a polyphonic way that befits and indicates a sacred hymn, achieving a complete amalgamation of the human and the divine.

Galina Ustvolskaya (1919–2006)

Piano Sonata No. 6

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111

- I. Maestoso – Allegro con brio ed appassionato
- II. Arietta: Adagio molto, semplice e cantabile

Performed by Samson Tsoy

— Intermission —

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Goldberg Variations, BWV 988

Performed by Pavel Kolesnikov

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Saturday, 20 September 2025

VISIONS DE L'AMEN

Bullroom

12:00

It is no coincidence that this performance at the Bull Room has been scheduled for the daytime. The restoration of the Bull Room's roof features transparent panels, and it is during daylight that the interior takes on a unique quality—the delicately coloured patches on the floor resemble the reflections of stained glass windows in a cathedral. Messiaen's *Visions de l'Amen* itself can be seen as a cathedral of music. Through his distinctive harmonic system, Messiaen filled his sound with extraordinary colour—sensual and dazzling. Working with blocks of sound saturated with vibrant hues, he "constructed" some of the most majestic and ambitious sound works of the 20th century.

The programme of *Visions* is rooted in the mysteries and miracles of religion, yet it is, in itself, a miracle. Without bricks or nails, it creates a universal devotional space that is open to all, reminding us of the mystery of faith—that the world around us becomes what we believe it to be.

Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992)

Visions de l'Amen / Visions of the Amen

I. Amen de la Création / Amen of the Creation

Creation of things by God: space, time, the heavens and the depths, the angels, sounds, colours, the shape of visible things...

II. Amen des étoiles, de la planète à l'anneau / Amen of the Stars, of the Ringed Planet

Adoration of the starry sky, the circle of planets in search of an Amen. God present throughout the universe and even in the smallest stars.

III. Amen de l'Agonie de Jésus / Amen of the Agony of Jesus

Agony of Jesus, accepting suffering in order to redeem us. Supplication of Christ to his Father in the Garden of Olives.

IV. Amen du Désir / Amen of Desire

Man's desire for God. The loving yearning of the creature for its Creator. The desire of the elect, the desire of the Church.

V. Amen des Anges, des Saints, du chant des oiseaux / Amen of the Angels, the Saints, the Birdsong

Spiritual joy. Joyous Amen of Paradise, bird songs, the perfect joy of creatures in the light of God.

VI. Amen du Jugement / Amen of the Judgment

Judgment of grace or damnation. Justice, terrible presence, wrath, fire, all the fearful mysteries. And also the Amen of forgiveness.

VII. Amen de la Consommation / Amen of the Consummation

Amen of consummated Love, of fulfilment, of light. Amen of the supernatural union of the heavenly Church and the earthly Church, of God and humanity, of Christ and his Bride, the Church.

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DANCE OF THE EARTH

Stone Circle

21:30

For the final performance in Marfa this September, we will gather at one of the iconic sites: Haroon Mirza's Stone Circle.

During our first visit, we experienced the activation of the Stone Circle that takes place during the full moon. It was then that we envisioned a different kind of activation, one that would happen during the New Moon, when the gigantic stones remain silent.

At night, inside the Stone Circle, Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* will be performed in its original version for one piano, four hands.

The Rite of Spring caused an infamous riot at its premiere in Paris in 1913. Today, over a hundred years later, this remains easily relatable. This shocking work, which forever changed the course of music history, channels the elemental energy of Earth in a way no other artwork has. Its hair-raising rite of sound is beyond music—it is a mystical experience, an unforgettable and violent ritual of life and death.

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Le Sacre du printemps / The Rite of Spring

Part I: L'Adoration de la Terre / The Adoration of the Earth

- Introduction
- Les Augures printaniers / Augurs of Spring
- Jeu du rapt / Ritual of Abduction
- Rondes printanières / Spring Rounds
- Jeux des cités rivales / Ritual of the Rival Tribes
- Cortège du sage / Procession of the Sage
- Le Sage / The Sage
- Danse de la terre / Dance of the Earth

Part II: Le Sacrifice / The Sacrifice

- Introduction
- Cercles mystérieux des adolescentes / Mystic Circles of the Young Girls
- Glorification de l'élue / Glorification of the Chosen One
- Évocation des ancêtres / Evocation of the Ancestors
- Action rituelle des ancêtres / Ritual Action of the Ancestors
- Danse sacrée / Sacrificial Dance