

Realizing Bach's ultimate power

A pianist with a higher purpose

CLASSICAL

Golandsky Institute International Piano Festival

When: 8 p.m. performances Sunday-July 21

Where: Taplin Auditorium, Woolworth Music Building, Princeton University campus, Princeton

How much: \$25. Call (877) 343-3434 or visit www.golandskyinstitute.org

BY BEN FINANE

FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

"In my life as a Benedictine, we try to surround ourselves with beauty and to infuse it into our liturgy because this helps us experience God, who is the author of beauty," says Father Sean Duggan, O.S.B.

"I can't help but think that Bach felt this, too," Duggan says. "His music plumbs the depths of human experience and emotion, and even when Bach is expressing sorrow and grief, you never feel that he's just leaving you there, but that he can lead you to a transcendent experience."

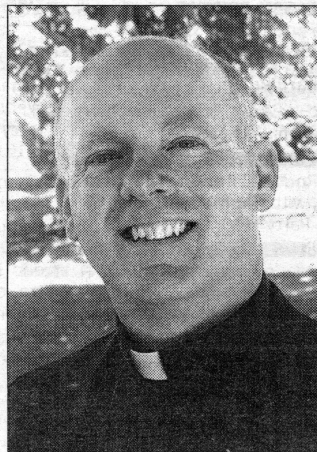
Though many musicians have waxed philosophical over the centuries about the transcendence and spirituality of Bach's music, pianist, teacher and priest Duggan would appear to be in a more credible position to do so.

Duggan, 52, placed first in the Washington, D.C., Bach Competition in 1983 and 1991 and is on currently on the piano faculty at the State University of New York at Fredonia.

On Tuesday, Duggan performs a mighty program of Bach's Goldberg Variations (BWV 988) alongside Beethoven's Diabelli Variations (Op. 120) as part of the fourth Golandsky Institute International Piano Festival, which opens Sunday in Princeton.

Duggan has performed the program before and feels that the two sets of variations make for a fascinating pair, given their overall similarity in shape, and, he believes, their shared themes of exaltation and resurrection.

In addition to Duggan's performance, another highlight should be Russian technician Ilya Itin, who performs Schubert's Sonata in B-flat Major, D-960, and four scherzos by Chopin on Monday night.



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Hailing from Hong Kong, 14-year-old pianist Rachel Cheung opens the festival Sunday with a performance of works by Chopin, Copland, Mozart and Schumann.

Thursday night features a special concert by the early-music ensemble Música Ficta, who will guide listeners through musical poetry in the works of Sebastián Durón.

On Friday, Turkish pianist Gülsin Onay performs works by Chopin, Elgar, Ravel and others. The festival closes Saturday with a performance by 23-year-old Ukrainian pianist Alexander Gavrylyuk who, in addition to other works, will tackle Busoni's arrangement of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565.

Edna Golandsky founded her institute in Manhattan in 2003 as a center for pianists to improve their skills using principles set forth by New York pedagogue Dorothy Taubman. The Taubman Approach aims to help players achieve virtuosity without injury. Golandsky helped found the Taubman Institute and served as its music director for 26 years (although the Golandsky Institute and its festival are not sanctioned by Taubman).

Parallel to its festival, the Golandsky Institute holds a week-long symposium of workshops and master classes for musicians, including one taught by Duggan, who travels to New York twice a month to take lessons with Edna Golandsky.