

# PREVIEW

## A Piano Festival Adds In Cello and Voice

by Elaine Strauss

**M**aking its fifth appearance, the Golandsky Summer Institute takes up residence at Princeton University for a week beginning Sunday, July 12. During the day the institute focuses on teaching physiologically sound ways to play the piano. During the evenings it focuses on concerts that display the technical and musical prowess that comes from moving freely at the instrument. The daytime events go by the title "Golandsky Institute Summer Symposium at Princeton." The evening concerts bill themselves as "The Golandsky Institute International Piano Festival."

All six concerts, as well as many daytime events, are open to the public. The concerts take place at 8 p.m. in Taplin Auditorium in Fine Hall on the Princeton campus. Performers from Cuba, Serbia, Russia, Switzerland, Canada, and the United States present a spectrum of solo and chamber concerts drawn from classical, contemporary and jazz styles. The roster includes Jorge Luis Prats, Sunday, July 13; Misha Dacic, Monday, July 14; pianist Father Sean Duggan and cellist Natasha Farny along with pianist Thomas Bagwell and soprano Adrienne Danrich Tuesday, July 15; solo pianists Sylvie Courvoisier and Vicky Chow Thursday, July 17; Ilya Itin, Friday, July 18; and Bill Charlapp Saturday, July 19.

Ilya Itin does double duty. In addition to his Friday performance, he provides live piano examples for a talk on Schubert by Princeton University's Scott Burnham on Wednesday, July 16, at 1 p.m. in McCormick Hall.

Based at Princeton since 2003, the Golandsky Institute builds on the insights about healthy virtuoso piano playing discovered by Dorothy Taubman in the 1940s, more than 60 years ago. Edna Golandsky, a Taubman student, was instrumental in setting up the first summer institutes devoted to Taubman's work in the 1970s, more than 40 years ago, and, over time, became the primary Taubman spokesperson. Taubman's work has saved the careers of pianists whose injuries at the instrument made them unable to play, and has given solidity to the careers of pianists seeking a reliable and powerful interpretive technique.

Word of the existence of the Taubman-Golandsky approach has not yet reached all crannies of the piano world. News about the method is still spreading among active music professionals. Professor Scott Burnham, chair of Princeton's music department, first heard about the system when planners of the 2006 Golandsky Institute talked to him about using university facilities and setting up a panel on contemporary composers. He made the arrangements and put them in touch with associate professor Barbara White, a Princeton composer, who participated in the panel.

"I only had a vague sense of the approach," Burnham says in a tele-

phone interview. "I soon learned that it dealt with pain and was different from a normative approach. Then I witnessed a few workshop sessions. It was like faith healing. Edna [Golandsky] would explain what to do, and the passage would come rippling off the fingers."

Reluctant to accept faith healing as an explanation, Burnham tries to concoct a rational explanation, but slips back into the mystical. "The Taubman-Golandsky approach gets into the mechanics of playing the piano, but it's not just mechanics. It's a way of linking what a performer feels about the music with the performer's musculature and limbs. There's a link between the body and the spirit. It's a miracle. People can't play a passage at all; then suddenly, they learn how."

**A**ctually, from my own experience with the method over two decades, I know that there's nothing mystical involved. After careful analysis to pinpoint the crux of a problem in a thorny section, an experienced Taubman teacher comes up with a carefully choreographed battery of motions to solve the problem. Solutions are not necessarily instantaneous. New neurological circuits must develop before new habits become comfortable. Once the refinements fall into place, dilemmas disappear and a feeling of enormous satisfaction emerges. Talking to those with similar stories breeds a feeling of kinship.

Burnham was struck by the sense of closeness among those who have benefited from the method. "People into this are completely into it," he says. "They really believe. They come back year after year and swear by it. There's a community vibe. People think, 'We're all in this together.' It's like going to church."

He also found that the Golandsky-Taubman sound results in new ways of thinking about piano music. "It sensitizes you to new musical issues," he says. "You hear differently afterwards."

The program varies subtly from year to year at Princeton. There is always something fresh happening. Programs and performers for the evening performances shift. To supplement the daily fare of lectures about Taubman technique, private lessons, and supervised practicing, invited guests give talks on special topics.

Fresh solutions clear up glitches when they arise. "It was really hum-drum last year," Burnham says, "and the concert piano was acting up. Our campus technician adjusts the piano more for chamber music than solo performances. This year, Mark Love [vice president of Ja-

cobs Music, which has locations in Lawrenceville and elsewhere.] jumped in. He's contributing a concert piano for the week, and seeing that it's serviced."

In 2007 Burnham lectured at the symposium about Beethoven's late piano sonatas. "There's a kind of electricity that I felt," he says. "I've never had a more electric audience for my lectures, except for, maybe, the Medina Judges Seminar." The Medina Seminar, founded in 1990, brings to Princeton annually 40 state and federal judges and their guests for lectures about various subjects in the sciences and humanities. Burnham has talked to them about musical subjects half a dozen times, he estimates.

"With Medina, I go easy on the technical stuff," he says. "With Golandsky I can explain the magic of certain passages in a technical way because they're musicians. They know it in their muscles, and know it in their minds."

This year Burnham returns to the Golandsky Seminar to talk about the piano music of Franz Schubert during the last year of his life.

As a music professional, Burnham uses the piano a great deal, though he considers himself an amateur pianist. "I'm a functional pianist," he says. "I can read, I can improvise, and I can demonstrate. But I don't have a great technique. I haven't performed on stage since I was in college."

Burnham took piano lessons for two months when he was in first grade. "I quit because I didn't like to practice," he says. "I wanted to play baseball. There was a vacant lot next to our house where kids played baseball. I could hear the ball smacking into the glove while I was practicing piano."

He returned to the instrument at age 17 as a senior in high school. "There was nothing else going on that I was really interested in," he says. "I discovered that I could play by ear. I got into rock music and would jam around on the piano a little."

"In high school, I found myself in a lot of trouble," Burnham continues. "My peer group liked to party. I didn't go to college right away. My friends, who did, flunked out. I took a course in classical music at a community college. At 19 or 20, I started at the Baldwin-Wallace College Conservatory outside of Cleveland. It was the number three conservatory in the area, so they tried harder. The Cleveland Institute of Music and the Oberlin Conservatory are numbers one and two."



**World Class Music:**  
Natasha Farny,  
cellist, above, and  
Vicky Chow, pianist.



Burnham met his wife, Dawna Lemaire, at Baldwin-Wallace. A piano and oboe student there, she is also a music therapist. Her current position is as accompanist for the Hopewell school system. The couple has a 15-year-old son, Emmett, and two daughters, Sophia, 11, and Georgia, 9. All three play piano and Sophia started oboe this year.

A music composition major as an undergraduate, Burnham minored in piano and graduated from Baldwin-Wallace in 1979. He completed additional coursework in German in 1980. He earned a master's degree in music composition from Yale University in 1982 and a Ph.D. in music theory and analysis from Brandeis University in 1988. Burnham is the author of "Beethoven Hero" and the co-editor of "Beethoven and His World," as well as a volume translating selections from Adolph Bernhard Marx's writings into English.

**'B**eethoven and Schubert are foils for each other," Burnham says. "They're similar, but absolutely different. In the 19th century, when writers attributed gender to musical compositions, Beethoven's pieces were considered masculine, and Schubert's feminine. Beethoven was considered a master of symphony, and Schubert a master of song. People were slow to come around to realizing Schubert's achievements in piano, chamber music, and orchestral music because they were so dazzled by his songs. There was always the opinion that Schubert was Beethoven's opposite. So Schubert is a natural next lecture after Beethoven."

While he is best-known for his work on Beethoven, Burnham has also published scholarly articles about Schubert. "Schubert's late music has an uncanny sound," Burnham says. "It's still grounded

in the style of Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn. But Schubert infused his late music with a lyricism and melancholy that make it like no other music. You would never mistake it for anyone else. He found a unique spot."

What makes the piano music of Schubert's last year so outstanding, Burnham believes, is primarily the large number of pieces that he wrote, and their variety. "It kindles our imagination," he says.

In addition to giving his Schubert lecture, Burnham is likely to turn up at the Golandsky evening concerts, as he has before. "The concerts are off-the-charts for Princeton," he says. "I was ready for great music-making, but sometimes those performances took my breath away."

**International Piano Festival, Golandsky Institute, Taplin Auditorium, Fine Hall, Princeton University, 877-343-3434. www.golandskyinstitute.org.**

Sunday, July 13 at 8 p.m., Jorge Luis Prats from Cuba performs music of Villalobos, Granados, and others.

Monday, July 14 at 8 p.m., Misha Dacic from the former Yugoslavia performs Schumann, Rachmaninoff, and Liszt.

Tuesday, July 15 at 8 p.m., an evening of chamber music. Father Sean Duggan, piano, and Natasha Farny, cello, perform Bach and Beethoven sonatas; Thomas Bagwell, piano, and Adrienne Danrich, soprano, perform works by Ricky Ian Gordon, Lowell Liebermann, John Carter, and others.

Thursday, July 17 at 8 p.m., an evening of contemporary music. Pianist and composer from Switzerland, Sylvie Courvoisier's performance will include improvisations and original compositions from her new solo piano album "Signs and Epigrams." Canadian pianist Vicky Chow will perform works by Olivier Messiaen, Ryan Francis, and Neil Rolnick.

Friday, July 18 at 8 p.m. Ilya Itin, from Russia, performs Haydn, Prokofiev, and Beethoven.

Saturday, July 19 at 8 p.m., Bill Charlapp, jazz piano.

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