

Austrian pianist headlines 3-day event



Pianist Lisa Smirnova headlines Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra's Power of Music Festival set for April 10 to 12 in Frankfort and Chicago Heights. (HANDOUT)

By Jessi Virtusio Daily Southtown

March 31, 2015

Austrian Pianist Lisa Smirnova headlines Power of Music Festival in April

Transforming lives is the theme of Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra's Power of Music Festival.

Pianist Lisa Smirnova, who headlines the April 10 to 12 event in Frankfort and Chicago Heights, said she can relate to that.

"Music allows (us) to discover the dimension of magic and without it life isn't complete. We would feel that something is missing even if we couldn't explain what," said Smirnova, who was born in Moscow and now lives in Vienna, Austria.

"My life was and is completely affected by the music. Without it everything would appear in a different light. Everything would make much less sense."

Smirnova grew up with a family who leaned more toward the sciences and the technical. She said her grandmother's death caused her to seek an escape, which included music and studying with Karl-Heinz Kammerling in Austria.

The festival marks a return to IPO for Smirnova, who performed for October's Opening Night. Her April 11 concert features Domenico Scarlatti, Ludwig van Beethoven, Johann Sebastian Bach, Philip Glass and Franz Liszt selections.

"It is not an easy task to compose a good recital program. You should play pieces that you like and manage to have contrasts but not stylistic breaks within the program. It is also good to have an evergreen. In this case, the 'Moonlight Sonata.' Bach and Scarlatti are my favorites," Smirnova said.

"I was asked to include an American work and Philip Glass goes perfectly with the Baroque music as it has the same clarity and transparency of musical language."

The fest also includes an April 10 screening of "Following the Ninth: In the Footsteps of Beethoven's Final Symphony," University of Michigan musicologist Jason Geary's April 11 "Music and Mass Media" lecture and an April 12 Friends of the IPO Rising Star Showcase.

"I would like to share with them the experience of being totally concentrated on here and now," Smirnova said. "I want to achieve that for the duration of the concert, they stop thinking about what they didn't work (on) at the office yesterday and what they should think about tomorrow when they bring the kids to school.

"The moments when we manage to be away from those things in our mind are the best in life."

Jessi Virtusio is a freelance writer

The Power of Music Festival

When: 8 p.m. April 10 for "Following the Ninth: In the Footsteps of Beethoven's Final Symphony" screening, 4 p.m. April 11 for Jason Geary's "Music and Mass Media" lecture, 8 p.m. April 11 for Lisa Smirnova concert and 4 p.m. April 12 for Friends of the IPO's Rising Star Showcase

Where: Lincoln-Way North Performing Arts Center, 19900 S. Harlem Ave., Frankfort, except the showcase at Prairie State College auditorium, 202 S. Halsted St., Chicago Heights

Tickets: \$50 (\$5 for students) for an All Access Festival Pass including general admission to all events; individual event pricing of \$5 for the screening, free for the lecture, \$35 for the concert and \$10 for the showcase

Information: 708-481-7774, ipomusic.org or lisasmirnova.com

Etc.: Presented by Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra

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