

ELENA CHOLAKOVA (USA)

Emory University (Atlanta, Georgia)



Bulgarian pianist Elena Cholakova regularly performs in important musical centers in Eastern and Western Europe, South America and the United States. She has given solo recitals at the Liszt Academy in Budapest, Hungary, USA Embassy in Budapest, Hungary, Bulgaria Hall and Sofia Conservatory in Sofia, Bulgaria, Aosta Concert Hall in Aosta, Italy, Fellbach Musicschule in Fellbach, Germany, Fazioli Salon in Chicago, Illinois, and more. She has toured the south-east United States as a member of the American Chamber Music Society. Her performances have been broadcasted live on NPR, Atlanta's - WABE, Chicago's classical music radio station WFMT, Bulgarian TV and radio stations. Cholakova recently performed Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" with Atlanta Symphony's music director Robert Spano in a multi-media production hailed as "one of the most important collaborations of the year". During the summer, Dr. Cholakova serves on the faculty of the Interharmony Music Festival in Italy and the Prague Piano Festival in the Czech Republic. Dr. Cholakova holds an MMus and DMus in piano performance from Northwestern University. She serves as Director of Piano Studies at Emory University and Director of the Emory Young Artist Piano Competition.

Contact Presenter

Email: elena.cholakova@emory.edu

Le Sacre du Printemps - two pianos and/or four hands?

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"Dear Stravinsky, you are a great artist. Be with all your strength a great Russian artist." ¹

This was a letter Claude Debussy wrote to Igor Stravinsky in 1915. Few years earlier, following a quick acquaintance, the two composers were the first pianists to read through the four-hand version Stravinsky had brought back after his return from Russia. Performing *Le Sacre* is no less thrilling than it was in 1912 however we are forced to recognize and overcome difficulties and limitations of performing the piece on two pianos vs four hands. Pedaling, communication, keyboard geography, note distribution and performance techniques are all issues that will be discussed and demonstrated in this presentation. Performing *Le Sacre* on two pianos gives performers a greater soloistic approach as each pianist is equipped with an important tool of expression - independent pedaling. There is more freedom to maneuver around the keyboard and achieve a level of bri. What becomes inevitably problematic is coordinating the ensemble. The four-hand piano version facilitates that to a great extent as performers have visual cues. The sheer acrobatics of the four-hand version is a good enough reason to attend a performance. Having performed the piece in each setting, I have gained a perspective why the four-hand version is the appropriate medium and will share my performance experience.

¹ White, Eric Walter, et al. "Stravinsky and Debussy." *Tempo*, no. 61/62, 1962, pp. 2-5. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/944075. Accessed 1 May 2020.