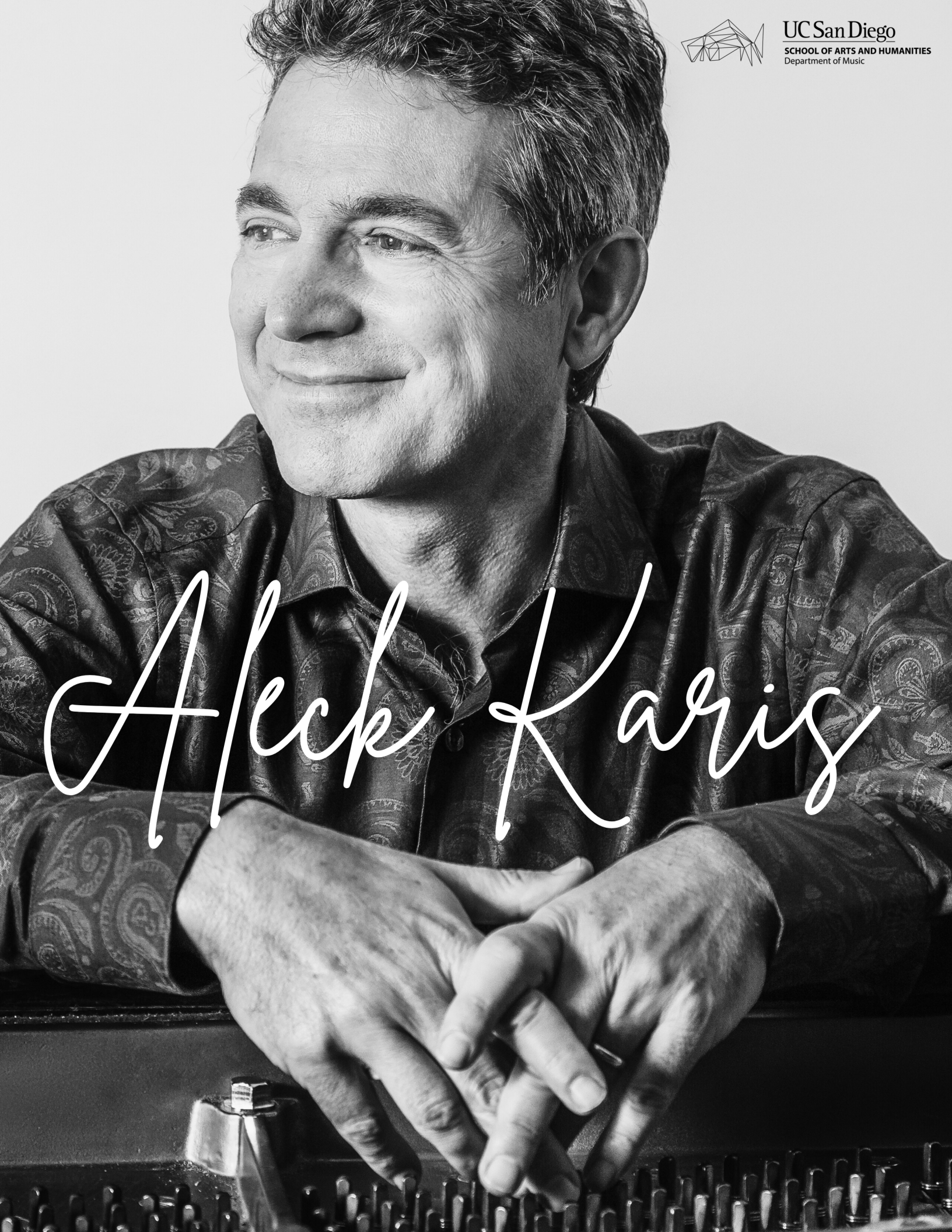




UC San Diego
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Department of Music



Aleck Karis

Aleck Karis, piano

Saturday, June 10, 2023 - 5:00 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Music Center | Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Serenade in A (1925)

Igor Stravinsky

Hymne

Romanza

Rondoletto

Candenza Finala

Variations from the Golden Mountain (2014)

Harrison Birtwistle

Two Nocturnes, Opus 55 (1842-44)

Frédéric Chopin

No. 1 in f minor, Andante

No. 2 in Eb major, Lento Sostenuto

Sonata in b minor, Opus 58 (1844)

Allegro maestoso

Scherzo: Molto vivace

Largo

Finale: Presto, non tanto; agitato

Please join Aleck for a reception in the North Courtyard immediately following the performance..

Notes on the program

Last Spring I saw the New York City Ballet perform the Stravinsky/Balanchine masterpieces *Orpheus* and *Apollon Musagète* and was reminded how much I love the music from Stravinsky's "neoclassical" middle period - as much now as I did when I first heard it in High School. Here Stravinsky takes an affectionate look back to the late 18th century while creating fresh new harmonies, often restricting himself to seven notes rather than all twelve. Critics rejected this music as reactionary for not being atonal, ignoring the music's refinement, wit, lyricism and restrained emotional power. The *Serenade in A*, from the early middle period, has four movements, each short enough to fit on the side of a 78 rpm record (the work resulted from Stravinsky's first gramophone contract). The note A predominates, and every movement ends with that note, but the entire work contains only two root position A chords, one in minor near the beginning and one in major near the end.

Ever since playing Harrison Birtwistle's *Secret Theatre* in 1987 I've been hooked on his music, and take every opportunity to live in his unique sound-world. This 9-minute piece is, sadly, the composer's last work for solo piano. *Variations from the Golden Mountain* ("Golden Mountain"=Goldberg) is quirky even for Birtwistle. Not a traditional theme and variations, it follows series of episodes that sometimes build on each other and sometimes jostle with each other. These episodes often have a ritualistic quality found in many of the composer's works. The final section is the most sustained, a beautiful evocation of bells.

The two late nocturnes in Chopin's Opus 55 are a study in contrast. The first, in F minor, is cool and restrained, expressive in its simplicity; the second, in E-flat major is heated and passionate, expressive in its complexity.

Chopin's third and final sonata was written during a time of advancing illness. Weak and often suffering, he composed what for me is the perfect Romantic sonata. The first movement, rich in melody and original harmonies, is also full of brilliant counterpoint. The expressive flow is so natural and spontaneous that it's easy to miss how ingenious the formal structure is. The scherzo features a witty perpetual motion in the outer sections and a contrasting middle section in four-part harmony. The slow movement, also in ternary form, is stately and heartbreaking. The finale belies the image of the composer as weak and hyper-sensitive. It is a robust, surging, virile, even militaristic -- a call to arms. Its Slavic-accented theme is a reminder that for Chopin, the cause of Polish independence was paramount.

Aleck Karis

Biography:

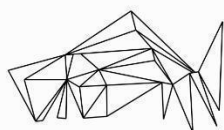
Aleck Karis has performed recitals, chamber music, and concertos across the Americas, Europe, Japan, and China. As the pianist of the new music ensemble Speculum Musicae he participated in over a hundred premieres and performed at major American and European festivals. His appearances with orchestra have ranged from concertos by Mozart, Beethoven and Chopin to those of Stravinsky, Messiaen and Carter. His seven solo discs on Bridge Records are: Chopin/Carter/Schumann, Mozart, Stravinsky, Cage, Feldman/Webern/Wolpe, Poulenc, and most recently, Debussy. His two discs on Roméo Records are Music of Philip Glass and Late Chopin. A Distinguished Professor of Music at the UC San Diego, he has studied at the Manhattan School and Juilliard, and his teachers include William Daghlian, Artur Balsam and Beveridge Webster. This is his thirty-third solo recital on campus. It is his hope that after retirement on July 1 he will continue to play yearly recitals and continue to collaborate with the wonderful performers and composers in the UC San Diego musical community.

Contact us for information on upcoming concerts:
Music Box Office: (858) 534-3448 | <http://music.ucsd.edu/concerts>

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UC San Diego is a non-smoking campus.

Concert Hall Chimes composed by Caroline Louis Miller



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