



Inhabiting the Inner Space: Arthur Greene and the Passage from Pain to Triumph at the Gina Bachauer International Piano Foundation

Description

Gina Bachauer International Piano Foundation • November 14, 2025
Jeannette Wagner Theatre, Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center

PROGRAM

Bach • Partita No. 2 in C Minor, BWV 826
Chopin • Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35
Liszt • Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude
Beethoven • Sonata in A-flat Major, Op. 110
Encore: Myroslav Skoryk • Melody

Salt Lake City, UT • Arthur Greene's return to the Gina Bachauer stage carried the weight of history—his own, and the competition's. In 1978, Greene won the Gold Medal at the Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition, the same year he won the William Kapell International Piano Competition, establishing himself early as a musician of rare depth. The Washington Post would later write that Greene was "a profound musician—one of intense concentration and seriousness of purpose." Decades later, that description feels almost understated.

Arthur Greene won First Prize at the Gina Bachauer International Artists Piano Competition and top prizes at the Kapell and Busoni Competitions. He has recorded for Naxos and Toccata Classics and has been praised as "a profound musician" (The Washington Post) and "a masterful pianist" (The New York Times). Greene is on the piano faculty at the University of Michigan, where he has been honored with the Harold Haugh Award for Excellence in Studio Teaching.

What emerged on Friday night was not merely a recital, but the work of an artist who has moved beyond virtuosity into something quieter and more essential: clarity, intention, and a lifetime's worth of listening.

Promotional poster for the Bachauer Concert Series featuring the title 'Passages' and details about p

After the recital, Greene spoke with a generosity that echoed the depth of his playing. When I asked whether his program's theme—the passage from pain to triumph—reflected his own life, he paused, then said, "It could. I've been through a lot, and I finally feel like I've figured out how to bring that into the playing."

That honesty appears in every measure he performs. Greene, now seventy, radiates the artistic freedom of a musician who no longer chooses repertoire for balance or expectation. "At this point, I just want to play the pieces I love," he told me. "Maybe they don't actually go together. I played them anyway."

His playing is luminous partly because his practice is not labor but nourishment. "Practicing is like eating for me—a different kind of nourishment."

It is rare to hear a pianist speak of technique with such humility. Early in his career, a serious arm injury forced Greene to rebuild his entire technical foundation—at one point, practicing repertoire entirely with his left hand while his right recovered. As he shared, only in "the last five years" has he felt technically able to fully realize the artistic vision he has carried for decades.

This late-life synthesis became unmistakable in performance.

Bach's Partita No. 2 in C Minor, BWV 826

From the opening Sinfonia, what struck me first—before phrasing, before line—was Greene's dynamic command. His pianissimo doesn't diminish; it glows. His fortissimo doesn't overwhelm; it expands. These weren't dynamics as contrast but as architecture, shaping space and breath.

The architecture matters in this piece. Bach's Partita No. 2 is itself a kind of theatrical construction: an ambitious, shape-shifting work that keeps altering the scene in front of you. The Sinfonia begins in the stately dotted rhythms of the French overture—a courtly form pioneered by Lully in the seventeenth century, all ceremonial weight and "padam, padam" grandeur. Bach opens with those dark, heavy chords, then seems almost to abandon the form mid-stride: the overture dissolves into a hesitant melodic line over a quick bass, which then yields to a fleet, two-part fugue that feels almost too quick to mentally track. And just when the fugue reaches its final cadence, the overture rhythm suddenly returns—a spotlight snapping back on.

Greene's performance made that theatricality visible. On the overhead screen, the synchronicity of his hands became its own kind of stagecraft. There were uncanny moments where his fingers moved so fluidly and efficiently that the feed seemed to slip into fast-forward—not from speed, but from utter clarity. In the delicate passages, his two hands felt like independent voices sharing a private conversation; in the denser writing, their coordination landed with breathtaking precision.

Dynamic control at this level can sometimes feel clinical; Greene's never did. His touch was warm, human, and deeply lived-in—evidence of decades of listening, rebuilding, and refining. Bach's shifting worlds never felt abstract or academic; Greene illuminated them.

Chopin's Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35

Chopin's Second Sonata often encourages drama; Greene chose clarity. The first movement unfolded with poised structure, and the Scherzo landed with crisp articulation rather than force.

The third movement—the Funeral March—is one of the most recognizable pieces in Western music, to the point that many listeners know it long before they know who wrote it. Composed in 1838 and later incorporated into the full sonata, it was played at Chopin's own funeral and has accompanied state ceremonies, films, and cultural moments for nearly two centuries. Its opening—those heavy left-hand chords tolling like a distant bell—has become the default musical shorthand for mourning.

Greene approached this famously solemn movement with restraint rather than theatrical weight. The march felt inward and unforced, and the contrasting middle section—the brief moment of lyric consolation—was played plainly, without sentimentality. It reminded me how powerful the piece can be when delivered without exaggeration.

The whirlwind finale—light, fast, and controlled—again revealed that uncanny hand-synchronicity: a blur without smudge, motion without strain. After the structural discipline of Chopin, Liszt opened an entirely different emotional register.

Liszt — Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude

With Liszt, Greene shifted into a more inward register. The sound was spacious and patient, but never vague. After the recital, he told me that an arm problem during his doctoral years forced him to rethink his entire approach to technique, and that it took him years to work out what was wrong and how to change it. More recently, in 2020, he fell on his right shoulder while walking on a beach in Costa Rica, tearing his rotator cuff, undergoing surgery, and spending months practicing with his left hand alone before gradually rebuilding his playing.

Knowing that history, his Liszt made sense. The piece did not feel like the work of someone relying on long-automatic habits; it felt like the playing of someone who has had to relearn trust in his own body more than once. His touch moved easily from weightless to resonant, but always with clear intention. The long, singing lines of Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude were steady and unhurried, as if he were inhabiting a space he had carefully rebuilt rather than taken for granted.

Beethoven — Sonata in A-flat Major, Op. 110

Before playing Op. 110, Greene offered the audience a spontaneous reflection on the sonata's spiritual arc, explaining Beethoven's descent—from the spiritual realm, down into the tragic, and rising again. That clarity of insight translated directly into the performance.

The Arioso unfolded like a quiet collapse, carved out of silence. The fugue rose slowly but inevitably, a resurrection that felt both musical and personal—an ascent earned. After the concert, I tried to find a recording online and stumbled upon a talk Greene gave on Beethoven's Op. 111. In it, he described something that feels essential to understanding his Beethoven:

“Consciousness is such a complex and elusive phenomenon! but Julian Jaynes talks about an inner space you develop. And I find the same thing to be true about music. Each piece has its internal world—caverns underneath, light from above, all these side chambers. I had played this piece before without inhabiting the space! I was looking at it from the outside. Now I’m trying to step into it.”
—Arthur Greene

It’s a remarkably clear way of expressing what so many pianists struggle to articulate: not performing *at* the music, but learning how to enter the world inside it.

Encore — Myroslav Skoryk’s *Melody*

Although the printed program ended with Beethoven, Greene returned to the stage with a quiet, unexpected offering: *Melody* by Myroslav Skoryk (1938–2020), one of the most significant Ukrainian composers of the 20th and 21st centuries. Skoryk, born in Lviv and deported with his family to Siberia as a child, later became a central figure in Ukraine’s musical and cultural life. His *Melody*—originally written for film—has taken on profound national resonance; when President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the U.S. Congress shortly after Russia’s 2022 invasion, an orchestral version of the piece accompanied the film that introduced his remarks.

Greene has described Skoryk as “a friend of our family,” a detail included in the description of his 2022 recording of *Melody* for the Michigan Recording Project. That connection shaped his performance on Friday night. Before playing, Greene dedicated the piece to his mother-in-law, sister-in-law, godson, cousin, and other family members living in Kyiv and Lviv.

Hearing *Melody* in the moment, I registered it as a thoughtful, unflashy encore. It was only after the recital—when Greene told me that Kyiv had endured “seven hours of missiles”—the night before—that the depth of that dedication came into focus. The encore was not chosen for atmosphere; it was chosen for home, for family, and for the impossibility of separating art from the world in which it is played.

Final Thoughts

If Greene’s early career established him as a “masterful pianist,” Friday night’s recital revealed something deeper: an artist who has carried the difficult, meticulous work of technique, life, injury, resilience, and world history into a sound that is unmistakably his own.

In our conversation afterward, he said simply:

“This is what I do. Practicing is like eating for me! a different kind of nourishment.”
— Arthur Greene

And that is exactly what his playing feels like—nourishment. Not spectacle, not display, but sustenance. Few pianists play with such humanity and I feel grateful I had the opportunity to see him live.

UPCOMING SHOWS:

Mackenzie Melemed, Friday, March 13, 2026 @ 7:30 PM

Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center

In celebration of America’s 250th anniversary, Young Artists laureate Mackenzie Melemed presents *Keys Across America*—a vibrant program featuring music by Copland, Ives, Beach, Gottschalk, Rorem, and other iconic American voices.

Lukas GeniuÅ¡as and Anna Geniushene, Monday, April 13, 2026 @ 7:30 PM

Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center

Bachauer Gold Medalist Lukas GeniuÅ¡as and Cliburn Silver Medalist Anna Geniushene—an electrifying husband-and-wife duo—perform a bold two-piano program featuring Rachmaninoff’s *Symphonic Dances*, Adams’ *Hallelujah Junction*, and Copland’s *El SalÃ³n MÃ©xico*.

[Tickets](#)

Sources

Arthur Greene, “Beethoven: Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111,” YouTube video, 7:14, posted Sep. 24 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZ3Nz5ePiJo>.

[Home](#)

Category

1. Reviews
2. Music

Tags

1. Art and War
2. Arthur Greene
3. Arthur Greene pianist
4. Arthur Greene review
5. Bach Partita No. 2
6. Bachauer

7. Bachauer 2025
8. BÃ©nÃ©diction de Dieu dans la solitude
9. Beethoven Op. 110
10. Best piano concerts Utah
11. Chopin Sonata No. 2
12. classical music
13. Classical piano masterclass
14. Concert Review
15. Franz Liszt
16. FrÃ©dÃ©ric Chopin
17. Funeral March
18. Gina Bachauer International Piano Foundation
19. Injury and Recovery
20. Inner Space
21. Johann Sebastian Bach
22. Julian Jaynes
23. Ludwig van Beethoven
24. Melody (Skoryk)
25. Music and Emotion
26. Music and Memory
27. Music and Politics
28. Music Criticism
29. Musical Expression
30. Myroslav Skoryk
31. Performance Analysis
32. Pianistic Technique
33. Piano Recital
34. Piano technique interpretation
35. Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center
36. Salt Lake City
37. Technique and Interpretation
38. Ukraine
39. Ukrainian Composers
40. Ukrainian Music
41. Utah Arts
42. Utah classical music review
43. War in Ukraine
44. Zelenskyy

default watermark

Date

2026/06/25

Date Created

2025/11/16

Author

keola06