

# *A Concert Tribute to Solomon Mikowsky*

Featuring **Inesa Sinkevych** (PS '06, DMA '10), piano,

**Yuan Sheng** (BM '95, MM '97), piano,

**Wael Farouk** (PS '07), piano,

**Alexandre Moutouzkine** (MM '03, PS '05, AD '06), piano,

**Jiayin Li** (DMA '23), piano,

and **Simone Dinnerstein** (PC '89), piano

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2024 | 10:30 AM  
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL

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## PROGRAM

*Reflection*

**Slideshow celebrating Solomon  
and MSM's Mikowsky Recital Hall**

*Welcome*

**James Gandre**  
*President, Manhattan School of Music*

FRANZ SCHUBERT  
(1797–1828)

*Ungarische Melodie (Hungarian Melody)* in B Minor, D. 817  
**Inesa Sinkevych\*** (PS '06, DMA '10), piano

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN  
(1810–1849)

Nocturne in D-flat Major, Op. 27, no. 2  
**Yuan Sheng** (BM '95, MM '97), piano

*Remarks*

**Joyce Griggs**  
*Executive Vice President and Provost,  
Manhattan School of Music*

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF *Elegie* in E-flat Minor from  
(1873–1943) *Morceaux de fantaisie*, Op. 3, no. 1  
**Wael Farouk\*** (PS '07), piano

J. S. BACH Concerto in D Minor, BWV 974  
(1685–1750) II. Adagio

ALESSANDRO MARCELLO  
(1673–1747) **Alexandre Moutouzkine\***  
(MM '03, PS '05, AD '06), piano

*Remarks* **Jorge Lerman and Aida Weissman**  
*Nephew and Niece of Solomon*

IGNACIO CERVANTES *Adiós a Cuba (Farewell to Cuba)*  
(1847–1905)

*No llores más (Cry No More)*

**Jiayin Li\*** (DMA '23), piano

ROBERT SCHUMANN *Von fremden Ländern und Menschen (Of Foreign Lands and*  
(1810–1856) *Peoples)* from *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15, no. 1

**Simone Dinnerstein** (PC '89), piano

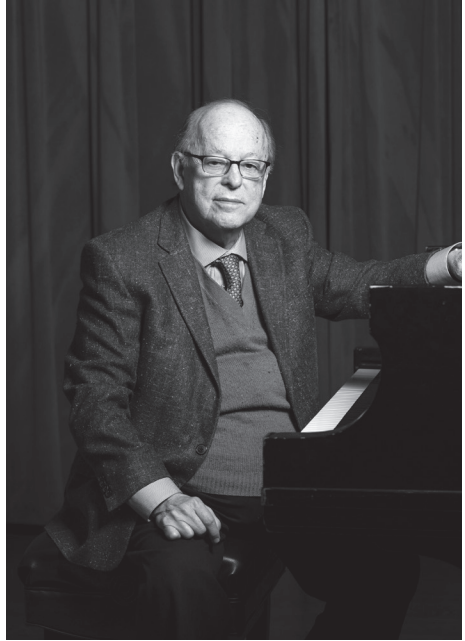
*Reflection* **“Final Video”**

BALDASSARE GALUPPI Sonata No. 7 in D Major, R.35  
(1706–1785) I. *Adagio*

**Solomon Mikowsky**, piano

# ABOUT SOLOMON MIKOWSKY (1936–2024)

Solomon Mikowsky – who possessed a singular pedagogical genius which he brought to his work at Manhattan School of Music – joined the MSM Precollege faculty in 1969 and the College faculty in 1974. With 55 years of service to our institution, Solomon taught for more than half of MSM’s 105-year history. Included in Benjamin Saver’s *The Most Wanted Piano Teachers in the USA* and cited by *Clavier* as “one of the world’s most sought-after artist teachers,” Mikowsky stands as one of this country’s giants of music pedagogy.



Solomon approached his inextinguishable passion for teaching with a dry wit and immense skill as

both musician and teacher. Over five-plus decades, he taught into being a living musical legacy – an expansive community of former students who are performing and teaching at many of the world’s greatest performance halls and institutions of higher education (including 11 who have taught at MSM’s College and Precollege). France’s *Sur Exprès* referred in an article to Solomon’s “magical ability to develop his piano students into artists,” a contention evidenced by this partial list of those former students enjoying international careers, including Alexandra Beliakovich, Jenny Q. Chai, Jovianney Emmanuel Cruz, Gustavo Díaz-Jerez, Simone Dinnerstein, Wael Farouk (MSM faculty), Po-Wei Ger, Kirill Gerstein, Kookhee Hong, Adam Kent (MSM Precollege faculty), Kho Woon Kim, Kyu Yeon Kim, Youngho Kim, Sofya Melikyan, José Ramón Mendez, Misha Namirovsky, Edward Neeman, Yuan Sheng, Aaron Shorr, Tatiana Tessman, Chun Wang, Xiayin Wang, Yungwook Yoo, Jie Yuan, and current Co-Heads of MSM’s Piano department Alexandre Moutouzkin and Inesa Sinkevych.

Moreover, we see Solomon’s pedagogical legacy and philanthropic devotion to the institution live on in highly visible fashion on the MSM campus. A longtime MSM donor and member of the Galaxy Society, Solomon made two

generous gifts which led to the creation of the Solomon Mikowsky Recital Hall, inaugurated in 2010 and expanded in 2018, in conjunction with the School's Centennial. Many of those same former students mentioned above returned to perform at both the hall's inauguration and its expansion and reopening eight years later.

A Steinway Artist, Solomon was a recipient of the MSM President's Medal for Distinguished Service and was celebrated during the pandemic with the MSM website presentation of seven sets of Mozart's *Twinkle Variations* featuring Solomon and 47 of his students and an 85th-birthday celebration featuring him and 75 of his students performing in *A Birthday Celebration!*

Born in Cuba to Polish parents, Solomon received his early training with César Pérez Sentenat, and then, awarded scholarships by the Cuban government and The Juilliard School, he continued his studies in New York City with Sascha Gorodnitzki, receiving BM and MM degrees from Juilliard and completing his studies with a doctorate from Teachers College of Columbia University. In addition to his foundational service on the MSM faculty, Solomon's incredible life journey also saw him teaching and giving master classes at leading conservatories as well as judging international competitions around the world.

Solomon leaves behind family, close friends, and former students, many of whom are here today to celebrate him. We will miss him dearly and move forward with gratitude in our hearts for the role he played at MSM for more than half its existence and for those elemental qualities of artistry and inspiration that he brought forward in so many of our students over the years.

# WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

Solomon was a pivotal figure in my life, my most important teacher and beloved mentor. In addition to his enormous teaching output at the Manhattan School of Music, he traveled from New York to Chicago every three weeks for 11 years to teach several talented students, and I was incredibly lucky to be the first of them. To many of his students, including myself, Solomon was like a father figure, deeply caring not only about our professional development, growth, and success, but also about our personal lives. He developed our curiosity and ardently insisted that we broaden our scope not only from a musical perspective, but as artists and citizens of the world. His zest for life and passion for finding beauty in music was inexhaustible. He loved art, opera, great conductors, great food, but most of all he enjoyed making a good joke. His teaching philosophy formed a strong foundation for my own teaching, and his principles echo in my mind every lesson I give. I have no doubts that Solomon's legacy will be carried by his numerous students around the world for many generations to come.

**Inesa Sinkevych** (PS '06, DMA '10)  
*Co-Head of Piano Department  
and Piano faculty, Manhattan School of Music*

Dr. Mikowsky has always been—and will always be—a great source of inspiration in music as well as in life. We, his students, carry with us his sharp and witty criticisms, yet we also remember how he always believed in us and how much he supported us. He still does. I greatly miss his unique sense of humor, his inexhaustible energy, his contagious curiosity about life and culture, his admiration for Shura Cherkassky, and his strongest belief in the intrinsic value of art. There is no end to this list, and to my gratitude.

**Alexandra Beliakovich-Shkoda** (BM '10, MM '12, DMA '16)  
*Music Director, Church of St. Mary the Virgin  
and Assistant Choir Director and Adjunct Professor, Seton Hall University*

Dr. Mikowsky was not only an exceptional pedagogue but also the most dedicated teacher I've ever known. He gave me everything, profoundly transforming my life in ways words can't fully express. He was like a second father to me, guiding and nurturing me with boundless care and compassion. His persistence and high expectations could sometimes be demanding and even harsh, but they always came from a place of deep kindness and a genuine desire to see us succeed. He pushed us beyond our limits not to be difficult, but to help us discover our true potential and grow into the best versions of ourselves.

His wisdom, strength, and unwavering commitment left a lasting mark on my heart. The lessons he imparted and the values he instilled in me will stay with me always. I am eternally grateful for the profound impact he had on my life, and I will forever cherish the memories of his guidance and the way he helped shape who I am today.

**Jiayin Li** (DMA '23)  
*Piano faculty, Manhattan School of Music*

I cannot thank Dr. Mikowsky enough for his ongoing support over the decades. When I started the FaceArt Institute of Music in 2011, he, along with Inesa, flew to Shanghai with some of his students and gave master classes for our grand opening. On our tenth anniversary, he still flew all the way from New York to support us! He was always so honest, real, and full of wisdom.

The most important thing for me was how Dr. Mikowsky formed the bonds between his students. He organized tours in Europe and Canary Islands where we played concerts and shared great time together. It is the most precious thing for me that his students come from all over the world and now we love and support each other around the globe!

**Jenny Q Chai** (DMA '13)  
*Piano faculty, University of California, Berkeley,  
and Founder, FaceArt Institute of Music*

I was very fortunate to cross paths with Solomon. A great and dedicated teacher, an extraordinary musician, a loyal human being.

**Wael Farouk** (PS '07)  
*Piano faculty, Manhattan School of Music*

Simone spent the formative years of her youth studying with Solomon Mikowsky, before studying with Maria Curcio in London and Peter Serkin at The Juilliard School. She has released thirteen albums which all topped the Classical Billboard charts, and in 2022 was nominated for a Grammy. However, a most special recording was *Mozart in Havana*, which came about after Dr. Mikowsky brought her to his festival in Cuba and introduced her to the fabulous Havana Lyceum Orchestra and conductor, José Antonio Méndez Padrón. The release of the album was marked by a concert tour of the United States, where warm and enthusiastic crowds cheered the arrival of the Cuban musicians.

**Simone Dinnerstein** (PC '89)  
*Piano faculty, Mannes School of Music*

The emptiness that Dr. Mikowsky's absence leaves in our hearts and lives is enormous, but bigger is the love and the generosity that he spread during his rich life-path. Bigger still was his unconditional dedication to music and to his students, the passion with which he lived every day and with which he embraced his vocation as a pedagogue. The years spent in his studio were very important and made me have a different insight on many issues, not only musical but also individual. His capacity to observe, to detect, and to develop the personality and the individual qualities of each student was unique, as were his sharp sense of humour, his outspoken nature, and his love for life and music.

**Sofya Melikyan** (MM '06)

*Concert Pianist*

I met Dr. Solomon Mikowsky when I was 16 years old at the “Infanta Cristina” Piano Competition in Spain. He made such an impression on me that I decided to complete my Bachelor's, Master's, and DMA degrees with him at MSM. During those years he helped me develop and mature not only as a musician, but also as a person. He was aware of my passion for science, composition, and contemporary repertoire, and he encouraged it. He had the rare talent of teaching students with great rigor while bringing the best out of them, enhancing their unique musical personalities. He was a maker of true artists. He was my musical father and his artistic influence perdures in me to this day.

**Gustavo Díaz-Jerez** (BM '92, MM '94, DMA '00)

*Professor of Piano, Higher School of Music of the Basque Country, Musikene*

Having studied with Dr. Mikowsky for 14 years, it is difficult to describe all his influence in a few words. One of the last repertoires he worked on with me was J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*—in which, after a few lessons, he advised me to go study with the renowned Bach scholar Kenneth Cooper. Mikowsky felt that this particular composition was beyond his expertise, and he was curious to learn from another pedagogue. When I returned from working with Cooper, I distinctly recall Mikowsky's exact words: “Was I far off?” To which I remarked: “Not at all!”

Despite all his legacies, nothing stopped him from being curious and eager to learn. It is something that we as artists should remember to do.

**Mijung Lee** (PC '08, BM '11, MM '13, DMA '19)

*Piano faculty, Lindeblad School of Music*



Even when I was apprised of Solomon's grave condition at the end, there was a part of me that was sure he would pull through. He was indomitable; he would always be there. He instilled respect for professionalism even in his youngest students, championed individuality, and always reminded us that music is about communication above all. The ride was sometimes bumpy; he could inflict self-doubt with a single barbed observation. But he also knew how to instill confidence and—more importantly—how to define the contribution of every musician. There has never been a "Mikowsky" style of playing, because he cultivated each student's unique musical voice. There is not a body of knowledge or a cachet of secrets for former students to pass along; rather, there is an outlook on living life and filling it with music which we hope to transmit. Solomon may have winced at the Yiddishisms of his youth, but I know his memory is already a blessing.

**Adam Kent** (BM '86, MM '87)  
*Music faculty, State University of New York at Oneonta  
and Piano faculty, MSM Precollege Division*

For long but still too short years, Solomon had shared his passion, knowledge, and wisdom on music and arts, history and culture, life and the universe with each and every one of us who has had the fortune to know him. Even though he was fearlessly convinced that he was going to a "different place" than the rest of us, I feel he has never departed as his love, sensitivity, and wit will stay in our memory and spirit for years to come.

**Yuan Sheng** (BM '95, MM '97)  
*Professor of Piano, Central Conservatory in Beijing*

Dr. Fütting talked about how we only feel the presence during absence, and now I'm experiencing this more than ever. It is strange to not see Dr. Mikowsky around the school. Curious about every aspect of life, he was more than a teacher to us. A true visionary, I found myself always lagged behind him slightly. I remembered him advising me to embrace the musical works of our time, and me shying away from the strange-to-me notations back then. Now I found myself curious about new music more than ever. He told me to play with more passion, and now music is meaningful only with the fullest devotion. We not only lost a great teacher, we lost a greater friend and a family member.

**Po-Wei Ger** (BM '18)  
*Candidate for Doctor of Musical Arts, Manhattan School of Music*

I first met Solomon in 2004, after competing in an international competition. He was generous in his comments while explaining how I was far too rough and undisciplined. Two years of a Master's degree, many private lessons and many meaningful conversations later, if I have not yet tamed my worst musical excesses at least he gave me the ability to truly see and appraise myself as an artist. Solomon was a brilliant musician who understood what his students really needed (but often did not want!) to hear to advance on their own musical journey. Even now, I can almost see him looking down at me after every performance, and telling me, "Much better in the Beethoven Sonata. But why play Ravel so fast?!"

**Edward Neeman** (MM '08)  
*Piano Faculty, Australian National University*

With every passing year, Solomon Mikowsky's influence on me becomes stronger as a kind of shining light of aspiration. I am deeply saddened that he is no longer with us.

Solomon's generosity is unique both in its kind and breadth. He was generous with his nurturing dedication for his students, with his praise and support, with his demands and unapologetic criticism, with his biting humor and his appreciation for every student's individualism, and with his resources. Solomon was real, reliable, sincerely caring, deeply professional, full of integrity, and very successful—rare. His legacy will live on in all his students and reflect far beyond his incredible musical teaching: in how we treat our profession and our students. A legendary figure that touched many lives.

**Misha Namirovsky** (PC '98, BM '01)  
*Associate Professor, Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing*

A tribute to a great teacher who has been one of the main influences on my life is no easy prospect. Words seem inadequate to express the breadth and depth of my years of study with Dr. Mikowsky. I feel lucky to have started my studies with him when I was 12 years old, and then continuing into my undergraduate and postgraduate studies, setting me up for a life in music that I never could have imagined as a naïve youngster. I was lucky to benefit from Mikowsky's unswerving dedication to training young pianists as well as nurturing the more mature pianists that I looked up to. I will always cherish the camaraderie of

being in his class, where he created a special environment for learning and sharing that nurtured the highest musical standards. It is with love and gratitude that I offer my sincere thanks to Dr. Mikowsky.

**Aaron Shorr** (PC '79, BM '83, MM '84)  
*Director of Music, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland*

I met Dr. Mikowsky in 2004 at the Panama International Piano Competition, where he was on the jury. There I also met many of his students: Inesa, Sasha, and Yung Wook, and I was touched by how deeply and genuinely he cared for each of them. His support for his students was legendary. We bonded almost instantly, and it was the start of a decades-long relationship that formed me into who I am today. I will never forget his generosity in bringing me to New York to pursue my DMA. As a teacher, he challenged my understanding of music and its limitless potential by inviting me to play music by underrepresented and living composers. I will miss his warmth, zesty jokes, humorous stories, and love of life. Rest in peace, dear Solomon.

**Tatiana Tessman** (PS '10, DMA '17)  
*Artistic Director, Mid-America Performing Arts Alliance*

Dr. Solomon Mikowsky was the first teacher who opened my eyes to the incredibly diverse world of modern and contemporary piano literature. His guidance forever changed my view on new music; he was honest, passionate, and cared deeply about the artistic development of each of his students. He will be missed dearly by all of us as his students, colleagues, and friends. May his memory be a blessing to all who knew him.

**Chun Wang** (DMA '20)  
*Board Member, Piano Teachers Congress of New York*

*As you can imagine, we received an overwhelming number of tributes from Dr. Mikowsky's friends, colleagues, and former students.*

*Please visit the link below to see the ongoing additions to these reflections and to see a special video message and performance by*

**Jovianney Emmanuel Cruz** (PC '84, BM '89, MM '91):



If you wish to make a contribution to Manhattan School of Music  
in memory of Solomon Mikowsky, please visit **MSMNYC.EDU/GIVING**  
or mail a contribution in any amount to:

Manhattan School of Music  
Office of Philanthropy  
130 Claremont Avenue  
New York, New York 10027



For further information, please contact Susan Madden,  
Vice President for Philanthropy, at 917-493-4115 or at [smadden@msmnyc.edu](mailto:smadden@msmnyc.edu).