

Masterwork Conversations BIO

Pianists Matthew Harrison and Vlada Yaneva have been bringing Masterwork Conversations to audiences since their inaugural Chopin series in 2010. Their performances have taken them from stages in Europe to Carnegie Hall to the airwaves of WQXR, and the Wall Street Journal has featured Mr. Harrison's article on Grieg: "Norwegian Soul Laid Bare." Their open conversation recital format has brought new musical insight and enjoyment to audiences of every age and experience. In 2015 they released their debut CD, *The Imagination of the Folk*.

VLADA BIO

Vlada was born in Bulgaria to a family of a puppetry director and an engineer. She grew up with two older siblings, a big collie dog and lots of small animals (hedgehogs, rabbits, and the occasional rooster) in their apartment in the capital, Sofia. She started playing the piano in kindergarten and went on to study at the National School of Music and then at the Pantcho Vladigerov Conservatory. Later she graduated from the Manhattan School of Music in NYC from the studio of Nina Svetlanova.

Music has taken Vlada on stages in Italy, France, Finland, Bulgaria, Greece, England and the United States. In NYC she has performed at Weill recital hall at Carnegie hall, Steinway hall, Yamaha hall, Trinity Church, Scandinavian House, St. John the Divine, Barge museum, Bulgarian Consulate and many more. She loves chamber music and often collaborates and performs with musicians in the city.

Mrs. Yaneva cherishes the opportunity to share her passion for music and the arts through teaching. In March 2007 she became a team leader of the first Children's Music Social Project at the New York Cares organization working with kids in transitional shelters for two years. Later in 2011 she joined the New Victory Teaching artist ensemble and continues to work currently with students from New York public schools. She also holds her private teaching piano studio in the city for the last fifteen years.

For fun Vlada enjoys performing with the Bulgarian folk dance group "Bosilek", composing music for puppetry theater, hiking, reading and cooking. She lives in Washington heights, NYC with her husband Matthew and their daughter Yana.

MATTHEW BIO

Matthew's pianistic odyssey began when at 14 years old he heard on an out of tune and worn piano an old gypsy melody by Liszt and became entranced with its sound. Seeking out old recordings in the library he soon discovered a special affinity for the music of Rachmaninoff and Chopin, and decided to become a concert pianist no matter the cost. His first piano teacher Betty Hines was thrilled to find him finally practicing, and selflessly directed Matthew to the studio of

Sandra Lawler, who prepared him to audition for the Manhattan School of Music, where he earned two degrees.

It was in New York that Matthew met pianist and author David Dubal, eventually becoming his teaching assistant. Matthew received much encouragement from him for both piano playing and for writing, which led to his article “Norwegian Soul Laid Bare” in the Wall Street Journal. New York also opened the door for a lasting mentorship with Garrick Ohlsson, whose pianistic guidance has been a lodestone for Matthew.

In 2015 became the music director of the Truman High School Band in the Bronx, which he revived after years of neglect with the support of the school. This follows after a decade of teaching in the Manhattan School of Music Precollege Division, where he continues to teach Piano Literature and Improvisation.

When not practicing Matthew can be found scaling mountains out West or in Europe, tracking wolves or bears in Alaska, or kayaking with alligators (as safely as possible!) in his native Florida. Matthew is happily married to Vlada Yaneva and proud father to their daughter Yana.