

HENRY KRAMER, piano

Biography



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The winner of the Second Prize at the 2016 Queen Elisabeth Competition and the 2015 William Petschek Recital Debut Award from The Juilliard School, pianist Henry Kramer is establishing himself as one of the most exciting American pianists of his generation. His performances have been praised by critics as “triumphant” and “thrilling” (*The New York Times*), and “technically effortless” (*La Presse*, Montreal). A Maine native, Mr. Kramer has also earned top prizes in the 2015 Honens International Piano Competition, the 2011 Montreal International Music Competition, and the 6th China Shanghai International Piano Competition. He was a laureate of the 2017 American Pianist Association Awards, prizewinner in the 8th National Chopin Competition in Miami, and received the 2014 Harvard Musical Association Arthur Foote Award. He is a winner of Astral’s 2014 National Auditions. His first commercial recording, dedicated to the *Oratorio Transcriptions* of Liszt, was recently released on the NAXOS label.

Mr. Kramer has appeared as soloist with orchestras across the globe, including the National Belgian Orchestra, Brussels Philharmonic, Calgary Philharmonic, Shanghai Philharmonic, Bilkent Symphony Orchestra in Ankara, Turkey, the Portland (Maine) Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre Métropolitain du Montreal, and the Yale Philharmonia. He has soloed under the batons of preeminent conductors Marin Alsop, Jan Pascal Tortelier, and Stéphane Dénève. In recent seasons, he was featured in Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 3* with the National Orchestra of Belgium and Hans Graf, in Brahms’ *Piano Concerto No. 1* with the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional in the Dominican Republic,

Ravel’s *Concerto in G* with Gerard Schwarz and the Indianapolis Symphony, and Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 4* with Symphony in C. He has been a guest performer in recitals at Portland Piano International (Oregon), The Cliburn Foundation, and the National Chopin Foundation in Miami, and in Carnegie’s Zankel and Weill halls, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Queen Elizabeth Hall in Antwerp, and BOZAR in Brussels.

Deeply committed to chamber music repertoire, Mr. Kramer has been featured in performances at Lincoln Center, and has participated in the Steans Institute at the Ravinia Festival, La Jolla Music Society’s Summerfest, Music@Menlo’s International Program, and the Verbier Festival Academy, where he was awarded the Tabor Prize in piano. He appeared on Ravinia’s Steans Music Institute tour, which included performances at Boston’s Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and New York’s Morgan Library, as well as an unprecedented appearance in Havana, Cuba, as a cultural ambassador. He performed in the Orchestra of St. Luke’s Resonance Festival dedicated to the works of Schubert, and also at the Salon Chamber Music Festival in Provence, where he shared the stage with members of the Berlin Philharmonic, including Emmanuel Pahud and Daishin Kashimoto.

Mr. Kramer holds both a Master’s and a Bachelor’s degree from The Juilliard School and an Artist Diploma from the Yale School of Music, where he received the Charles S. Miller Prize for the most outstanding first-year pianist. He recently completed a doctoral degree at the Yale School of Music. He has held positions as the visiting artist in piano at Smith College and Associate Professor of Piano at the University of Missouri Kansas City Conservatory of Dance and Music, and currently holds the L. Rex Whiddon Distinguished Chair in Piano at Columbus State University’s Schwob School of Music in Georgia. His musical mentors have included Julian Martin, Robert McDonald, and Boris Berman.

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HENRY KRAMER, piano

Critical Acclaim



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"After a dark and quietly expressive performance of Bach's G-sharp *Prelude and Fugue (WTC I)*, pianist Henry Kramer pulled of a thrilling a nearly flawless performance of Brahms' *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*. Playing with astonishingly confident technique, steady rhythm and masterful pacing, he dazzled the ear for 25 straight minutes. There's not much more to say about it than, 'Wow!'"—*Cleveland Classical Review*

"He produced a most exceptionally rich sound, big-boned in certain respects yet intimate when it mattered. He traversed [Beethoven's *A Major Sonata (Op. 101)*]'s wide-ranging emotions with great sensitivity, wistful for the opening theme and somber in the third movement, and when the gloves came off for the second movement's march and the valedictory finale, he swept everything before him. Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit* also received a close to perfect performance. His silky tremolos in *Ondine* was achieved with enviable evenness—pianissimo throughout—before building up to a tumultuous tsunami of a climax...the full dynamic range of Kramer's armamentarium was unleashed with a vengeance...His repeated note technique was superb, and the way he launched into the coruscating climaxes was breathtaking."—*Pianomania*

"...his reading [of Chopin's *Fourth Ballade in F minor (Op. 52)*] came close to the perfect conception of this masterpiece, opening with unadorned simplicity and working his way through the variations to a feverish climax. Even in the terrifying coda, absolute clarity and no over-pedaling concluded this moving and probing account...He packed in savage power [in Prokofiev's *Sixth Sonata*]."—*Pianomania*

"... as technically flawless and precise as a faceted diamond..."—*Portland Press Herald*

"...the third movement of Ravel's *Presto* was superb under Kramer's hands, executed with light dexterity and tonal sensitivity."—*International Piano Magazine*

"...Henry Kramer [was] triumphant in a thrilling performance of [Prokofiev's] *Sixth Sonata*."—*The New York Times*

"This is a pianist of enormous talent....[Kramer] personalized interpretations to such a degree that works emerged anew. He is a big personality. Nothing was for the sake of flash. But how could you not be impressed with a Ravel 'Alborada del gracioso' that was so virtuosic, and which pulled an entire orchestra from the belly of the Steinway?...But the real stunner was 'La vallée des cloches.' Kramer managed to create three distinct color fields of sound—valley, sky, bells?—which lent a luxurious, three-dimensional air....Kramer did not attempt to shave down [Schumann's] jagged edges or tone down the contrasts [in *Kreisleriana*]. Still, there was something personal in the way [he] imagines each of [the] movements: songful here, explosive there....[Hannah Lash's] 'Petit rêve pour les pétunias défuntes' was lyrical and sensitive...But a figure lurked about that called back to earlier in the recital, and the pianist recognized it as such, shifting moods and colors as only a true Schumannite could."

—*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"...plays with much dignity and nuance...not a single missed note, and doing exactly what is necessary to make [Liszt's *First Piano Concerto*] come alive..."—*Pianomania*

"Kramer powered through Chopin's difficulties with energy to spare...unusually beautifully nuanced performance...it seemed to flow naturally from somewhere deep inside. Well-judged pedaling perfectly melded ringing left hand accents with a right hand that did seem to sing....Kramer's performance was unaffected and lyrical...Kramer's way with *Brahm's Variations on a Theme of Pagini*, was a revelation."—**Oregon Arts Watch**

"As for Henry Kramer's artistry, I've rarely heard such a sensitive, cultivated, and ravishingly colorful Ravel G Major from a young pianist. The first movement's long chains of trills, for example, readily evoked images of an ethereal musical saw, very much in the tradition of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli's benchmark 1957 recording."
—**Jed Distler, ClassicsToday.com**

"Henry Kramer confirmed first round impressions with a strong reading of Haydn's *E-flat Sonata (Hob. XIV:49)*, ably contrasting its sunny and dark polarities and mixing gentle runs with weightier passagework. He played subtly and effectively with rhythms in the concluding Minuet...He ended with seven movements from Ligeti's *Music Ricerta*, creating a wide variety of articulations and playing Ligeti's obsessive motifs with amazing stamina (the left hand figures in No. 7 are killing, but Kramer barely batted an eyelash). He brilliantly completed the set with No. 10."—**Cleveland Classical Review**

"Not a single piece in the program could be described as technically or musically facile, yet Kramer interpreted and performed every one with consummate artistry and dazzling technique.... playing that was characterized by sharply delineated textures, cleanly articulated phrasing and supple yet muscular rhythms....technical aplomb and evocative expression.... Kramer met every challenge Ravel threw at him...."—**Chestnut Hill Local**

"Henry Kramer in Prokofiev's *Sixth Sonata* was especially successful in investing this fingerbuster with expressive character."—**Musical America**

"a mesmerizing performance of Sergei Prokofiev's 1923 *Piano Concerto No. 2*, featuring guest piano virtuoso Henry Kramer...he performed musical marvels....Kramer's playing is a study of precision, tempo variation and expressive sensitivity." —**Tacoma Weekly News**

"Kramer employed a deft touch for voicing and coloring to achieve a near-orchestral palette of timbres in the Suite 'Bergamasque.' The Prelude recalled the styles of French Baroque composers Jean Philippe Rameau and Francois Couperin – tart and elegant. The Minuet danced with a beguiling quirkiness while the "Clair de lune" set a dreamlike trance. The Passepied was, indeed, a balletic finale. Like Debussy, himself, Kramer combined the sonic impressions of an island of pleasure within the framework of a pyrotechnical display piece worthy of Liszt in 'L'isle Joyeuse.' Kramer...elicited a singing tone...projecting the composer's peerless lyricism within a securely molded structure delivered with impressive technical brilliance." —**Chestnut Hill Local**