



Schwarzkopf will play in the upstairs gallery of the Asheville Art Museum's east wing at 3 p.m. Aug. 17. Admission \$6. Call 253-3227, or go to www.ashevilleart.org.

SPECIAL TO SCENE/COURTESY ALEXANDER SCHWARZKOPF

Alexander Schwarzkopf has been playing piano since age 8.

Schwarzkopf will play 'Goldberg Variations' at art museum

By Mark-Ellis Bennett

Renowned pianist Alexander Schwarzkopf will perform Johann Sebastian Bach's keyboard masterpiece "Goldberg Variations" at the Asheville Art Museum on Aug. 17. The presentation is part of the museum's ongoing Pianoforte Recital Series. It is said Bach wrote the Goldberg Variations to be performed on a harpsichord or clavichord with two keyboards.

Schwarzkopf said playing it on a single keyboard presents technical challenges. "Like most of Bach's compositions it sounds incredibly beautiful and pleasing, but once you get on the inside of it you realize Bach was way ahead of his time. What the audience actually perceives when they listen to this piece are rich colors and timbres and temperaments, it's like having water poured over you. It's a very beautiful and refreshing experience on every level," Schwarzkopf said.

Published in 1741, it is comprised of an aria with 30 diverse variations. According to Schwarzkopf, although there is at least one precedent of keyboard variation form in the classical repertoire, Bach's Goldberg Variations became the model for all variation sets to come.

"The transcendent beauty and consummate mastery of lyricism, counterpoint, compositional form, and structure Bach presents in this work are the most enduring features

of this keyboard masterpiece," Schwarzkopf said. "There is no doubt in my mind why this work has remained highly sought after and yet rarely performed by keyboard players throughout current and past generations. Its sheer length and technical difficulty place it among the most challenging compositions in keyboard literature."

Schwarzkopf's repertoire range on the piano includes everything from baroque to contemporary and includes many original compositions, premiered in the United States and in Germany. He has performed in public since age 8, and became a scholarship student in piano at Colorado College at age 12. He has a doctorate in Piano Performance from the University of Oregon and is a past recipient of University of Oregon Graduate Teaching Fellowships in Piano Pedagogy and Collaborative Piano.

The Pianoforte Recital Series began in 2006 when Asheville Art Museum board member Harry Rowney told executive director Pam Myers there weren't enough public venues for local pianists to play classical music, and suggested having concerts at the museum three or four times a year. Frequent Pianoforte guest artist Dr. John Cobb performed their first recital. "We've branched out a bit since then," Rowney said. "Every time we have a concert we end up getting mail from other pianists around the country who want to play in Asheville."