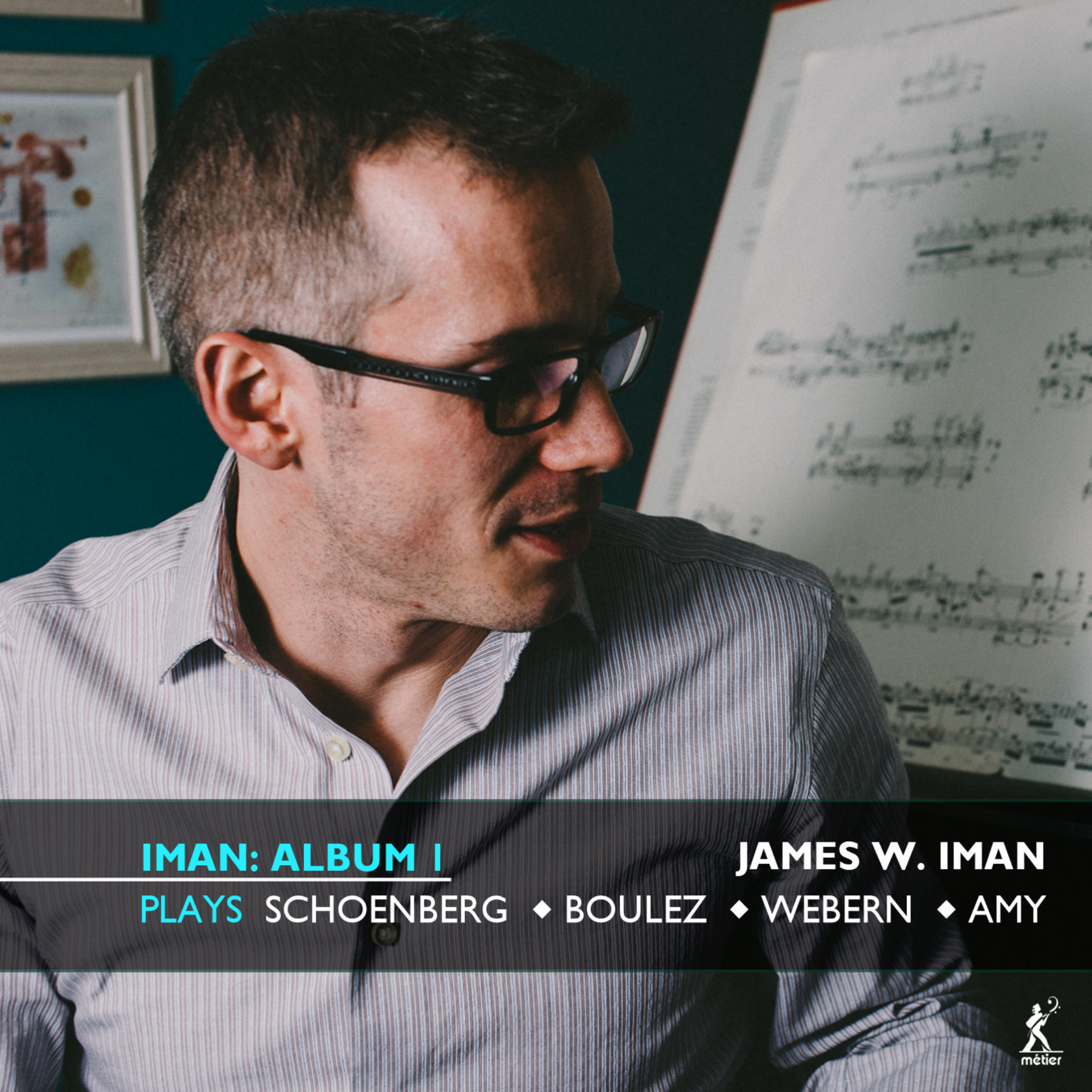

IMAN: ALBUM I
JAMES W. IMAN
PLAYS SCHOENBERG ◆ BOULEZ ◆ WEBERN ◆ AMY
métier

IMAN: ALBUM I

James W. Iman, *piano*

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)

Drei Klavierstücke, Op. 11			**13:39**
1	I.	Mässig	3:28
2	II.	Mässige Achtel	7:16
3	III.	Bewegt	2:55

Pierre Boulez (1925-2016)

Troisième Sonate pour Piano			**23:34**
4	I.	Formant 2: Trope	
		Paranthèse · Commentaire · Glose · Texte	8:53
5	II.	Formant 3: Constellation-Miroir	
		Mélange · Points 3 · Blocs II · Points 2 · Blocs I · Points 1	14:41

Anton Webern (1883-1945)

Variationen für Klavier, Op. 27			**7:39**
6	I.	Sehr mässig	2:02
7	II.	Sehr schnell	0:44
8	III,	Ruhig fliessend	4:53

Gilbert Amy (b.1936)

Sonate pour Piano			**24:53**
9	I.	Séquences	9:17
10	II.	Mutations	3:36
11	III.	Interférences	11:59

Total playing time **69:47**

THE MUSIC

With its antecedents in the late 19th century, Expressionism had grown into a substantial artistic movement in the early 20th century and made significant contributions to all of the arts. As an aesthetic, its objective is uniting the medium of a given art with visceral human emotion. Essential to achieving this is stripping away anything that does not directly contribute to that union, and as a result, Expressionism has very little concern for convention.

Conventionally, piano technique had reached its peak in the 19th century by building on the patterns and textures of the preceding eras. This predictability of technical conventions across style periods allows pianists to find familiarity between, say, Mozart and Chopin, despite their stylistic differences. It was precisely these conventions that Arnold Schoenberg would strip away in his *Drei Klavierstücke,* Op. 11, and it is for this reason that, while not virtuosic in the usual sense, these pieces are decidedly uncomfortable to play.

In a letter to Ferruccio Busoni, Schoenberg made this intention clear after Busoni had written a "concert arrangement" of Op. 11 No. 2 in which he restored the very conventional patterns and textures Schoenberg had sought to eliminate (much to Schoenberg's frustration).

Schoenberg wrote, "I strive for: complete liberation from all forms, from all symbols of cohesion and logic. Thus: Away with 'motivic working out.' Away with harmony as cement bricks of a building. Harmony is *expression* and nothing else." Indeed, the way Schoenberg wrote for the piano in his *Drei Klavierstücke* was unintentionally revolutionary, and these pieces served as a model for composers of subsequent generations who similarly sought liberation from symbols of cohesion and logic.

Pierre Boulez first performed a preliminary version of the *Troisième Sonate pour Piano* in 1958, but we know that he had begun work on it several years earlier, and was almost certainly thinking about it well before that. His intention for the sonata was to adapt the innovations he saw in the writing of Stéphane Mallarmé and James Joyce to create a work capable of constant renewal.

He had originally conceived of the sonata to be in five movements, Antiphonie, Trope, Constellation/Constellation-Miroir, Strophe, and Séquence, with each movement being mobile on the micro and macro scale. Due to the logistical problems his concept posed, only Trope and Constellation-Miroir have been published in a completed form.

Trope has four parts: Texte, Parenthèse, Commentaire, and Glose. These four parts can go in any of eight cyclical orders with Glose either preceding or succeeding Commentaire. Within Parenthèse and Commentaire there are sections enclosed in parentheses that can either be included or excluded entirely at the discretion of the performer. Additionally, there are, at various points, notes whose durations can either be discrete notated values, or a duration of the performer's choosing.

Constellation-Miroir has six parts: Mélange, Points 3, Blocs II, Points 2, Blocs I, and Points 1. The substance of Points and Blocs is distinct, with Points being composed primarily of individual notes (with occasional lines of counterpoint) and Blocs being primarily composed of aggregates ("chords"). The material within each of these six parts is broken into fragments of various sizes that are scattered across nine large sheets. The material in Points is printed in green and the material in Blocs is printed in red. At the end of each fragment are sets of uniquely shaped arrows which correspond to arrows at the beginning of other fragments. These arrows designate the options the performer has in ordering the material with the rule that none of the material may be omitted or repeated. Despite being incomplete, there is still a significant degree of variety available to performers. The ordering of material presented here is one I arrived at after years of performing and continuous study of the work and its internal logic.

Anton Webern's approach to using twelve-tone composition was wholly unique and it was his music that would have the most significant influence on Pierre Boulez, among others. Of particular interest was the way Webern used his tone rows as both the sonic and structural content of his compositions. The *Variations,* Op. 27 are an excellent example of this approach.

Each of the movements is in a conventional form–though there has been a lot of discussion about the specifics–and each plays on a different aspect of symmetry within the row.

The first movement is in ternary form wherein each phrase of the A section is an exact palindrome (the result of combining a row with its retrograde), each phrase of the B section ascends and descends the range of the piano, and the A' section is a combination of both treatments.

The second movement is in binary form wherein all of the gestures are equidistant from A 440. This treatment of symmetry gives the impression of certain events being affixed to a particular register.

The third movement is the only one that is a set of variations. In this movement Webern exploits the fact that certain permutations of the row share several notes in common with other rows. This allows him to overlap the rows and adjoin each variation to the next such that the elision results in the beginning of the statement of the row being "misaligned" with the beginning of the variation. This gives the impression that the pitch content of each variation is changing.

Peter Stadlen was the pianist tasked with premiering Webern's *Variations*, Op. 27, for which he had several rehearsals with the composer. Stadlen's copy of the score is filled with annotations added by both he and the composer and these annotations make clear that Webern had a deeply expressive (perhaps romantic) interpretation in mind for this piece.

Gilbert Amy entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1954 where he began taking piano lessons with Yvonne Lorriod, and it was through her that Amy became acquainted with Boulez in 1956. Shortly thereafter, Amy began showing his work to Boulez, which included a piece for piano that made use of integral serialism.

This piece may have remained an individual work had Boulez not performed his third piano sonata at Darmstadt in 1959. Amy was fascinated by the work and the possibilities and challenges it posed. Gilbert Amy's *Sonate pour Piano* is something of a chimera, it inherits the aggressive difficulty of Boulez's second sonata and explores the structural innovations of his third piano sonata.

Gilbert Amy's piano sonata consists of three movements: *Séquences*, *Mutations*, and *Interférences*.

Séquences (the work he had shown to Boulez) was not conceived as a mobile structure and remained so as he set about extending the material into a fully-fledged, three movement sonata wherein the second and third movements offer a different approach to dealing with mobile form.

Mutations is printed on large sheets and in six colors, each color representing a "circuit" to be chosen and followed by the performer (only one such circuit is performed). These circuits are segmented into structures of various sizes which are arranged along a vertical and horizontal axis.

The placement of a segment along the horizontal axis indicates its execution in linear time while the placement along the vertical axis indicates its tempo. While the execution of the segments must be in linear order, the performer is free to begin with any segment they wish so long as they complete the circuit.

Occasionally different circuits cross and require the interjection or combination of material from other circuits. Sometimes the result is that the pitch material of two circuits is the same, at others this requires the performer to play the material of two separate circuits simultaneously.

Lastly, many of the pitches are placed within a "time band" (similar to a measure, in the conventional sense) at the discretion of the performer such that the placement of the notes spatially within a "time band" does not indicate their order of execution.

Essentially, *Mutations* amounts to six different versions of the same movement. The mobility lies in the freedom to begin at any point in the linear structure as well as the placement of many of the individual pitches within a given time-band.

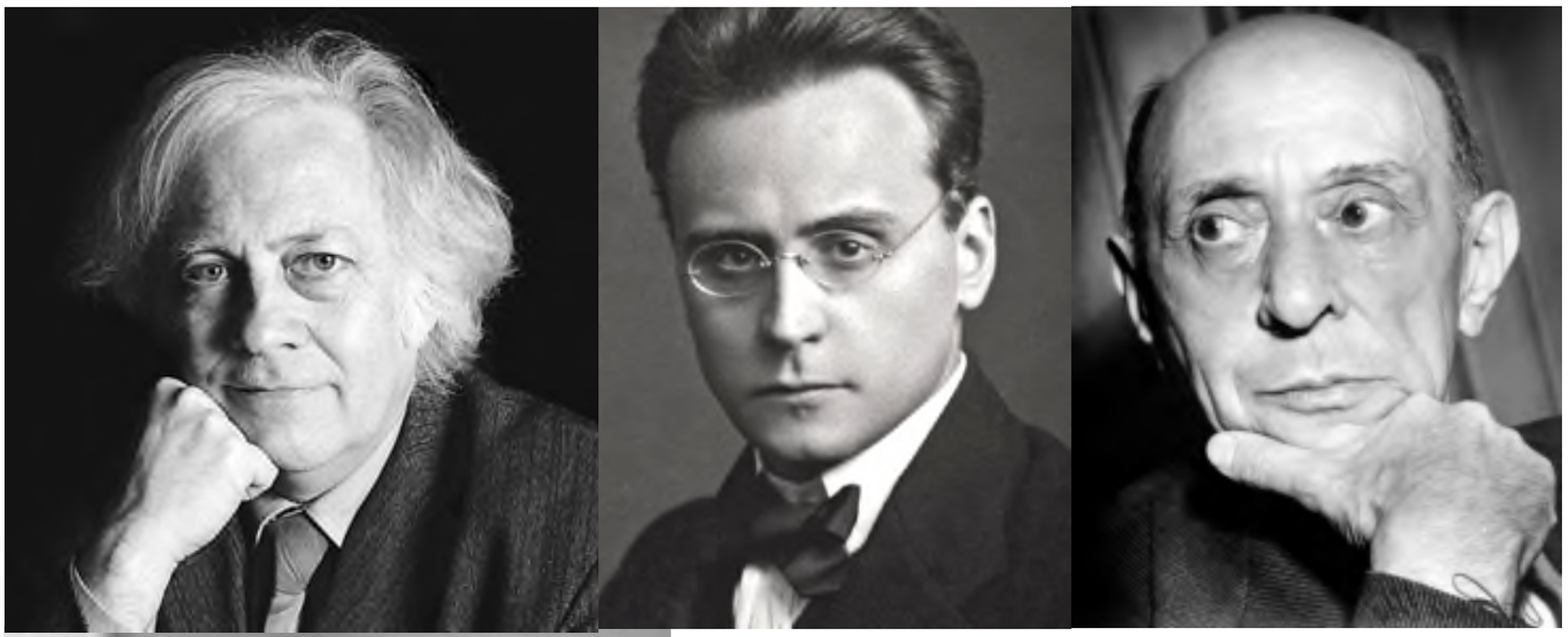
Interférences is printed in four colors on a score with complicated folding. Here the colors represent different structural groups—preparatory, developmental, concluding, and transitional—which are adjoined according to certain conditions.

Amy's Piano Sonata, for being such an early work, is without question the most substantial response to the third piano sonata of Boulez and it is recorded here for the first time.

A note from Gilbert Amy written for the original issue of this album in 2017:

> "I wrote my piano Sonata between 1957 and 1960 and I remember at the time getting some advice from Pierre Boulez for the first movement, *Interférences*. I played the Sonata at Darmstadt in July 1960 and was pleased to get it published soon after. Although the work has been played by renowned pianists such as Yvonne Loriod, Claude Helffer, Ian Pace…, this publication is a premiere after 55 years, as far as commercial recording is concerned, thanks to the efforts of James Iman."

Gilbert Amy



(L-R): Gilbert Amy, Anton Webern, Arnold Schoenberg

Pierre Boulez (1944)

THE PIANIST

Pianist James Iman plays the usual and the unusual, by composers known and unknown. As a specialist in music written since 1900—with an emphasis on music written since 1945—his repertoire spans many stylistic developments since Debussy. He is meticulous in his study of the scores and the aesthetic concepts behind each of the works he plays. This allows him to find fresh approaches to established canonic warhorses and to make complex contemporary works engaging and immediately clear to audiences.

Frances Wilson of *The Cross-Eyed Pianist* heralded James as among the few pianists who can "rise to the challenge of this music and meet it head on with conviction, musicality, and a supreme alertness to its myriad details and quirks" and as a performer he gives "a very clear sense of his total commitment to this music, and also how comfortable he feels in this repertoire."

James is constantly looking for new and interesting works to add to his repertoire and curates his programs with an interest in diversity, contrast, and continuity. He is a vocal advocate of underrepresented composers and frequently performs music by women, BIPOC, and LGBTQIA+ composers. He has appeared on Chatham University's Friday Afternoon Musicales concert series in which he has presented four programs of works by female composers.

James has given world premieres of works by Charlie Wilmoth, David Dies, and Everette Minchew and United States premieres of works by Gilbert Amy, Alwynne Pritchard, Raphaël Languillat, and Soe Tjen Marching. In April of 2017, James gave the World Premiere of "People," a concert-length work he commissioned from composer Lowell Fuchs.

In addition to his activities as a performer, James is active as a lecturer and clinician. He is a frequent guest lecturer on contemporary music at Shenandoah Conservatory, and has been a resident at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and at Grand Valley State University giving master classes for pianists and clinics with composition students.

As a graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, James holds an MA in Piano Performance and a BA in Music History and Piano Performance. While at IUP, he studied piano with Judith Radell and James Staples. In 2015, James worked with Steve Drury as a fellow at New England Conservatory's Summer Institute for Contemporary Performance Practice.

More information at: www.jameswiman.net

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Lastly, I would like to thank Jim Cunningham and the crew at WQED-FM, Christopher Ruth for his beautiful photography and—above all—my wife for her patience, encouragement, and assistance in keeping me sane through this project.

James W. Iman

(This acknowledgment was first included in the original 2017 booklet for this recording)

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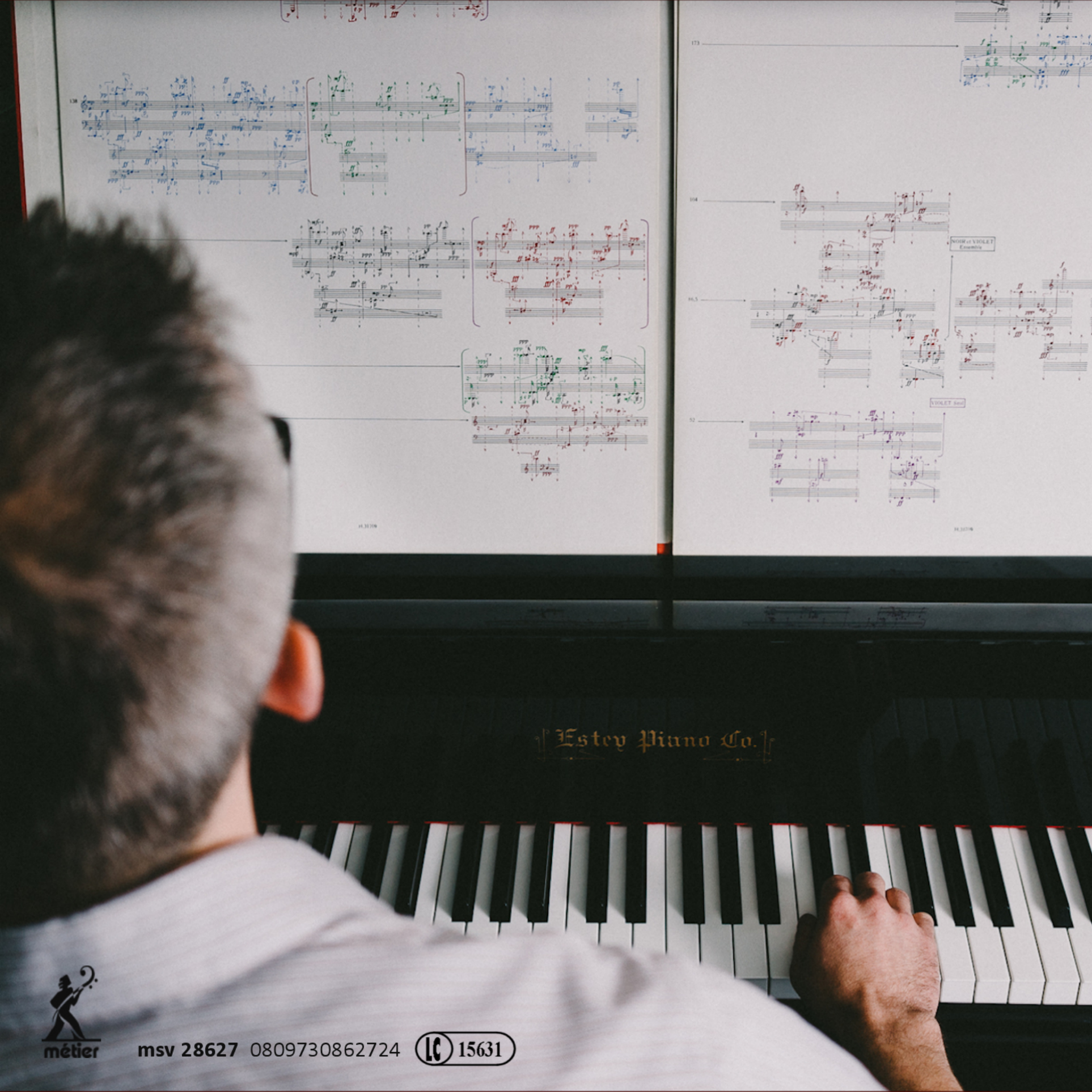

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