

DETROIT SESSIONS LAUNCH PARTY FEATURES SOLO PIANO PERFORMANCE BY IVAN MOSHCHUK AT ORCHESTRA HALL



Ivan Moshchuk is an international piano virtuoso, unabashed fan of all things Detroit who is quickly working to contribute to the City's great musical legacy on his own terms. On Thursday, June 9th Ivan will make his major stage debut – **the first solo piano concert presented by ProMusica of Detroit at Orchestra Hall in over 10 years** – featuring contemporary dance ensemble ArtLab J and experimental collaborations with the music of Scriabin, Bach/Busoni, Ravel, DiChiera, and Liszt.

Since returning to Detroit from living abroad, he has been focused on testing the boundaries of the classical music experience that drove him to refocus his art and energy from the international touring stage to his hometown of Detroit. "It's not just rock stars or pop artists who want creative control these days. While respecting the traditions of music, dance or theatre, and starting from a substantial foundation, my artistic allies and I have the power and confidence to try new things," says Ivan, who harbors the rare ability of most great artists to reach deeply within and without, communicating his enthusiasm to others.

Tickets are available online now for Thursday, June 9th to watch him make his solo debut at Detroit's Orchestra Hall, the first solo piano [performance](#) in that venue exclusively presented by ProMusica of Detroit in over 10 years! The Detroit Sessions [after-party](#) that evening will celebrate his latest endeavor embarking on a series of impressive artistic collaborations that include Shakespeare in Detroit, the ArtLab J

dance community and the musicians of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Dr. David DiChiera, Founder and Artistic Director of the Michigan Opera Theatre, has described him as “the pianist of our time.”

Moshchuk is firmly committed to Detroit’s artistic and social growth by showing how classical music can appeal to a wider audience- perhaps less versed the genre, but who are appreciative about new experiences with music mixed with other forms of artistic expression, including voice, theater, dance and cinema.



Ivan Moshchuk, pianist. Image courtesy of Marco Borggreve

As a musician, he captured first prize in the Arthur Fraser International Piano Competition and was selected as a Yamaha Young Performing Artist. A covert recommendation from his piano tuner, led to his 2010 Gilmore Young Artist Award after high school graduation in 2009 and, at the Peabody Institute, Moshchuk earned a Bachelor of Music in piano performance. Following graduation in 2013, Moshchuk relocated to Paris, France, where he became a resident of the Cité Internationale des Arts.

Last fall, in 2015, Moshchuk next released his debut studio recording, a conceptual album entitled “Forgiveness,” now available on Apple Music, Google Play, Amazon, Spotify and [Tidal](#). The album features the music of Beethoven and Rachmaninoff and explores the concept of forgiveness in relation to music, aesthetics and philosophy.

Zolfinger Tagblatt muses that, “A new star has risen in the heaven of music for the young pianist Ivan

Moshchuk. He combines technical perfection and extraordinary interpretation to create a density that lets you feel the spiritual aspects of the music...” **PLAYGROUND DETROIT** has had the pleasure to meet Ivan and chat about what drives his vision for a new way of experiencing classical music.

How long have you lived in Detroit?

I spent most of my childhood in the Detroit area, and returned a year ago to base myself here full-time. I was born abroad, in Moscow and I came to Detroit when I was four, together with my family after my father accepted an invitation to work here as a scientist. I remember being very happy growing up, although now, looking back, it must have been incredibly difficult for everyone around me. My family never intended to leave and we still had a home waiting for us in Russia – we ended up going back and forth quite a bit. I’m very grateful that we ended up staying in Michigan. Over the years I began to think that Detroit and Moscow could be sister cities of some sort given their bold and resilient nature.

What style/genre of music is your focus as a musician?

I have studied and performed “classical” music for as long as I can remember. However, I believe that genre in music is a recent phenomenon that will soon pass. I try my best to function outside of genre and study as many different kinds of music as possible; for me, it becomes a question of freedom.

To quote Andrei Tarkovsky, “in the supreme meaning of the concept of freedom, and especially freedom in relation to art, freedom does not exist.” I think what he meant to say was that any artist becomes a slave of their gift – they are eternally obliged to spiritually feed and serve the people. This is only possible if the artist achieves an absolute freedom in their inner world. This is not the kind of freedom we hear about on the news – one can be socially and politically free, yet still crumble under impermanence and insecurity.

I am drawn to the piano and to music because I feel that this is the vehicle that I have been given to create, it has become my method of existence. However, I can only do so if I maintain an inner freedom, if I achieve freedom as a kind of spiritual condition.



How long have you been a practicing musician?

I remember performing as a child, and never thinking about a career in music. I still don't think in terms of career, just ideas that I would like to bring to life. I think this prevents me from acquiring a cut-throat mentality which permeates most musicians these days. Music has stayed and will stay in my life because it is what I love. I never felt pressured to pursue it.

My first learning experience was with a mentor from the Leningrad Conservatory, who taught at the central specialized school for gifted children in St. Petersburg, Russia. After she retired to Michigan, she didn't take many students. I was fascinated to know more about the Russian piano tradition, and remember her stories about people like Mravinsky and Sofronitsky, as well as her life during the golden age of Russian musicianship. So many of my teachers there helped inspire and cultivate my diverse interests, it was a blessing to be a part of the Grosse Pointe public school system. This led to my acceptance to Johns Hopkins and the Peabody Institute where I was supposed to pursue neuroscience and piano performance simultaneously.

This was a turning point for me. I needed to commit to one thing with all of my heart – thus, I simply choose music. Someday I would like to revisit neuroscience, with the hope of doing research from a musical perspective. We underestimate the value of these studies, I think we should be focusing more on exploring how music connects with cognition.

Ivan Moschuk, pianist. Image courtesy of Marco Borggreve. What inspires you?

Beauty. But what is beauty? I feel that the very concept of beauty is dynamic and must change along with the course of history and the evolution of our humanity. Perhaps it is a symbol of something else entirely, such as truth. I would like to note the etymological problem of “truth” – in Russian, there are two separate words правда (pravda) and истина (istina), or relative truth and absolute truth or verity, respectively. As much as beauty is subjective, I think we must articulate an absolute separation between genuine and fabricated beauty.

A long time ago, truth was expressed through parietal art. Today most of abstract art has little to do with truth, strictly speaking. Let us not speak of beauty as something “pretty,” but strive for a harmonic beauty, a hidden beauty – beauty as a result of living on the path toward verity. Truth expressed through beauty is always a mystery. At this point, words will always fail – nevertheless, when our souls make contact with this realm we are all capable of recognizing a presence. We all become witnesses of the miracle of beauty.

Who are influential artists in your life?

There was a time when I was influenced by my teachers. In addition to working in the studio of Leon Fleisher at the Peabody Institute, I studied extensively with a member of the music theory faculty, Dr. Ildar Khannanov. He introduced my mind to many different schools of thought – among them the world of

Jacques Derrida, whom he studied with personally. This opened a door for me into philosophy, and I became obsessed. These days my conscious only contains “personas” – I try to avoid idolization. My personas are also obsessed, but never diabolic. They are more along the lines of a divine order. Among those no longer with us – Bach, Chekhov, and Michelangelo, to name a few.

What about your creative process have you found to be the most successful for you?

I try not to search for anything, especially inside of myself. I don't think an artist creates with the help of the mind, but rather a kind of faith in instinct. I never know the precise reason behind what I create, only after do I try to analyze and construct an explanation. The concept, the artistic purpose, may come about only as a result of observation. If an artist creates an idea purely out of contemplation, the image becomes a symbol – it becomes a product of reason. This kind of approach inadequately reflects humanity and the world.

In the creative process, the big question is always “how” – it is a delicate mixture of subtlety and avoiding the cliché. Is the path of a struggling artist, along with the corresponding human problems, wants, and needs, really that interesting? The difficulty is to find images that portray the world and not the world of the artist, to find the path of humanity as a whole toward verity. The final mark of genius is a simple feeling of contact with the soul.

What is the most important concepts or themes do your work revolve around?

I was once accused of taking the music of the composers I interpret and distorting their intent. There is an overwhelming tendency amongst classical musicians today to serve an absolute ideal in music, to fulfill the “intent” of a composer with meticulous detail, to portray how “beautifully” it is written. In my mind, music is more than the intentions and notes of the composer. If anything, the written score and archive material guiding it is a loose metaphoric device pointing in the general direction of the truth. These documents cannot be taken literally.

I can see my style of interpretation evolving over time. If I could pick a constant theme for my work, it would be my belief that in art, we must see not only art. Unfortunately, the 20th century bestowed upon us the prominent “artist-individual”, who, instead of creating art, uses art for the sake of expressing his or her own “I”. Art thus becomes the loudspeaker of the author's petty pretensions. In classical music, this same “artist-individual” often hides behind fabricated traditions and intentions of composers. I reject the idea of definitive interpretations of classical music. Any such attempt in this field, often linked to some kind of “authority”, is simply a lie.

Have you done any collaborations?

My initiative **The Detroit Sessions**, is grounded entirely in collaboration. It has been incredible to engage with the vibrant artistic community we have in place and work with artists across all disciplines. I have done projects with soloists of the Michigan Opera Theatre and [Detroit Symphony](#), theatre company [Shakespeare in Detroit](#), and contemporary dance ensemble ArtLab J. This has all happened over the course of the past few months. For future installments, I intend to increase the scope and bring international artists to Detroit,

making sure that our community is at the forefront of the global cultural scene.

What would you consider your favorite accomplishment?

The decision to come back home. After years of personal growth and self-realization, does any of this “knowledge” that I have found really matter? It is easy to become addicted to a fast-paced lifestyle that creates an illusion of self-progress. My return has kept me grounded and re-energized. It has given me perspective on what is truly important in life – family. Thank God for music – it has blessed me with many gifts, but the most important thing it has done for me was bring me back home.

What are challenges as a classical musician in Detroit?

In Detroit, there is a phenomenon that I have before only seen in Russia – we do not value our own people and talent.

I remember listening to an interview with J Dilla and hearing him say how crazy it was to be selling out shows all over the world, then coming home and people barely knowing his work. But these challenges are really just on the surface. I think the greatest challenge for each artist is finding the resources and time to manifest as many of his or her ideas as possible. When we remember how many works Michelangelo left unfinished, and just how few he actually completed, it always makes me wonder, how much more he could have given us if he had more support.

What is the concept behind your solo performance on June 9th?

I needed to find a way to re-interpret the Liszt Sonata. This piece is often associated with the Faustian legend. I disagree. Liszt never meant it to be implied this way, and actually forebode his students and following to ever perform this work because he felt it was misunderstood. Given the dramaturgy, a Faustian trajectory is perhaps suitable, but in my mind, it fits much more accurately with what we have lived through in Detroit over the past 20 years or so. And what we are still living through. This is why this piece anchors the program and is the gateway to the future.

The entire program is inspired by Detroit. The presenter, **ProMusica**, is one of the oldest concert organizers in the city – they were the first to bring artists like Ravel to our area. On June 9th, we will re-imagine one of Ravel’s landmark compositions, Gaspard de la Nuit, with the Orchestra Hall premiere of a dance setting by ArtLab J. In addition, we have the Orchestra Hall premiere of a work by Detroit-based composer Dr. David DiChiera. And this is just to name a few details, I don’t want to give away the entire evening. Prepare to expect the unexpected.

Image courtesy of the artist, still from Vanished Present film. Tell us about your debut album, “Forgiveness.”

I released my debut studio recording this past fall and am steadily building a portfolio of conceptual records that I hope will one day make up my own imprint. My next release will be completely visual. As a recording artist, I strive to shift the trend of classical music recording away from the archive and toward albums that

are fleeting and in the moment – projects based on personal experiences that reflect our time, and testifying to my own truth of the world. We are often intimidated by the music we must interpret because in a sense, it has already become eternal. Nobody can say what will be heard 100 years from now, except for time itself.

What is on the horizon for you next?

I am finishing several recording projects and preparing for concerts in the next season. I feel fortunate to currently be in a position where I can select and tailor most of the projects that I do – I feel like not many artists my age have this opportunity. I am not sure how long this moment will last, and would like to use it to create something that can inspire the next generation to rethink their possibilities.

Classical musicians have been put in a corner with predisposed paths that are hugely destructive and detrimental to the creative process. From the educational system we have in place, to the way we are hired to perform, everything in the classical music world is set up to turn musicians against each other. We compete for the “best” teachers, then compete against each other in competitions, and if we are fortunate enough to survive, end up on a grueling performance circuit, or a vehicle of this very same system.

With every performance and project that I do, I try to avoid this cliché and predisposed path. I would like each aspiring musician to recognize that there is an alternative. Amongst my friends, you will always hear me saying, “don’t feed the monster,” In many ways, the arts infrastructure we have in place is a monster. Technology has given us the necessary tools to build an alternative arts community, one rooted in collaboration and a direct connection with our audience. I have hope that the next generation will restore a healthy balance. This is the century for artists. I believe that we are on the brink of a kind of renaissance.

Why do you live and make work in Detroit?

I enjoy the isolation from the major cultural centers of our society. There is no one near to confuse or distract me, and in the words of Haydn, “I am forced to become original.” All the dominant cities of our planet are struggling to maintain their identity, they are gradually yielding to corporate culture and commercialism. I believe that Detroit- at its core, is still rooted in authenticity along with the people that live here. For me, this kind of genuine reality is an absolute prerequisite for creating art. In today’s world it is especially hard to find.

What do you love about Detroit?

I love the people and their attitude. I see that most of the people here function outside of success and failure- that is very important to me because I choose to live on that axis as well. I tend to not do the same thing twice, and somehow Detroit always provides an endless stream of surprises. Despite the time I have spent here, I still feel like I am just starting to discover the city.

Describe what you imagine Detroit to be in 10 years.

Detroit will become a beacon of positive energy for the world. In the 20th century, time and time again, this city paid its price for success in full. As a result, we can now move forward and share our history, inspiring

patience and understanding among people, and setting an example of how to build a community not based on expedience, but a community grounded in sustained, genuine, long-term happiness.

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BUY [TICKETS](#) NOW!!

This event will be followed by the official launch party for The Detroit Sessions, an Arts initiative founded by Ivan to leverage Detroit's culture of creatives to redefine the classical music experience. For more information, please visit www.thedetroitssessions.com.



