

Charisse Baldoria

Philippine-born pianist Charisse Baldoria fuses Western pianism with her Southeast Asian and Hispanic heritage, and integrates various art forms into a concert experience. Prizewinner of international competitions, she has performed in five continents, establishing a career as a pianist with multidisciplinary interests.

From performing Godowsky's virtuosic *Java Suite* for solo piano, Rachmaninoff's second concerto, and Lou Harrison's chamber music combined with the Ramayana epic in dance against a video backdrop, to composing art songs inspired by female poets, Charisse's programs are unique and engaging. She has collaborated with dancers, visual artists, performance artists, and Hindustani classical performers.

Her latest CD *Gamelan on Piano* features music inspired by Southeast Asia, with works by Lou Harrison, Colin McPhee, Godowsky, Debussy, Gareth Farr, and Philippine National Artist Ramon P. Santos. She is currently working on Leopold Godowsky's complete *Java Suite*, a set of 12 pieces inspired by his 1923 travels in Java, Indonesia; and works by other Asian composers.

Charisse also has a strong interest in Hispanic music and culture, perhaps influenced by having grown up in the Philippines, a Spanish colony for 333 years. Her CD *Evocación* features music inspired by flamenco and tango, with pieces by Albéniz, Piazzolla, Falla, Scarlatti, and Filipino composer Francisco Buencamino. She has given a solo recital at the International Festival of Spanish Keyboard Music (FIMTE) in Almería, Spain, a series of concerts sponsored by Spain's Ministry of Culture and the Instituto Cervantes, and concerts in Argentina. Awarded a grant by the Cuban Research Institute, Dr. Baldoria did research at Florida International University's Díaz Ayala Collection, the world's most comprehensive Cuban music collection. Her musical and personal explorations have also taken her to Rio de Janeiro, Havana, Java, and Bali.

She was a prizewinner at the San Antonio International Piano Competition, semifinalist at the Sydney International and Hilton Head Island International piano competitions, first prize winner of the Society for Musical Arts competition, two-time winner of the University of Michigan concerto competition, and first prize winner of several competitions in the Philippines.

Gifted with perfect pitch, Charisse taught herself to play the piano at age four. She begged her parents to buy a piano, and when it was delivered, she immediately sat down and learned how to play, improvising and learning complete songs on her own. She later studied with Philippine piano pedagogue Nita Abrogar Quinto, winning numerous competitions since she was eight.

Charisse's most recent compositions are the song cycles *Alchemy* for baritone and piano based on poetry by Denise Levertov, and *The Kiss* for soprano and piano based on poetry by Sara Teasdale. She has worked as a professional composer-arranger and songwriter for many years, having written songs for large corporations and government agencies in the Philippines such as Philippine Airlines, PLDT, and the Philippine Department of Energy. At the University of Michigan, she studied composition with Erik Santos and Susan Botti, and electronic music with Evan Chambers.

She studied piano with Logan Skelton at the University of Michigan where she did her master's as a Fulbright scholar and doctorate under full university scholarship. She is currently Associate Professor of Piano at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.

She loves photography, travel, and kayaking. She has gone hang-gliding in Rio, skydiving in Pennsylvania, scuba-diving in the Tubbataha reefs, and enjoys fine cuisine and exotic dishes.