

Jon Kimura Parker Plays at UW Campus

By [Roxanne Ray](#)

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This month, Seattle welcomes an internationally-renowned pianist who has performed for prime ministers, supreme court justices, and Queen Elizabeth II.

Jon “Jackie” Kimura Parker performs as part of the UW President’s Piano Series, offering a program including Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff, Mussorgsky, and his own transcription of Stravinsky’s “The Rite of Spring.”

Hailing from Vancouver, B.C., Parker has many connections to Seattle. “My wife, Aloysia Friedmann, who is the Founder and Artistic Director of the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival, grew up in Seattle,” Parker says. “Her parents, Laila Storch and Martin Friedmann, have been musical mentors to me for 25 years!”

Parker has professional as well as personal connections to our region. “Some of my earliest experiences performing with orchestra were with Vilem Sokol and the Seattle Youth Symphony, and my first major chamber music experience, and the forum in which I met many of my closest musical colleagues, is the Seattle Chamber Music Society,” he says.

“My ties to Seattle are very deep, and it’s been my pleasure and honor to meet many of this wonderful city’s biggest music fans.”

It is these fans and the university milieu that were at the front of Parker’s mind when he selected his UW program, because Parker was in college when he

discovered Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" for the first time.

"The primitivism in the work held special appeal to me as I began discovering the continuum of classical music that followed Bach, Beethoven and Chopin," Parker says. "In particular, having grown up on Genesis, Rush, and Frank Zappa, I couldn't resist the appeal its of ever-changing rhythmic patterns."

Parker's study of Stravinsky's work began slowly, but he soon received new inspiration. "When I discovered Stravinsky's piano duet arrangement, my obsession with playing this music at the piano began in earnest," he says.

"I noticed that Stravinsky, having arranged the duet primarily to facilitate ballet rehearsal, was less fastidious with details than I had expected," he says. "I became engrossed in adding instrumental lines that had been left out."

This was the start of Parker's transcription. "From there, it was a natural evolution to try to manage it all myself," he says. "The big challenge is finding ways to honor the differences in texture and articulation within the many co-existing voices."

The timing of the UW concert is perfect for this choice. "I'm performing 'The Rite of Spring' now because we are just weeks away from the centenary of this masterpiece," he says. "Its infamous premiere and subsequent riot took place in Paris on May 29, 1913!"

This transcription is only one of the many avenues of Parker's exploration, which has been both instrumental and geographical. "I've performed on a yacht in Puget Sound, on an electronic keyboard with a speaker plugged in," he says. "I've played in the Canadian Far North, including on Baffin Island driving keyboards to small towns such as Iqaluit and Apex."

Parker has played in countless beautiful locations, though not without complication. "I once performed in a CBC Television episode filmed on the banks of Lake Louise in Banff National Park," he says. "I had to pre-record the soundtrack and 'finger-sync' the performance, which made the music of Ravel a particularly difficult choice."

As part of his musical explorations, Parker is interested in humanitarian causes, having performed alongside Elie Wiesel in 1995, and in giving back to his community. "For ten years I spent part of each concert season touring remote areas of Canada in a project called Piano Six," he says. "I discovered that my favorite part of this project was going into schools and playing for kids, describing how music is 'constructed' and how to make wonderful music happen at the

piano.”

Though no longer touring with Piano Six, Parker continues to seek out educational venues. “To this day I continue to perform in schools whenever possible,” he says.

Parker adds: “A highlight of my trip to Seattle will be visiting the Roosevelt School, not only because it is known for its musical achievements, but because my wife attended there in the 70s!”

Jon Kimura Parker performs on May 8 at Meany Hall for the Performing Arts in the UW World Series, University of Washington campus, Seattle.
<http://uwworldseries.org/presidents-piano/jon-kimura-parker/>