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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Pianist Taylor Ready for Musical Mecca Moscow

By Katherine Lawrence Mansfield

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Taylor will take part in a Bach marathon, which will see all the composer's concertos performed in one day. Taylor will play twice in the marathon.

Performing in Russia can be a daunting task for any classical musician.

"It's such a musical mecca, so many pianistic powerhouses have come out of here," U.S. pianist Christopher Taylor said after rehearsing for two concerts he will perform this weekend. "It's like coming to Rome to give your first sermon," he joked.

While it may feel that way to him, Taylor is no novice. He's made the journey from Wisconsin to Moscow as part of the 18th Art-November international arts festival, after an invite from artistic director Natalia Rubenstein.

Even though it's Taylor's first trip to Russia, Rubenstein knows his work and said she considers him to be "one of the most interesting American artists."

Its not difficult to see why.

Described by The New York Times as a "demonically intense artist with a stunning technique," he is a sought-after performer of global acclaim. In 1993, he won a bronze medal at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, making him the first American to reach the finals in more than a decade. He is internationally renowned for his Bach interpretations, which he often performs on a rare, double-keyboard piano. To top it off, he holds a mathematics degree from Harvard.

The first of his concerts this weekend is "An Evening of New American Music" on Friday. The program begins with William Bolcom's Pulitzer Prize-winning "12 New Etudes for Piano" and ends with Frederic Rzewski's "The People United Will Never Be Defeated," an eclectic and monumental set of 36 variations on a Chilean workers' song.

"I think its appropriate that I'm playing American music that's maybe not that well-known over here," Taylor said. "It's pleasing to me to have the New World and the Old World have a meeting of the minds."

Taylor goes on to perform in Art-November's grand finale: a stamina-testing, 10-hour Bach marathon on Sunday starting at 11 a.m. Never before have Bach's complete concertos been performed in a single day — a "crazy idea" that took "many months of preparation," Rubenstein said.

Ten hours of Bach may seem like a lot, but Taylor is excited. "People like marathons. ... It's a satisfying sensation to know you've covered all the territory." But if a full day seems like too much, tickets for one-hour intervals will also be available.

Taylor performs Bach's "Harpsichord Concerto in A major" at 6 p.m. and "Harpsichord Concerto in C major" as part of a trio at 9 p.m.

"An Evening of American Music" (Vecher Novoi Amerikanskoi Muzyki) is on Friday at 7 p.m. at the Arkhipovsky Musical Salon, 2/14 Bryusov Pereulok, Bldg. 8. Phone: 695-0166. "Bach Marathon" (Bakh-Marafon) is on Sunday from 11 a.m. at Dom Muzyki, 52 Kosmodamianskaya Naberezhnaya, Bldg. 8. Phone: 730-1011. www.mmdm.ru

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