

# LEON FLEISHER

**"Fleisher's performance was a marvel of grace and perception. Runs were executed flawlessly and ornaments were touched in with a subtle swagger."**

-- *Washington Post*

**"... magical phrase-sculpting ... For his 80th birthday, Fleisher is the one handing out the gifts."**

-- *Baltimore Sun*

## NOTES:

Pianist and conductor Leon Fleisher accepted the 2007 Kennedy Center Honor at a star-studded gala in Washington DC. Now he prepares for a year of celebratory performances around the globe commemorating his 80th birthday and in conjunction with his Sony BMG Masterworks release, *The Essential Leon Fleisher*, an anthology of highlights from his greatest recordings.

Recital performances in the 2008-2009 season included Carnegie Hall in New York City, Boston and Baltimore and his first two-hand recitals in over forty years in London, Brussels, and Lucerne. Leon Fleisher continues the celebration in the first half of 2009 including performances in London, New York and Washington, DC as soloist with the London Philharmonic and Vladimir Jurowski conducting.

His musicianship is the stuff of legend, and his personal story is as heartbreaking as it is life affirming. Leon Fleisher was well on his way to conquering the music world at 16, singled out in *The New York Times* as "one of the most gifted of the younger generation of keyboard artists" and soon hailed quite simply as "the pianistic find of the century" by the great conductor Pierre Monteux. He was cruelly sidelined at the height of his powers by a rare neurological disease that lost him the use of his right hand. Undeterred, while being told by his doctors that he would never play again, he became an inspirational teacher and an inspired conductor, all the while playing-and in fact revitalizing-the left-handed repertory, determined not to be defeated. Fleisher was, as the *Times* dubbed him, "a pianist for whom never was never an option." He underwent brain surgery, grueling experimental treatments, years of trials that certainly would have discouraged any ordinary mortal. Then, against all odds and baffling medical experts, he returned. "His comeback," wrote Holly Brubach in *The New York Times* in 2007, "has catapulted him up next to Lance Armstrong as a symbol of the indomitable human spirit and an inspiration to a broader public."

Treatments involving botulinum toxin (botox) injections have helped restore the mobility in Fleisher's hand, and for several years he has been playing with both hands, winning enormous acclaim for his 2004 'two-hand' recording aptly titled *Two Hands*. Fleisher's story is the subject of the 2006 Oscar-nominated documentary film of the same name, written and directed by Nathaniel Kahn (*My Architect*), aired on HBO.

In addition to being awarded the Kennedy Center Honors, Fleisher and was named Commander in the French Order of Arts and Letters, in 2005, the highest rank of its kind and in 2007, honored by both The Music Institute of Chicago and the World Piano Pedagogy Conference in Las Vegas. In 2009, he will be honored by the Peabody Conservatory, where he has been a major figure for decades, and by Amherst College.

## SAMPLE PROGRAMS: - please consult for specific offerings

JS BACH        Sheep May Safely Graze (from Cantata No.208, arr. Egon Petri)  
JS BACH        Capriccio in B-flat Major on the Departure of His Most Beloved Brother, BWV 992  
JS BACH        Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903 (c. 1720, rev c. 1730)  
JS BACH        Jesu, bleibet meine Freude (from Cantata 147, arr. Myra Hess) (1685 – 1750)  
JS BACH        Chaconne for Left Hand (from Partita II for Violin in D minor, BWV 1004, arr. Brahms)  
SCHUBERT     Sonata in B-flat Major, D.960 (1828)

## WHAT THE CRITICS SAY:

**"The performances of works by Bach, Debussy, Scarlatti, Chopin and Schubert could not be more elegant, insightful and affecting." –*The New York Times* 'Best of the Year'**

**"Fleisher distills the beauty of Bach like an alchemist." – *Oliver Sacks, Wired.com***

**"...a legend in his own time." –*Los Angeles Times***