

**Illinois State University
Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts
School of Music**

Guest Artist Recital

**Resonances of Syria, Armenia, and the
Classical Masters**

Riyad Nicolas, *piano*

This event is sponsored by the Antonini School of Music Guest Artist Fund.

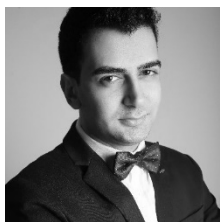
**Kemp Recital Hall
October 20, 2025
Monday Evening
7:30 p.m.**

This is the twenty-third program of the 2025-2026 season.

Program

Please silence all electronics for the duration of the concert. Thank you.

Partita No. 2 in C minor, BWV 826 I. Sinfonia (Grave-Andante-Allegro)	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Piano Sonata No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57 “Appassionata” I. Allegro assai II. Andante con moto III. Allegro ma non troppo – Presto	Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Nocturne	Arno Babajanian (1921-1983)
Elegy and Vagharshapat Dance	Arno Babajanian
La Nuit du destin	Dia Succari (1938-2010)
from <i>Aleppo Songs</i> Enough I intend to leave you	Kareem Roustom (born 1971)
Étude Révolutionnaire No. 1	Walid Al-Hajjar (born 1932)



Riyad Nicolas, the Syrian-British Pianist of Armenian Origin, was born in Aleppo, Syria, in 1989, and has already established himself as a leading figure of his generation on the international performing circuit. He has been complimented by such musicians as Daniel Barenboim, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Uchida Mitsuko.

Riyad has given solo recitals in many prestigious venues at the UK, including Royal Albert Hall, Cadogan Hall, Wigmore Hall, Barbican, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, St. James's Piccadilly, and Leighton House in London, and Bridgewater Hall and Staller Hall in Manchester. Concert performances have also taken him to the United States, including a debut at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and the Chicago Cultural Center (Dame Myra Hess Series), as well as to various universities such as Princeton University, Lewis University, the University of Texas in Dallas, Carleton College, and many others. Internationally, he has performed at the Yehudi Menuhin Forum in Switzerland and at venues across France, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, Malta, the Gulf, Lebanon, and Syria.

In the UK, Riyad is regularly invited to give recitals hosted by the Beethoven Piano Society of Europe and the Chopin Society UK, and performed extensively as a solo pianist for over 100 music societies in the UK. He has also been invited to performing numerous UK musical festivals such as Harrogate, Norfolk-Norwich, King's Lynn, Brighton, Devon, Darlington, Stratford-upon-Avon, Lincoln, Crediton, and Eastbourne.

Riyad made his first appearance as a soloist with an orchestra at the age of ten in Aleppo. Since then, he has performed with many orchestras including the London Chamber Orchestra at the Cadogan Hall, The Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra (UK), Emirate Symphony Orchestra in Dubai, Young Musician Symphony Orchestra at St. John's Smith Square, Todmorden Symphony Orchestra, the Syrian National Symphony Orchestra at the opening of the new Damascus Opera House, the Syrian Expat Orchestra as well as with the Gomidas Chamber Orchestra of Aleppo.

Riyad has been selected to be a Tillet Trust Young Artist and an artist at the Countess of Munster Trust Concert Scheme in the UK. He has also won numerous international prizes and awards including First Prize with a recording contract at the Francaix International Piano Competition in Paris, the first Prize at the Ference Liszt International Piano Competition, and the first prize at the Norah Sande Award and the Christopher Duke Recital Prize in the UK. He also won Second Prize at the Seiler International Piano Competition in Greece and the Ciutat de Carlet International Piano Competition in Spain, Educational

Award Prize at The London International Piano competition and was a finalist at the Busoni International Piano Competition in Italy.

Besides solo performances, Riyad is also a keen chamber music player, and has performed regularly in duos with violin and flute, collaborating with artists including the flautist Wissam Boustany and the Violinist Levon Cilingirian.

Riyad first came to London in 2005 when he was awarded a two-year scholarship to study at the Purcell School of Music with Sulamita Aronovsky, continuing to work with her at the Royal Academy of Music, where he graduated in 2011. In June 2015, Riyad graduated with a distinction in a Master of Performance course at the Royal College of Music, studying with Dmitri Alexeev and Vanessa Lataarche, when he won the Gold Medal at the prestigious Chappell Piano Competition. Riyad also teaches piano at the Guildhall School of Music, and Forest School in London.

Through music Riyad has been promoting peace and raising awareness for the plights of the Syrian people and performing for many organizations such as UNHCR, the International Rescue Committee, the Arab British Centre, Said and Asfari Foundation.

Riyad Nicolas is one of the most exciting young artists to emerge from the Middle East.

'Riyad is very talented and he has a very high level of musical sensitivity. He reached an impressive level of musicianship which speaks of a dedication to music that bodes well for his career'

Maestro Daniel Barenboim

'...this paragon of pianistic prestidigitation...setting a new gold standard",

'..he had given a prodigious recital which rose head and shoulders above everything else we have heard this year', '...every aspect of his performance....melding all together into an indissoluble unity of conception.'

Beethoven Piano Society of Europe.

'A wonderful blend of intelligence and technical mastery with its huge range of colours and rhythms, deftly negotiated by Riyad with great virtuosity.

Salisbury Journal