An Evening of Life and Hope  
Musical Program Notes by  
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This program showcases six works, four solo piano pieces and two art songs featuring Keene State College Instructor of Voice, Dr. Evan Leontis.

The emotional arch of this program takes us on a journey from great overcoming, through to shining moments of hope, aesthetic beauty through nature, and finally to celebration and resilience. Tonight, we will travel musically from Israel to the USA, to Japan, France and Germany.

The first three works are rooted in finding strength through tragedy.

‘Galilee’ from Landscapes of Israel  
Joachim Stutschewsky (1891 – 1982)

Russian Jewish composer Joachim Stutschewsky went to school in Germany and Vienna. He had to escape Vienna to move to Israel during WWII where he spent the last 40 years of his life. It wasn't easy for him in Israel, and struggled to make a place for himself. Stutschewsky was a Nationalist; he loved Israel and wrote music that captured the Soul of his People. You'll hear one of his Landscapes of Israel, featuring the region of Galilee, known for its stunning geography of mountains, the Sea of Galilee and lakes, as well as lush greenery.

‘Chains’ and ‘Hiding’ from A World Turned Upside Down  
Juliana Hall (1958 – )

The next two songs, by American composer Juliana Hall are based on texts from Anne Frank's Diary, and they are from a song cycle called, 'A World Turned Upside Down'. Evan and I recorded these for an art song organization in Boston called ‘Calliope’s Call’.

Hiding (July 8, 1942) It seems like years since Sunday morning. So much has happened it's as if the whole world had suddenly turned upside down. But as you can see, Kitty, I'm still alive, and that's the main thing, Father says. Father received a call-up notice from the SS. Mother's gone to ask whether we can move to our hiding place tomorrow. Hiding...where would we hide? In the city? In the country? In a house? In a shack? When, where, how...? Margot and I started packing our most important belongings into a
schoolbag. The first thing I stuck in was this diary, and then curlers, handkerchiefs, schoolbooks, a comb and some old letters. At seven-thirty we closed the door behind us; Moortje, my cat, was the only living creature I said good-bye to.

Chains (April 11, 1944) We've been strongly reminded of the fact that we're Jews in chains, chained to one spot, without any rights, but with a thousand obligations. One day this terrible war will be over. The time will come when we'll be people again and not just Jews! Who has inflicted this on us? Who has set us apart from all the rest? Who has put us through such suffering? It's God who has made us the way we are, but it's also God who will lift us up again. Who knows, maybe our religion will teach the world and all the people in it about goodness, and that's the reason, the only reason, we have to suffer. Be brave! There will be a way out. God has never deserted our people.

Rain Tree Sketch
Toru Takemitsu (1930 – 1996)

Written in 1992, Rain Tree Sketch celebrates the so-called Miraculous Rain Tree, which has tiny leaves that store up moisture and continue to let raindrops fall long after the rain has stopped. I just can't think of a more special image for storing up strength and holding onto hope in difficult times.

‘Poissons D’or (Goldfish)’ from Images
Claude Debussy (1862 – 1918)

I put the fifth work, Poissons d'or, or Goldfish by French composer Claude Debussy, on this program because of another aspect of this concert, which is celebrating all the colors that a great piano can create. This work, Goldfish, was inspired by a Japanese Lacquer box with a picture of a goldfish on it. It's said that Debussy spent way too much of his money on beautiful, small Japanese boxes and ceramics - he loved them. The simplicity of a single goldfish swimming in the sunlight is so charming, and brings such hope to us for a bright future.

‘Andante’ from Organ Sonata No. 4, BMV 528, arr. August Stradal
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

Finally, we will finish the program with a movement from one of Bach's Organ Sonatas, transcribed for piano by Czech pianist August Stradal. Whenever I play this particular movement, I feel like time stops and I feel such an overwhelming sense of the beauty in life. I am just so grateful that we in the Music Department and the Cohen Center can share this with you.