



PERSPECTIVE

The Music of Benjamin Lees

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CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF BENJAMIN LEES

From **International Piano Magazine**'s November/December 2008 issue:

THE INTERNATIONAL PIANO AWARDS 2008

BEST NEW PIANO MUSIC RECORDING

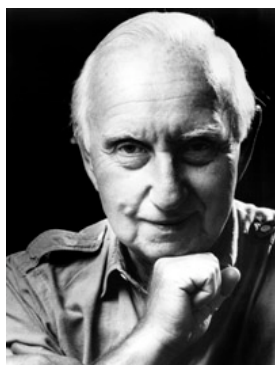


WINNER BENJAMIN LEES

Piano works 1947–2005. Mirian Conti (pf). *Toccata Classics TOCC0069*

This release of Benjamin Lees's complete piano music epitomises the ideal for the New Piano Music Award: strong, unfamiliar music, not necessarily of recent provenance, brilliantly executed (by Argentine pianist Mirian Conti) and recorded. Lees (b.1924) is one of the major figures in American music, and the works on this disc – all recorded for the first time – span his entire 60-year career. From the *Toccata* of 1947 to the *Odyssey* no.3 from 2005, they provide a fine overview of his musical development, and Conti's outstanding technique and insightful understanding of this music makes for a thrilling experience. Although hardly a neglected composer, he is not as well known as he deserves. With this disc, perhaps his time has come.

ANOTHER GRAMMY NOMINATION FOR MUSIC BY BENJAMIN LEES



For the second time in four years, a piece by Benjamin Lees has been nominated for a Grammy Award.

Nominated in Category 102 - **Best Instrumental Soloist(s)**

Performance (with Orchestra), the recording of the **Violin Concerto** was released on Artek Recordings in a performance by the superb violinist Elmar Oliveira and John McLaughlin Williams conducting the National Symphony

Orchestra of Ukraine. The catalogue number is AR-0042-2 and more information about the disk is at <http://www.artekrecordings.com/>.

Steven Schwartz, writing for ClassicalNet, says, "I first heard Lees's 1959 violin concerto from a Seventies LP released by Vox/Turnabout in their "Composer in



America" series. Ruggiero Ricci soloed with the American Symphony Orchestra under the direction of

Kazuyoshi Akiyama. Szeryng premiered the

work in 1963... Lees's concerto emphasizes the here and now and continually looks forward... Even when one metaphorically catches one's breath, some goal is always in sight, and while Lees does re-use certain thematic shapes, the effect is rather that of a golden thread running throughout the concerto fabric, rather than an attraction to the past." Read the complete, finely analytical review [here](#).

CELEBRATING A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY OF BENJAMIN LEES

Benjamin Lees has recently turned 85 years old. In celebration of his remarkable life and career, we thought it would be appropriate to share a few images of Ben and some of the people he's known over the years.



Let's start with Ben Lees in 1950 with George Antheil in Los Angeles.

Next, here's a shot of the composer with violinist Henryk Szeryng at the World Premiere of his Violin Concerto with the Boston Symphony. February 8, 1963.



Here's a good one of Lees with James DePreist with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg in Portland, Oregon



...and at the Aspen Music Festival in 1986.

LEES ON THE WEB

For more information about Benjamin Lees, including more photos from the scrapbook, visit him online at <http://www.benjaminlees.com/>.

AND ON THE PHONE

For any other information about the music of Benjamin Lees, please contact Jeffrey James Arts Consulting at 516-586-3433 or jamesarts@worldnet.att.net.

