



Jade Simmons

Concert Pianist &
Genre-bending Creator of Mind-blowing Arts Experiences
Long-form Bio

How do you get to be named Classical Music's "*No. 1 Maverick*"? By repeatedly defying expectations, delivering riveting performances and combining passion and innovation at every turn. Called a "musical force of nature", Jade Simmons is easily one of the most exciting and versatile artists on the scene today. Classically trained in piano performance at Northwestern University under Sylvia Wang and as a Provost Fellow at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music under renowned concert pianist Jon Kimura Parker, Jade has eschewed the traditional recital in favor of taking her audiences on concert adventures that span Rachmaninoff to Rap.

In her inimitable career as a concert pianist, Jade has remained committed to expanding the boundaries of Classical music and its presentation and as a result has revolutionized the concert platform. Today, she offers an incredibly diverse mix of repertoire from the Classics to the cutting edge and diverse audiences have come to expect creative projects backed by riveting performances. Ms. Simmons has toured the US extensively in recital and with orchestra highlighted by performances at venues as wide-ranging as Ravinia, the Chicago Sinfonietta in Symphony Hall, New York's Town Hall and the Detroit Institute of Arts. She has performed at The White House and has also received the Sphinx Organization's Medal of Excellence in a concert held at the US Supreme Court hosted by Justice Sonia Sotomayor. In 2009, Jade proudly became the inaugural *Spotlight Artist for Music for Autism*, an organization committed to creating meaningful, inclusive concert experiences for families living with autism. Prior to that, she was named as the first *New Music/New Places Fellow* for the prestigious Concert Artist Guild Organization in New York which kicked off her early career as an emerging artist.

Jade is equally at home performing concerti with orchestra, standard repertoire in traditional settings and New Music in alternative venues such as NYC's *Symphony Space*, *Le Poisson Rouge* and *Joe's Pub*. She is proud to count the much lauded

pianist Ursula Oppens, award-winning Afro-Cuban composer Tania Leon, and the legendary American composer John Corigliano amongst her greatest advocates. *Revolutionary Rhythm*, Jade's debut album prominently features Corigliano's *Etude Fantasy*.

In Classical circles, in addition to powerful performances, Jade's known for engaging pre-concert talks, dynamic kids' outreach and informational seminars for aspiring artists. She's the author of *Emerge Already! A Career Guide to Emerging Artists*. Great academic institutions like the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), the University of Chicago and the University of Michigan have brought her in for multifaceted artist-residencies that have a far-reaching impact inside and outside of music to departments as diverse as engineering, architecture, English and beyond, on into the surrounding communities.

In an extraordinary turn of events, Jade was tapped to portray legendary concert jazz pianist & entertainer Lillette Harris in the new musical *Lillette's Rhythm Club* which debuted in Florida this past June. For her work on and away from the stage, *Essence* magazine featured Jade alongside First Lady Michelle Obama and Olympic gold medalist Gabby Douglas as a part of their *Style & Substance* List which highlights women who have expanded the definition of beauty and achievement. Additionally, she has been recognized two years in a row by *Symphony* Magazine. She was listed as one of *Ebony* magazine's *Top 30 Leaders under 30* (2008) and named Houston's *Best Arts Ambassador* by the Houston Press. She has even made waves as one of the rare classical artists invited to perform at the taste-making South by Southwest Festival where her show was ultimately branded one of the "*Best of SXSW 2014*". She made her film music debut performing selections by Chopin, Debussy and Bach for footage highlighting the early Classical beginnings of musical icon Nina Simone in the recently Oscar-nominated documentary *What Happened Miss Simone?* The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

Out of her habit of speaking from the concert stage, a career as a professional speaker was born and today Jade's impact spans a multitude of industries and touches an incredibly varied demographic, from college to corporate. In the last two years alone, companies like Mass Mutual, Pfizer, RBC, Nationwide, Genentech; universities like University of Michigan, University of the Pacific and Grand Canyon University, and important conferences like the Simmons International Leadership conference saw fit to bring Jade in to power up their people by way of speaking on redefining purpose, cultivating innovation and how to unleash momentum in life and business.

An unusually engaging media personality, Jade has guest hosted *American Public Media's* hit radio show *Performance Today* with Fred Child and the arts world once knew her as the knowledgeable and relatable face of the webcast for the Van Cliburn International Piano competition (Ft. Worth, TX) and the XIV Tchaikovsky International Competition (St. Petersburg/Moscow) providing insightful commentary and stories about the music and interviewing classical figures the likes of James Conlon, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Leonard Slatkin and Van Cliburn himself.

Coming at the end of 2018, she will host two new shows of her own. Jade's the new host of *Decomposed*, a revealing classical music podcast for American Public Media and she's the creator of *Courageously Classical*, a live performance and interview show for WQXR out of New York.

A native of Charleston, South Carolina, Jade completed her undergraduate work at Northwestern University in piano performance. While there, she went on to become Miss Chicago, Miss Illinois and ultimately first runner-up at the 2000 Miss America Pageant. In that capacity she served as an advocate for Youth Suicide Prevention and ultimately testified in front of Congress alongside Tipper Gore, Surgeon General Satcher and author Danielle Steele on behalf of Mental Health funding. For her Master's degree, Mrs. Simmons studied with Canadian pianist Jon Kimura Parker as a Provost Fellow at Rice University in Houston, TX. **Learn more at jadesimmons.com**