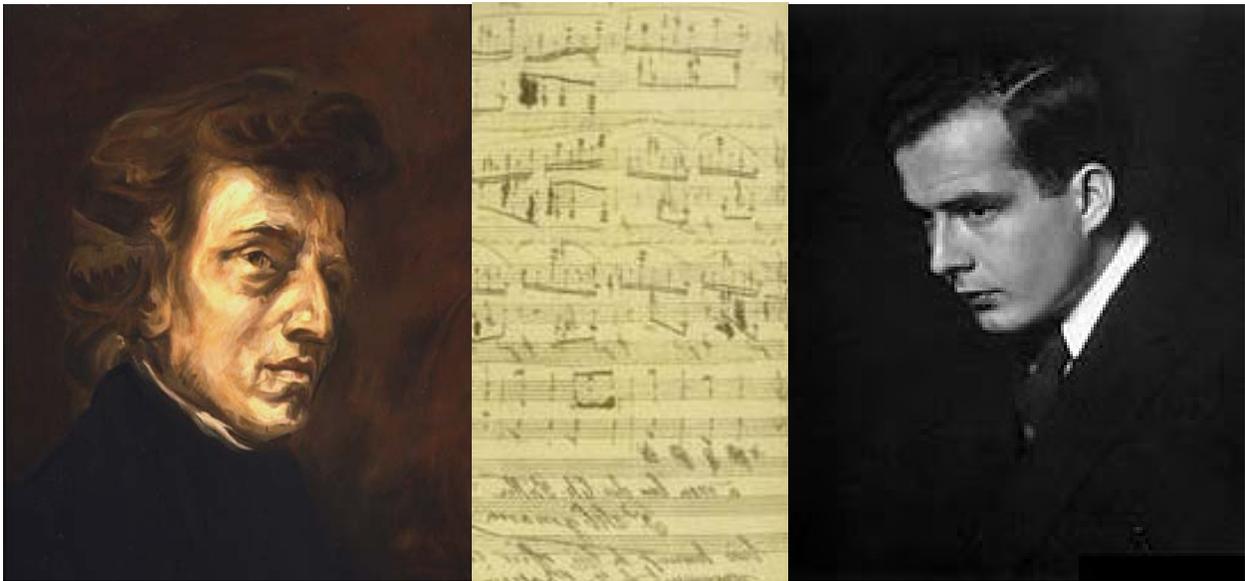


Embassy of the Republic of Poland

and

Polish American Arts Association of Washington, D.C.

**Concert of Fryderyk Chopin
and Samuel Barber's music**



by Lara Downes

**in celebration of the Bicentennial of Fryderyk Chopin's Birth
and
the Centennial of Samuel Barber's Birth**

**February 12, 2011
6:00 – 8:30 p.m.**

**Welcome remarks by Maciej Pisarski, Deputy Chief of Mission
at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland
and
Thomas Payne, President of Polish American Arts Association
of Washington, D.C.**

Lara Downes, pianist

PROGRAM

- Fryderyk Chopin** (1810-1849) Nocturne in B-flat minor, Op. 9, No. 1
- Samuel Barber** (1910-1981) Nocturne for Piano, Op. 33 “Homage to
John Field”
- Fryderyk Chopin** Sonata in B minor, Op. 58
Allegro Maestoso
Scherzo: Molto vivace
Largo
Finale: Presto non tanto; Agitato
- Samuel Barber** *From Excursions for Piano, Op. 20*
- Fryderyk Chopin** *Andante spianato et Grande Polonaise
brillante in E-flat major, Op. 22*
**/Performance dedicated by Lara Downes
to Solidarity with Belarus and the
Belarusian People/**



LARA DOWNES is one of the most communicative young pianists of today's generation, broadly admired by critics and called "a most delightful artist, with a unique blend of musicianship and showmanship" by National Public Radio.

Lara's performance style combines her own interpretations of both traditional and less familiar works. Downes always wanted to discover new ways that will bridge different musical tastes and genres and present them to the wide audience. Lara's performances are often accompanied by multimedia visuals and spoken-word components, because she always wants them to be inspiring and unforgettable.

Lara's performance works are widely appreciated and have received funding support from prominent organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts' American Masterpieces program, the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition and American Public Media's Classical Music Initiative.

Downes performed for a wide audience at world's most prestigious concert venues, such as Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, the Vienna Konzerthaus, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center. Recently she presented her talent to the audience at concerts in the Kennedy Center, San Francisco Performances, the University of Vermont Lane Series and the American Academy in Rome.

Downes is also host and co-curator of the Studio Classics series at the Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts at UC Davis.

Lara's chamber music appearances include collaborations with the Alexander String Quartet, the Miami String Quartet, cellists Zuill Bailey and Denis Brott, violinists Rachel Barton Pine and Lara St. John. Commissions and premieres of new works for Lara include composers Aaron Jay Kernis.

Lara Downes wishes to commit to expanding and developing new audiences for the arts. She is the Founder and President of the 88 KEYS® Foundation, which fosters opportunities for music experiences and learning in America's public schools by providing pianos and music education programming in K-12 classrooms. Lara is also the Founder and Artistic Director of the Rising Stars of California program, which gives the opportunity to the most gifted young musicians of California to participate in mainstage concerts and performances.

Lara's commercial recordings have been widely appreciated by audience and met with tremendous critical acclaim. Her debut CD, Invitation to the Dance, was called "a magical little recording" by NPR, and her CD American Ballads was ranked by Amazon.com among the four best recordings of American music ever made.

Program notes

Fryderyk Chopin (22 February/1 March 1810 - 17 October 1849), most renowned Polish composer, called the great master of the piano, he is easily identified and adored by performers and audiences. His music crosses the barriers between different cultures.

Chopin's legacy comprises over 150 opused works which were highly innovative in terms of technique and expression. His nocturnes, waltzes, preludes, etudes, 6 works for piano with orchestra, including 2 concertos, 3 sonatas as well as numerous polonaises and mazurkas in which he creatively and originally incorporated the spirit of folk music, have assured him a lasting place in the world's cultural heritage.

With a distinct style that is immediately recognizable, Chopin's music is arguably the most frequently performed of all composers of piano music.

Samuel Barber (9 March 1910 – 23 January 1981) wrote his first piece at age 7 and attempted his first opera at age 10. He studied voice, piano, composition and conducting at the Curtis Institute.

His music, masterfully crafted and built on romantic structures and sensibilities, is at once lyrical, rhythmically complex, and harmonically rich and proved highly attractive to the public.

His works includes: operas "Vanessa" (1957, Pulitzer Prize) and "A Hand of Bridge", popular *Adagio for Strings* (1936), two *Essays for Orchestra* (1937, 1942) and a *Piano Concerto* (1962, Pulitzer Prize). His "Antony and Cleopatra" was commissioned to open the new Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center in 1966.

Barber's music was championed by a remarkable range of renowned artists, musicians, and conductors including Vladimir Horowitz, John Browning, Martha Graham.

Barber was the recipient of awards and prizes including the American Prix de Rome, two Pulitzers, and election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Lara Downes explores the romantic sensibilities of the 19th and 20th centuries in unique pairings of parallel works by these two iconic composers.

The music of Chopin defines pianistic Romanticism, with unparalleled lyricism, nuance and expressive depth. Samuel Barber's music, masterfully crafted and built on romantic structures and sensibilities, is at once lyrical, rhythmically complex, and harmonically rich. Together, the two represent the transition from classicism to modernity, and the timelessness of the romantic soul.



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