

# LARA SALDANHA

## Sunday, September 10 at 1:30pm

**Le Tombeau de Couperin** was started in July 1914, a month before the start of World War I. In August, despite being 39 years old and having been exempted from the army because of "general weakness," Ravel enlisted in the army. By September, Ravel was on the front, caring for the wounded and working on *La Valse* and *Tombeau*, most of which was written by the end of that year. Conditions for Ravel became more perilous in 1915, when Ravel joined an artillery regiment as a truck driver, transporting equipment by night while often being shelled until his deteriorating health made surgery necessary in September of 1916. The end of his convalescence coincided with the death of his mother in January 1917, a grief from which Ravel never truly recovered. Discharged from the army, Ravel spent the summer of 1917 outside of Paris, completing *Tombeau*.

The term *Tombeau* is a reference to both to a French poetic form, typically a collection of short poems commemorating a person of distinction, and a French baroque musical form, typically a movement in memory of the composer's teacher or colleague. Each of the movements of *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, written in a French baroque form, is dedicated to a friend who perished in the war. The piece was premiered on April 11th, 1919, four months after the end of the war, by the widow of the dedicatee of the Toccata, Marguerite Long.

Berg's **Sonata, op. 1** was likely written in the spring or summer of 1909, published in 1910, and premiered on April 24th, 1911. Written within five years of *Tombeau*, they are a fascinating comparison in the ways in which traditional tonal harmony was reaching its limits, just as the reigning world order of the 19th century was about to splinter.

The Sonata was a graduation piece of sorts, written at the end of seven years of study with the great composer, Arnold Schoenberg. While the music of Berg and Schoenberg in this time was characterized by "an extended harmonic language that combined post-Wagnerian chromaticism with [. . .] tonally ambiguous, 'floating' harmonies," both composers were conservative in other aspects of their composition. Both valued absolute clarity of form and economy of motivic material. The thematic seeds of the entire Sonata are contained in just the opening phrase! And yet, the beauty of Berg (among other great composers) is that while his compositions are incredibly calculated and tightly woven, which when described theoretically seem to be the product of an abstract mathematical formula, the music itself is intensely lyrical, full of emotional spontaneity, and a portrait of a society on the brink of disaster.

Beethoven's "**Waldstein**" **Sonata op. 53**, is a perennial favorite, with its almost-uninterrupted stream of joyful, kinetic energy, in two gargantuan outer movements with just three minutes of stillness in the *Adagio*! It may come as a surprise, then, that it was written within a year of one of the darkest chapters of Beethoven's life, the Heiligenstadt Testament. In October of 1802, Beethoven wrote a letter to his brothers, an expression of despair over his encroaching deafness. In the year following, in an astounding burst of productivity, Beethoven produced the third symphony, the "Eroica," the "Kreutzer" sonata for violin and piano, and the "Waldstein." In part, the "Waldstein" was inspired by a new piano which had been given to Beethoven by the English piano manufacturer Erard, an instrument that was more powerful, and had a new pedal design. Although as tightly composed as any of the middle period works, the "Waldstein" seems infused with an improvisatory relishing of novel sonorities to be explored.

### Upcoming Concert

**Young Masters Recital Series:**  
**Erik & Marya Lawrence**  
**with David Budway**  
**Sunday, October 8,**  
**1:30 – 3:00pm**  
**Registration is required.**

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*Le tombeau de Couperin*  
*Prélude*  
*Fugue*  
*Forlane*  
*Minuet*  
*Rigaudon*  
*Toccata*

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Sonata, op. 1

Alban Berg (1885-1935)

### *Intermission*

Sonata in C major, op. 53 "Waldstein"  
*Allegro con brio*  
*Introduzione: Adagio molto*  
*Rondo. Allegro moderato-Prestissimo*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

*Carole Brill is founder and director of the Young Masters Recital Series*

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# YOUNG MASTERS RECITAL SERIES

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The “maturity” of pianist Lara Saldanha’s performances has been described as “hugely impressive” (Navhind Times.) Lara has performed across the United States, Europe, and Asia. In 2023, Lara has performed at the Rites of Spring Festival in North Fork, NY; MusicIC Festival in Iowa City; Icicle Creek in Leavenworth, WA; National Federation of Music Clubs Convention in Richmond, VA; and the Valley Cottage Library Young Masters Series, among other concerts. Past performance highlights include appearances at the German Consulate, Bohemian National Hall, Alice Tully Hall, and the DiMenna Center in NYC, soloing with the Texas Festival Orchestra and Mannes American Composers’ Ensemble, and her Indian debut at the National Center for the Performing Arts, Kala Academy, and Pune Music Society in 2017.



Lara will complete her doctorate at Stony Brook University in fall 2023, studying with Christina Dahl. She received her Performance Diploma and Master’s from Mannes, studying with Vladimir Valjarevic, and B.M./B.A. from Northwestern, in the studio of Alan Chow. She has also studied with Serguei Milstein at the Geneva Conservatory of Music in Switzerland, Inna Terekhov, and Neya Korsantia.

Lara is a committed music educator; she has been awarded Teaching Assistantships at both Stony Brook and Mannes, and has a thriving studio of around 25 students in New York City. She is also a sought-after collaborator, playing in duo and chamber recitals frequently with string players and singers. Lara is passionate about making concerts accessible to all walks of life, and frequently plays in community centers, schools, and house concerts. She has been a frequent performer at Groupmuse house concerts since 2016 and has an ongoing partnership with DOROT in New York City since 2018.

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