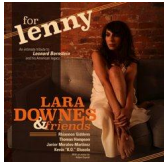


Lara Downes & friends – For Lenny (2018)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 22 April 2018 13:24 -

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1 *Something's Coming* 2:21 2 *John Corigliano - Anniversary For Lenny* 1:41 3 *Stephen Schwartz - Anniversary For Lenny* 1:47 4 *Eleanor Sandresky - Romance For Lenny* 2:08 5 *Michael Abels - Iconoclasm/For Lenny* 3:29 6 *Big Stuff* 3:03 7 *Anniversary For Johnny Mehegan* 0:46 8 *Anniversary For Aaron Copland* 1:17 9 *Anniversary For Stephen Sondheim* 1:27 10 *Stephen Sondheim - I Remember* 2:08 11 *Cool* 1:07 12 *The Story Of My Life* 2:34 13 *Greeting* 2:16 14 *Marc Blitzstein - Innocent Psalm, For The Bernstein Baby* 1:12 15 *Anniversary For Nina* 1:59 16 *Anniversary For Felicia On Our 28th Birthday (And Her 52nd)* 1:26 17 *So Pretty* 2:27 18 *Daron Hagen - Anniversary In Memoriam (For Lenny)* 3:34 19 *Anniversary For Lukas Foss* 1:44 20 *Lukas Foss - For Lenny, Variation On New York, New York* 1:54 21 *Ricky Ian Gordon - What Shall We Remember?* 4:12 22 *A Simple Song* 4:21 23 *Shulamit Ran - Exuberance (For Lenny)* 0:58 24 *Anniversary For Craig Urquhart* 1:11 25 *Craig Urquhart - Remembering Lenny* 4:09 26 *Theo Bleckmann - Goodbye Chorale (For Lenny)* 2:40 27 *Ned Rorem - Youth, Day, Old Age And Night* 2:25 28 *Some Other Times* 3:30

Baritone Vocals – Thomas Hampson (tracks: 22) Clarinet – Javier Morales-Martinez (tracks: 11) Piano – Lara Downes Vocal Percussion – Kevin "K.O." Olusola* (tracks: 1) Vocals – Rhiannon Giddens (tracks: 17) Arranged By – Ethan Treiman (tracks: 10), Jed Distler (tracks: 12, 28), Lara Downes (tracks: 13), Luke Russell (tracks: 6)

Lara Downes' new album *For Lenny* celebrates the 100th birthday of Leonard Bernstein with a special friends-and-family tribute to the man behind the music. The recording features Bernstein's aptly-named *Anniversaries* for Piano, new arrangements of his songs, and world premieres of works dedicated to Bernstein by leading American composers including Stephen Sondheim, John Corigliano, and Stephen Schwartz. The album is introduced by an essay from acclaimed *New Yorker* writer Adam Gopnik.

Taking her inspiration from Bernstein's boundary-breaking approach to music-making, Lara has invited a diverse group of guest artists: opera legend Thomas Hampson, roots singer Rhiannon Giddens, superstar beatboxer Kevin "K.O." Olusola (a member of the chart-topping a cappella

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group Pentatonix), and Mexican/American clarinet prodigy Javier Morales-Martinez.

Describing FOR LENNY, Lara says: “Leonard Bernstein reminds me of what a musician can be. Of what music can do in this world – how it can reach and teach and make things happen. Just imagine what American music was before Lenny came along, everything he changed. I’m only here at all, I think, because of the rules he broke and the doors he knocked down. Imagine the thousands of other musicians who feel the same way.” ---Editorial Reviews, arkivmusic.com

The last time I reviewed an album from American pianist Lara Downes, it was *America Again*, her tribute to some of the American music and musicians that inspired her. Now, with *For Lenny* she pays tribute to another person who inspired her, Leonard Bernstein. She's accompanied along the way in several of the selections by fellow musicians Kevin "I.O." Olusola; Javier Morales-Martinez; Rhiannon Giddens; and Thomas Hampson. The musical tracks, either composed by or written about and for Mr. Bernstein, make for a fascinating, entertaining, and enlightening look at one of America's foremost musical talents.

Most folks today probably know American conductor, composer, author, lecturer, and pianist Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) from his many recordings as conductor of the New York Philharmonic and from his music for *West Side Story*. But after his tenure with the NY Phil ended, he went on to conduct and make many more records with the Vienna Philharmonic, among other ensembles; and many people recognize him for his work on *Candide*, *Peter Pan*, *Wonderful Town*, *On the Town*, and *On the Waterfront*, plus symphonies, a mass, and other works. Or TV viewers might still recognize him for his long television series of musical lectures. Whatever, his legacy is broad enough to live on for a very long time.

Ms. Downes gives us a pleasant overview of Bernstein's contributions to our cultural heritage, and she and her colleagues do so using various unique styles and approaches, so the album isn't just another collection of greatest hits. There are twenty-eight tracks in all, covering a wide range of the composer's music. ---JJP, classicalcandor.blogspot.com

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