



SAN FRANCISCO  
**PERFORMANCES**

# SUMMER MUSIC SESSIONS

**Natasha Paremski** | Piano  
Monday, July 19, 2021 | 7:30PM

# NATASHA PAREMSKI

Piano

Monday, July 19, 2021 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

**CHOPIN**

**Barcarolle in F-sharp Major, Opus 60**

**CHOPIN**

**Mazurka in B Major, Opus 63, No. 1**

**ADÈS**

**Mazurka, Opus 27, No. 1**

**CHOPIN**

**Mazurka in F Minor, Opus 63, No. 2**

**ADÈS**

**Mazurka, Opus 27, No. 2**

**CHOPIN**

**Mazurka in C-sharp Minor,**

**Opus 63, No. 3**

**ADÈS**

**Mazurka, Opus 27, No. 3**

**CHOPIN**

**Polonaise-fantaisie in A-flat Major,  
Opus 61**

**PROKOFIEV**

**Piano Sonata No. 6 in A Major,  
Opus 82**

*Allegro moderato*

*Allegretto*

*Tempo di valzer: Lentissimo*

*Vivace*

**Natasha Paremski** is represented by Arts Management Group  
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Hamburg Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco

## ARTIST PROFILE

*San Francisco Performances* presents *Natasha Paremski* for the third time. She made her *SF Performances* debut in March 2007.

With her consistently striking and dynamic performances, pianist **Natasha Paremski** reveals astounding virtuosity and voracious interpretive abilities. She continues to generate excitement from all corners as she wins over audiences with her musical sensibility and powerful, flawless technique.

Natasha is a regular return guest of many major orchestras in the U.S. and Europe, notably Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with whom she has performed every year since 2008. She also has toured with Gidon Kremer and the Kremerata Baltica in Latvia, Benelux, the United Kingdom and Austria as well as appearances with National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra in Taipei.

A passionate chamber musician, Natasha is a regular recital partner of Grammy-winning cellist Zuill Bailey, with whom she has recorded a number of CDs. Their Britten album on Telarc debuted at No. 1 on the *Billboard* Classical Chart, remaining there for a number of weeks, in addition to being featured on *The New York Times* Playlist. She has been a guest of many chamber music festivals such as Jeffrey Kahane's Green Music Center ChamberFest, the Lockenhaus, Toronto, Sitka Summer Music, Cape Cod Chamber Music festivals and more.

Natasha was awarded several prestigious prizes at a very young age, including the Gilmore Young Artists prize in 2006 at the age of 18, the Prix Montblanc in 2007, the Orpheum Stiftung Prize in Switzerland. In September 2010, she was awarded the Classical Recording Foundation's Young Artist of the Year. Her first recital album was released in 2011 to great acclaim, topping the *Billboard* Classical Charts, and was re-released on the Steinway & Sons label in September 2016 featuring *Islamey* recorded on Steinway's revolutionary new Spirio technology. In 2012 she recorded Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Rachmaninoff's *Paganini Rhapsody* with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Fabien Gabel on the or-

chestra's label distributed by Naxos.

Natasha began her piano studies at the age of four at Moscow's Andreyev School of Music. She then studied at San Francisco Conservatory of Music before moving to New York to study at Mannes College of Music, from which she graduated in 2007. Natasha made her professional debut at age nine with El Camino Youth Symphony in California. At the age of 15 she debuted with Los Angeles Philharmonic and recorded two discs with Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra.

Born in Moscow, Natasha moved to the United States at the age of eight becoming a U.S. citizen shortly thereafter and is now based in New York.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Barcarolle in F-sharp Major, Opus 60**

#### **FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN**

(1810–1849)

One of Chopin's final works, the *Barcarolle* was completed at Nohant, George Sand's summer estate at Chateauroux, in 1846, at a time when both the composer's relation with Sand and his health were deteriorating: at age 36, he had only three years to live. The term *barcarolle* ("boat-song") comes from the Italian *barcaruoli*, the songs of the Venetian gondoliers, and this agreeable form of music was making its way into the art-music of serious composers across Europe—in these same years Mendelssohn included what he called *Venetian Boat Songs* in several of his sets of *Songs without Words*. The *barcarolle* traditionally has some of the relaxed ease of the gondoliers' songs, and Chopin's *Barcarolle*—his only work in this form—is one of his warmest and most attractive compositions.

The *Barcarolle* is in ternary form, and it has the briefest of introductions, a simple three-bar preparation. Out of the silence begins the left-hand accompaniment, its steady rhythms suggesting the sound of a giant guitar. Over this rhythm Chopin introduces his opening subject, marked *cantabile* and present-

ed very delicately at first. Gradually this opens up, expanding into a huge chordal melody that requires large (and powerful) hands. Chopin's *Barcarolle* has been called a nocturne, but—to the contrary—its amiable spirits and energy more readily suggest sunshine sparkling off water. The center section moves to A major, and over the rocking rhythm characteristic of the Venetian boat songs the music grows more animated and more fluid rhythmically. This impression of rhythmic freedom and plasticity is even more marked in the reprise, where Chopin brings back both his themes and drives them to an ebullient climax full of rippling runs.

## Three Mazurkas, Opus 63

### FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

This section offers two distinctly different approaches to the mazurka by weaving together performances of three of Chopin's mazurkas and three written nearly two centuries later by the English composer Thomas Adès. A *mazurka* is a Polish country dance that originated in the village of Mazovia, near Warsaw (the residents were referred to as Mazurs). The dance was in triple time, with the accent often on the second (or third) beat rather than the first. Chopin wrote about 60 mazurkas across the span of his life—the first when he was 14, the last in the year of his death. Chopin took the general form of the mazurka—sometimes raw and wild in its original form—and used it to write his own music, often quite original in matters of rhythm and harmony.

Chopin composed his *Three Mazurkas, Opus 63* in 1846. All three are quite brief. The opening section of the *Mazurka in B Major* moves quickly along dotted rhythms (the marking is *Vivace*). Chopin modulates to the unexpected key of A major for the middle section, and a whiff of this reappears in the coda. The *Mazurka in F Minor* lasts barely a minute. Marked *Lento*, it passes by so quickly that it seems to have no true central episode, only a continuation of the opening. The concluding *Mazurka in C-sharp Minor* has some of the manner of

a waltz: its opening, full of subtle harmonic shifts, gives way to a march-like central episode, and Chopin marks the return of the opening *con forza*. The coda is magical: beginning quietly, the opening tune evolves through a series of canonic imitations to the emphatic close.

## Mazurkas for Piano, Opus 27

**THOMAS ADÈS**

(b. 1971)

To help mark the bicentenary of Chopin's birth in 2010, a consortium of the Barbican Centre, Carnegie Hall, Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, San Francisco Symphony, and Het Concertgebouw commissioned a work from English composer Thomas Adès, who responded by writing a set of three pieces in one of Chopin's most characteristic forms. Emanuel Ax gave the first performance of Adès' *Mazurkas for Piano* at Carnegie Hall on February 10, 2010.

Thomas Adès used Chopin's mazurkas as the starting point for his own responses to this ancient dance. He retained certain features of the form—its triple meter, dotted rhythms, and quickly altering moods—but like Chopin he used them to write his own music. This is the mazurka as re-imagined two centuries after Chopin's birth.

Adès' three mazurkas are virtually miniatures—the entire set spans only about eight minutes—but they demand a first-class pianist to master their many challenges. The first, marked *Moderato, molto rubato*, emphasizes the dotted rhythms of the original dance. Its rising-and-falling lines gradually grow more intense, and the piece suddenly winks out in front of us. The second is extremely fast (*Prestissimo, molto espressivo*) and is in constant motion throughout, glittering and tumbling its way right to the abrupt stop. The final mazurka (*Grave, maestoso*), as long as the first two combined, takes us into a different world entirely. Adès marks it *cantabile*, and this music is slow, subdued, and dark; at moments the pianist's hands must reach to the extreme ranges of the keyboard.

# Polonaise-fantaisie in A-flat Major, Opus 61

## FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Written in 1845–6, the *Polonaise-fantaisie* is one of Chopin's final works—and one of his most brilliant. A polonaise is a national Polish dance in triple time, characterized by unusual rhythmic stresses; the fact that it is usually at a moderate rather than a fast tempo gives the polonaise a statelier character than most dance forms. Many composers have written polonaises, but the 14 of Chopin remain the most famous, and some feel that this distinctly Polish form allowed Chopin an ideal channel for his own strong nationalist feelings during his exile in Paris.

The polonaise is usually in three parts: a first subject, a contrasting middle section, and a return of the opening material. The *Polonaise-fantaisie* keeps this general pattern but with some differences: Chopin writes with unusual harmonic freedom and incorporates both themes into the brilliant conclusion—doubtless he felt that he had reshaped the basic form so far that it was necessary to append the “fantaisie” to the title.

The *Allegro maestoso* introduction is long and rather free, while the first theme group—in A-flat major—is remarkable for the drama and virtuosity of the writing. This makes the quiet middle section, in the unexpected key of B major and marked *Poco più lento*, all the more effective: a chordal melody of disarming simplicity is developed at length before the gradual return of the opening material. The final pages are dazzling—Chopin combines both themes and at one point even makes one of the accompanying figures function thematically as the *Polonaise-fantaisie* winds down to its powerful final chord.

# Piano Sonata No. 6 in A Major, Opus 82

## SERGEI PROKOFIEV

(1891–1953)

Prokofiev liked to plan his new music long in advance, and in 1939 he projected a series of three piano sonatas. These

were completed over the next five years, though the catastrophic Nazi invasion in the summer of 1941 doubtless had an impact on the second two sonatas that Prokofiev did not anticipate when he planned this music. He got the first of the set, the *Sonata No. 6 in A Major*, done before that invasion, however—it was completed in the spring of 1940. Prokofiev played the sonata privately for friends and colleagues before he gave the official premiere, a radio broadcast in Moscow on April 8, 1940.

This is an imposing sonata—its four movements span nearly half an hour—and it is full of Prokofiev’s characteristic keyboard brilliance, yet it is also remarkable for its adherence to classical form. The *Allegro moderato* opens with a stuttering, asymmetric main theme, an idea full of nervous, mechanistic energy. In utter contrast, the second subject is flowing and restrained, almost pure in its clarity. From the collision of these dissimilar ideas, Prokofiev builds a long movement, full of pounding dissonance before it fades out on a sharp fragment of the opening theme.

As the marking *Allegretto* implies, the second movement is not a true fast movement. It has been called a “quick march,” and after the fury of the first movement it feels quite orderly, proceeding steadily on its 2/2 meter; the music speeds ahead at the close, where the main idea returns in embellished form. The third movement is a slow, ghostly waltz that dances along on a 9/8 meter. Its angular middle section moves into 3/4, and when the opening material returns it seems to have taken on some of this spirit, for now the dance is more extrovert.

The concluding *Vivace* opens with one of those wonderful Prokofiev piano themes: energetic, muttering and flickering between different tonalities. The other themes sing with a similar brilliance, and then near the end comes a surprise: Prokofiev brings back the opening subject of the first movement and combines it with the opening theme of this movement—it is on this fusion of themes that it drives to its powerful close.

*Program Notes by Eric Bromberger*





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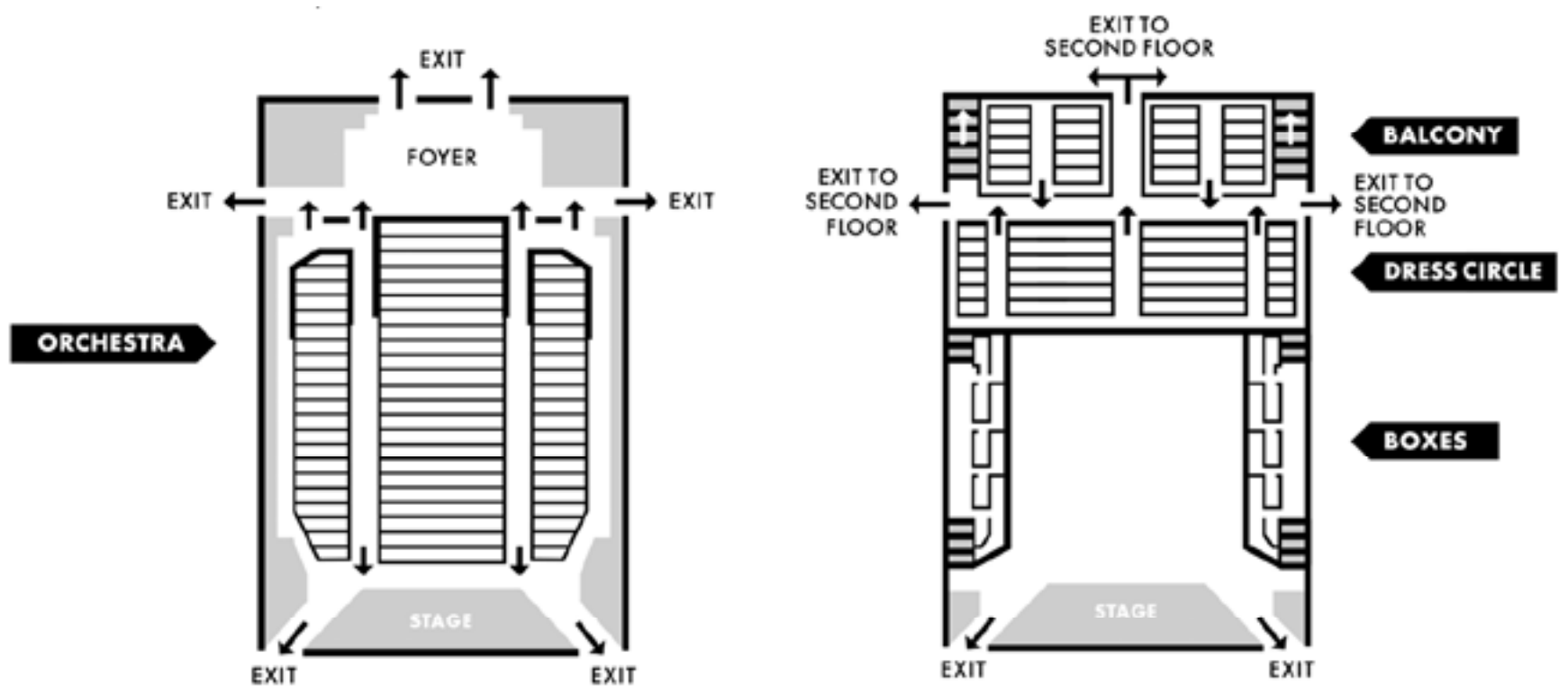
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