



ORCHID CLASSICS

A PORTRAIT OF  
**Chopin**

Lara Melda, *piano*  
Carducci Quartet

ORC100374

## A PORTRAIT OF CHOPIN

### Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Piano Concerto No.1 in E minor, Op.11

|   |                        |       |
|---|------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I Allegro maestoso     | 20.56 |
| 2 | II Romance - Larghetto | 10.26 |
| 3 | III Rondo - Vivace     | 10.49 |

Piano Concerto No.2 in F minor, Op.21

|   |                    |       |
|---|--------------------|-------|
| 4 | I Maestoso         | 15.33 |
| 5 | II Larghetto       | 9.37  |
| 6 | III Allegro vivace | 9.25  |

**Total time** **76.45**

Lara Melda, *piano*

Carducci Quartet:

Matthew Denton, *violin*

Michelle Fleming, *violin*

Eoin Schmidt-Martin, *viola*

Emma Denton, *cello*

It is with immense joy that I welcome you to *A Portrait of Chopin*, an album born from my deep love for Chopin's piano concerti and chamber music. These recordings of his First and Second Piano Concerti, arranged for piano and string quartet, offer a fresh and intimate perspective on these beloved works.

This album is deeply personal to me, as Chopin's concerti have long been a cornerstone of my musical life, their lyrical beauty and emotional depth resonating in ways few other works do. Yet, I've always been struck by their chamber-like qualities - the interplay between piano and orchestra that seemed destined for a more intimate ensemble. Reimagining these masterpieces with a string quartet not only allows these qualities to shine but also invites listeners to experience Chopin in a new light, immersing themselves in the nuanced dialogue of voices, much like in the salons where Chopin himself might have performed. This album is a testament to the enduring versatility of his genius, thriving equally in the grandeur of the concert hall and the intimacy of the chamber.

The Carducci Quartet brings extraordinary depth to this project, creating a dynamic dialogue that feels truly authentic. Our approach was not to imitate an orchestra but to fully embrace the intimacy of a chamber ensemble. This allowed us to explore the conversational interplay between piano and strings in a way that highlights the music's raw emotional core.

A great joy of this project was recording on the remarkable Shigeru Kawai piano. Its clarity, richness of tone and responsiveness allowed me to explore the full expressive range of these works in ways I had never imagined. I am deeply grateful to Kawai for their generosity and support.

Thank you for embarking on this journey with us, dear listener. I hope these performances bring you as much inspiration and joy as they brought me in bringing them to life.

Lara Melda

## Chopin's Piano Concerti

Chopin's Piano Concerti Nos.1 and 2 are among his most celebrated works, showcasing not only his extraordinary skill as a pianist but also his unparalleled ability to compose music of lyrical beauty and emotional depth. Composed between 1829-1830 during his late teens and early twenties, these concerti reflect a young artist at the height of his creative powers. Interestingly, despite being published as the "Second Concerto", the Concerto in F minor (Op.21) was actually composed first in 1829. However, his Concerto in E minor (Op.11), composed in 1830, was published first, leading to its designation as the "First Concerto". This reversal in numbering has led to some confusion but does little to diminish the impact of either work. Both concerti, written shortly before Chopin left Poland in 1830, carry an emotional resonance rooted in a deep connection to his homeland.

While traditionally performed with a symphony orchestra, these works have always possessed a distinctly chamber-like quality - a trait that feels particularly at home in this arrangement for piano and string quartet. This version reimagines these concerti in a way that allows their more intimate qualities to shine. Stripped of the grandeur of an orchestral setting, the music feels closer and more personal, bringing listeners into an atmosphere reminiscent of the salons where Chopin himself often performed. This sense of intimacy feels especially poignant given Chopin's exile from Poland, with the longing and nostalgia in these pieces further underscored. The arrangement offers a new lens through which to appreciate the genius of these works, emphasising the conversational interplay between the piano and strings and uncovering subtleties in the score that might be overlooked in a larger-scale performance.

### Piano Concerto No.1 in E minor, Op.11

Chopin's Piano Concerto No.1, composed in 1830, is a masterpiece of Romantic expression, filled with youthful passion and deep emotion. The opening *Allegro*

*maestoso* begins with a grand orchestral introduction, where the strings announce the dramatic themes that the piano later develops with elegance and virtuosity. In the quartet arrangement, this orchestral opening transforms into a richly layered conversation between the strings, setting the stage for the piano's poetic first entry. The contrast between the piano's introspective lyricism and the energetic dance-like second theme reflects Chopin's ability to blend heartfelt emotion with moments of lightness and charm.

The *Romance: Larghetto* is the heart of the concerto and one of Chopin's most tender movements. Often described as a musical love letter, it exudes an ethereal, nocturne-like quality with its serene and poetic melody floating over an unobtrusive accompaniment, creating an otherworldly sense of intimacy. Chopin described this movement as evoking the "moonlight" of a beloved landscape, and its delicate beauty invites a deeply personal connection.

The *Rondo: Vivace finale* is a vibrant conclusion that draws on the lively rhythms of Polish folk dances. Its playful energy and technical brilliance paired with the buoyant interplay between piano and strings mirrors the spontaneity and joy of a shared musical dialogue, making this movement feel as vibrant as it is playful and almost celebratory. This movement not only highlights the piano's virtuosity but also encapsulates Chopin's affection for his cultural roots.

### Piano Concerto No.2 in F minor, Op.21

Chopin's Piano Concerto No.2, composed in 1829, is equally rich in emotional depth but takes on a more introspective tone. The opening *Maestoso* introduces a noble, brooding theme in the strings, that gradually unfolds into virtuosic passages of great complexity. The movement alternates between moments of stormy passion and tender lyricism, reflecting the Romantic spirit of the era.

The *Larghetto* is often considered one of Chopin's most beautiful and personal statements. Written during a time when the composer was infatuated with a young



singer, Konstancja Gładkowska, this movement expresses a sense of longing and unspoken emotion. The piano's melody, almost operatic in its phrasing, sings over a delicate string texture, creating a deeply moving musical soliloquy.

The finale, *Allegro vivace*, is a lively and exuberant dance, drawing inspiration from the *krakowiak*, a traditional Polish dance. Its syncopated rhythms and light-hearted charm bring a sense of joy and vitality to the conclusion of the concerto. This movement encapsulates Chopin's ability to infuse his music with both technical brilliance and an unmistakable connection to his homeland.

### **Lara Melda**

#### *Piano*

Lara Melda first gained international recognition in 2010 when she won the BBC Young Musician competition, delivering a thrilling performance of Saint-Saëns' *Piano Concerto No.2* with Vasily Petrenko and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. Since then, she has performed with the orchestra on multiple occasions, including notable renditions of Mozart's *Piano Concerto K466* and Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No.3*.

She made her BBC Proms debut at the Royal Albert Hall in 2018, performing with the BBC Concert Orchestra under Andrew Gourlay. Other concerto highlights include Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No.2* with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, Mozart's *Piano Concertos K466* and *K242* with the Aurora Orchestra, and Chopin's *Piano Concerto No.1* with the Bath Philharmonia. She has also toured New Zealand, performing Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No.3* with the National Youth Orchestra of New Zealand.

Lara's recital appearances include Wigmore Hall, Laeiszhalle Hamburg, Les Sommets Musicaux in Gstaad, and the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival. She made her Wigmore Hall debut in 2017 to critical acclaim, returning for multiple sold-out performances.

A passionate advocate for music in Türkiye, Lara made her debut at the Istanbul Music Festival in 2011 and has since performed at major venues across the country. She has received the *Promising Young Artist* award from Kadir Has University and was named *Woman of the Year in Arts* by Elele-Avon.

Lara graduated with first-class honours from the Royal College of Music in 2016, where she studied with Ian Jones. She began her piano studies at the age of six with Emily Jeffrey and has worked closely with Alfred Brendel since 2017. In addition to her performances, Lara has made guest appearances on BBC television, including the Proms Extra programme, and in 2020 released her debut Chopin CD to widespread acclaim.

In recent years, Lara has dedicated herself to pioneering innovative and boundary-pushing artistic projects. She curated a critically acclaimed multi-sensory Van Gogh immersive concert experience in collaboration with Exhibition Hub, where the audience and Lara's playing become intertwined in a journey through Van Gogh's life - the music and art together evoking different emotions, feelings and memories for each person. Most recently, Lara has been working closely with the Carducci Quartet, performing Chopin's Piano Concerti in innovative piano quintet arrangements, bringing a fresh perspective to these beloved works.

### **Carducci Quartet**

Described by *The Strad* as presenting "a masterclass in unanimity of musical purpose, in which severity could melt seamlessly into charm, and drama into geniality," the award-winning Carducci Quartet is internationally acclaimed as one of the most accomplished and versatile ensembles of today. Each season, the quartet performs core repertoire alongside new works and diversifies further

with programmes of film music, pop, folk, and rock, as well as concerts combining music and spoken word. Founded in 1997, the ensemble has won numerous international competitions, including the Concert Artists Guild International Competition and Finland's Kuhmo International Chamber Music Competition.

The Carducci Quartet regularly performs at prestigious venues worldwide, including the Barbican, Royal Albert Hall, and Wigmore Hall in London; the National Concert Hall in Dublin; Tivoli Concert Hall in Copenhagen; The Frick Collection and Carnegie Hall in New York; the Library of Congress and John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; St. Lawrence Center for the Arts in Toronto; and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

In 2016, the quartet won a Royal Philharmonic Society Award for *Shostakovich 15*, an ambitious cycle of Shostakovich's quartets performed across the UK, North and South America, culminating in a one-day marathon cycle at Shakespeare's Globe in London. The project was accompanied by recordings of the quartets for Signum Classics.

Education is a vital part of the quartet's work, earning them a place on the Royal Philharmonic Society Award shortlist for their family concert *Getting the Quartet Bug!*. The Carducci Music Trust was established to support their outreach efforts in schools and with young musicians.







Recorded at Potton Hall on 14-15 & 25-26 November 2024

Producer & Engineer: Patrick Allen

Cover & booklet photography: Francis Bradfield

This album would not exist without the unwavering support and contributions of several extraordinary individuals. My heartfelt thanks go to Patrick Allen, whose brilliance and dedication as producer brought this project to life. To Joy and Cem Cesmig, and Sencar Toker, your generosity made this dream possible - I am deeply grateful. To Kawai, whose exceptional Shigeru Kawai piano gave voice to every note and brought this music to life. To the Carducci Quartet, your artistry and dedication brought a unique beauty and depth to this project. To Emily Jeffrey, Ian Jones and Alfred Brendel KBE, who shaped me into the musician I am today – your guidance and inspiration will always be with me. To my dad, Uğur, thank you for your constant support and belief in me. To Francis, my partner, photographer/videographer/chauffeur/PA, you are my rock. And finally, to my mum, Ayşegül, and my sister, Melis - your endless love and encouragement mean more than words can express, and this album is as much yours as it is mine.

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