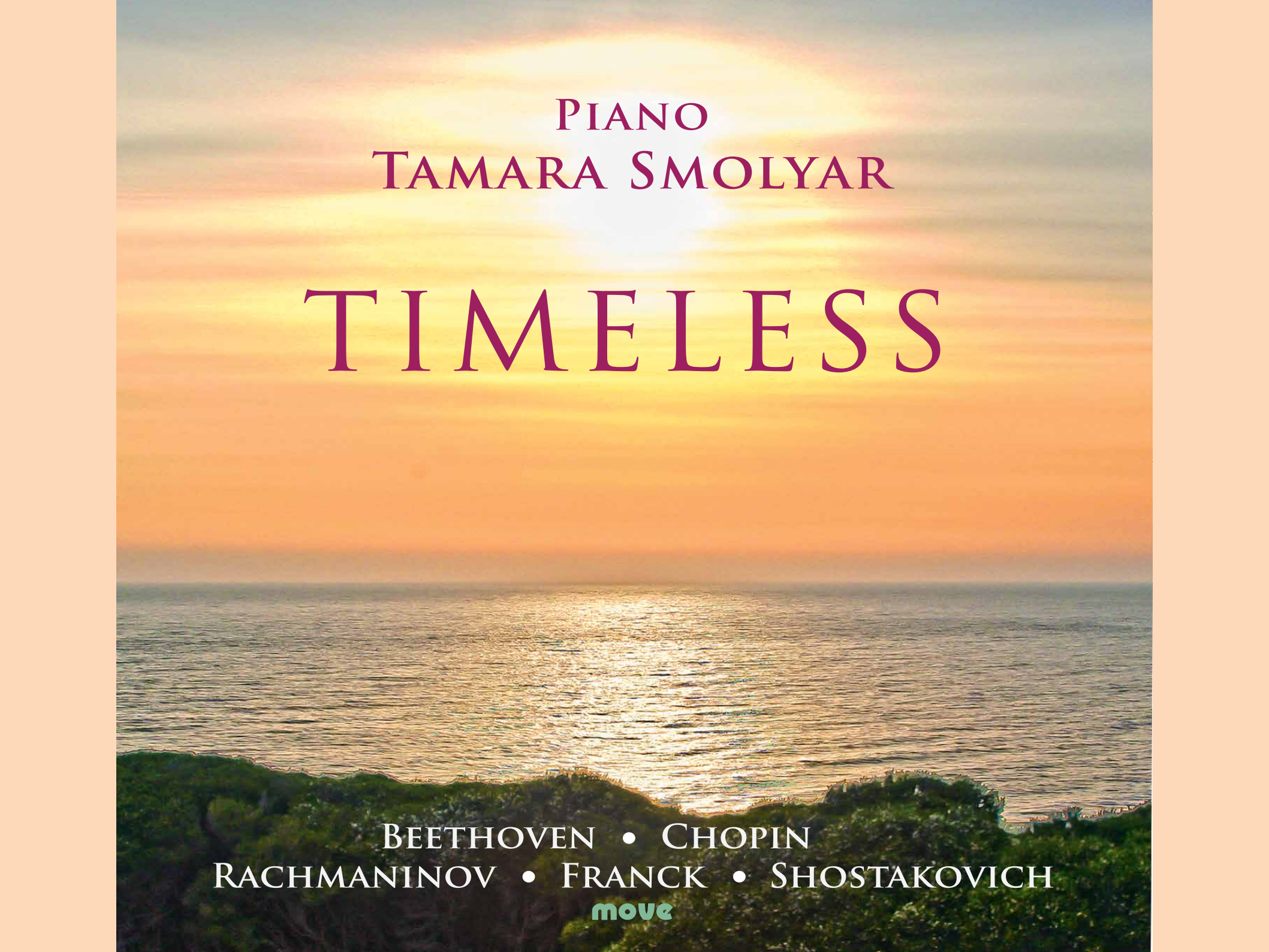




PIANO
TAMARA SMOLYAR

TIMELESS

BEETHOVEN • CHOPIN
RACHMANINOV • FRANCK • SHOSTAKOVICH

move

‘...DEDICATED TO MY DEAR MOTHER DIANA...’

I chose the pieces on this CD for several reasons. The music is a natural fit with my pianistic temperament and I have a genuine connection with the compelling originality of the pieces. These timeless compositions have been part of my life since I started playing piano, and have formed a ‘rite of passage’ for generations of pianists around the world. As a young Russian pianist, I could not avoid the towering reputation and adornment of Rachmaninov’s and Shostakovich’s compositions, the grandeur of Franck or the excellence of Beethoven and Chopin.

The title to my CD “Timeless” reflects my desire to offer a personal interpretation of these classic pieces and creates something for my family and others to enjoy. Moreover, the title echoes the beauty of music’s ability to travel across generations and cultures to reach new audiences. Hopefully, you can be inspired by these compositions as well ...

Warmest wishes,
Tamara Smolyar

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827) 32 VARIATIONS IN C MINOR (1806)

These variations were written in 1806, just a few years after Beethoven wrote his first two sets of variations in 1795. He wrote 22 sets of variations in all, and this massive set of 32 in C minor, even though fairly early Beethoven, truly reflect the control he already had of the variation form which culminated in the 33 Diabelli Variations Op 120 (1823), written after having completed the 32 solo piano sonatas. His lifelong love of the variation form is certainly a wonderful contribution to the musical literature he left for us, not only for solo piano, but also for many of his other instrumental works.

This work consists of an eight bar theme and 32 variations. The structure is based on a descending chromatic bass with a chord progression in the left hand reflecting a possible influence of the chaconne. Beethoven's choice of key reveals his intention to create a strongly emotive oeuvre. Some comments about his use of C minor include: "a stormy, heroic tonality", "works of unusual intensity" and "reserved for his most dramatic music". The late Charles Rosen, pianist and scholar, writes: "Beethoven in C minor has come to symbolise his artistic character. In every case, it reveals Beethoven as Hero. C minor does not show Beethoven at his most subtle, but it does give him to us in his most extrovert form, where he seems to be most impatient of any compromise".

The 32 variations in C minor prove how very much Beethoven is in control of the variation form. Even though his Diabelli Variations are possibly better known and receive higher praise and adulation, these C minor variations leave one breathless with disbelief as to how Beethoven could take those eight bars and deliver 32 variations that truly run the gamut

of possibilities without violating the classic concept of always using elements of the theme for each variation. You will likely find it impossible to breathe during the duration of the major variation simply because of the magic he creates with the simplest material. Be warned.

FREDERIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

John Field (1783-1837), the Irish pianist-composer created the form we now know as "nocturne" but it was Chopin who realised it to its fullest possibilities. In his nocturnes, Chopin truly expresses some of his most sensitive and poetic thoughts. John Hunecker wrote of the Chopin nocturnes, "the exotic savour of the heated conservatory, not the fresh scent of the flowers grown in the open by the less poetic John Field. Chopin loved the night and its starry mysteries; his nocturnes are truly night pieces, some wearing an agitated, remorseful countenance; others seen in profile only; while many are like whisperings at dusk – Verlaine moods."

NOCTURNE OPUS 62 NO. 2 IN E MAJOR (1846)

The Nocturne Opus 62 No. 2 is remarkable in many ways. It has an ample exposition of thirty-two bars. Both Schubert and Schumann in their pieces tended to repeat the entire exposition, which tended to lessen the effect of the work. However, Chopin in this nocturne abridges it considerably and essentially skips, after repeating bars 1 and 2 to bar 27 – and even more importantly intensifies the modulation in this bar, which had moved in the opening section to the flatted submediant (C major) by going, pianissimo, to a harmony more radically opposed to the tonic E major, the flatted leading tone D major. Introducing this distant harmony

towards the end of a piece represents Chopin's most significant break with classical tradition.

NOCTURNE OPUS 72 NO. 1 IN E MINOR

The E minor Nocturne Opus 72 No. 1 was his first one written in 1827 but was actually the nineteenth to be published in 1855. It features an unbroken line of quaver triplets in the left hand set against a slow melody of minims, crochets, quaver duplets and triplets in the right. It is only 57 beautiful bars of music.

This piece was played by Jeri Lynn Zimmerman Ryan while portraying Seven of Nine in the beginning of the Star Trek Voyager episode "Human Error". It was also performed by Doc Holiday in the 1993 movie Tombstone and was used as the main theme in The Secret Garden in 1987.

SERGEI RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

Rachmaninov was a brilliant composer, pianist and conductor, one of the last representatives of Romanticism in Russian classical music. His sheer presence at the piano commanded a respect which was formidable. His apparent effortless approach to even the most complex of pieces was a model of perfection which few have been able to emulate.

Morceaux de Fantaisie (Fantasy Pieces) Op 3 is a set of five piano solo pieces, of which Elegie is the first, composed in 1892. The title reflects the pieces' imagery rather than their musical form, as none are actual fantasies. This set was dedicated to Anton Arensky, his harmony teacher at the Moscow Conservatory.

The Preludes are an interesting example of how Rachmaninov organised his compositions. Opus 32 is a set of thirteen preludes for solo piano composed in 1910. It complements his

earlier famous Prelude in C sharp minor, Opus 3 No 2 and his Ten Preludes, Opus 23, to complete the full complement of 24 Preludes in all 24 major and minor keys. Rachmaninov is but one of many composers so smitten with Bach's The Well-Tempered Clavier that they had to find a way to copy his genius while still showing great respect.

Between August and September in 1911, the year after completing the Opus 32 set of Preludes, Rachmaninov wrote the Opus 33 Etudes-tableaux. These are less predictable than the Preludes. Like the piano etudes of Debussy, Scriabin, Messiaen and Ligeti they summarise their composers' discoveries about the piano and how music for it should be written.

The Opus 39 set of Etudes-tableaux, written between 1916 and 1917 was his last substantial composition written by Rachmaninov while still in Russia. It shows a marked departure from his previous work. The most noticeable feature of the Opus 39 set is how virtuosic is his approach to keyboard writing, calling for unconventional hand positions, wide leaps for the fingers and considerable technical strength from the performer.

ELEGIE OPUS 3 NO. 1 IN E FLAT MINOR

There exists a piano roll of Rachmaninov playing this Elegie. Even with the suspect quality of the sound of reproducing such a piano roll, the obvious gentle, sad expression of a heartfelt Elegie comes across with simplicity and absence of histrionics. It is a beautifully moving tribute.

PRELUDE OPUS 32 NO. 12 IN G SHARP MINOR

In this short and compact Prelude, Rachmaninov challenges the pianist to avoid

showing off the many complicated technical demands and just deliver a beautifully crafted and simple performance of a melody (which, of course, isn't really simple).

ETUDE-TABLEAU OPUS 39 NO. 1

One has to marvel at how many notes Rachmaninov can fit into three and a half minutes of music. Here he manages not only to win the prize but also to make it breathtaking with its energy, and leave an audience as well as the performer quite spent, but ready to be subjected to more of the same at any time. As Peter Donohoe writes, "In No.1, as with many of Rachmaninoff's works in C minor, the character of the Revolutionary Etude of Chopin is evoked, although until the tonality of this piece is ambiguous until the final cadence at the conclusion of a series of remarkable harmonies in the last phrase" (performance notes, Boosey and Hawkes edition, 1985).

DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975) PRELUDE AND FUGUE OPUS 87 NO. 14 IN E FLAT MINOR

Bach's The Well-Tempered Clavier is widely held to be the direct inspiration for Shostakovich's cycle. While Bach's progressed chromatically (C major/C minor, C# major and so on) Shostakovich decided to use the parallel major/minor around the circle of fifths (C major/A minor, G major/E minor and so on).

An interesting story is told about the actual writing of these compositions. In 1950 in Leipzig, Shostakovich was invited to sit on the judging panel of the first International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition (it was in fact the bicentennial of Bach's death). Though not required, one competitor had come prepared to

play any of the Bach 48 Preludes and Fugues on request. The winner was Tatiana Nikolaeva – she won the gold medal.

Shostakovich was so impressed by the winner's performance that he returned to Moscow and began composing his own cycle of 24 preludes and fugues. The complete set was written between 10 October 1950 and 25 February 1951. He averaged a piece every three days. After each piece he invited the winner (Tatiana Nikolaeva) to come to Moscow and he would play it for her. This move seemed to keep him writing at such an exceptional pace.

At one of the discussions Shostakovich said that "at first I wanted to write a kind of technical exercises in polyphony. Subsequently, however, I broadened my task and decided to compose on the model of Bach's Well-tempered Clavier a big cycle of pieces in polyphonic forms, with a definite imagery and artistic content" ("Towards the Discussion of Dmitry Shostakovich's 24 Preludes and Fugues", Sovetskaya Muzyka, No.6, 1951, p.55).

It takes genius to write such a simple sounding Prelude in E flat minor over a pedal note and make it not only interesting but also fascinating. Add to that a Fugue subject that fairly dances off the page, is half the length of the sombre prelude and you have a bit of truly quirky Shostakovich.

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822-1890) PRELUDE, CHORALE, AND FUGUE

Franck was born in Belgium in 1822 and died in 1890. He married in 1848 which signalled freedom from his father and he became an organist, teacher and devoted husband and father. His life spanned most of the important musical events of the nineteenth century. Beethoven died when Franck was only five years

old; he survived Liszt by four years, lived to see Debussy publish his *Cinq Poèmes de Baudelaire*, and heard Richard Strauss' *Tod und Verklärung*. Franck is a fascinating composer. He was fifty-five before he began the works that were his masterpieces: the Piano Quintet, the Symphonic Variations, the Violin Sonata and Prelude, Chorale, and Fugue, the String Quartet and the Symphony in D minor. Although he wrote operas, oratorios, cantatas, works for piano, for organ, for orchestra and chamber music, he is best known for his later works. He was a firm and unrelenting classicist, believing that classic structures, such as the canon, the fugue, the variation form and the sonata, could serve as a medium for sincere emotion and individual expression.

The Prelude, Chorale and Fugue was written in 1884. In this work, Franck was influenced by Beethoven's sonatas, Schumann's Symphonic Etudes and List's *Weinen Klagen* variations. There is almost a quote from *Parsifal* in the melody of the chorale. And like so much keyboard music since the Baroque, Franck certainly owes a debt to Bach and his *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Franck's obsession with cyclic form is especially apparent in the last section after the Fugue, when all the themes restate themselves. Organ pedals can be felt through his rich chromatic bass throughout the piece.

Franck was a quiet and reserved man hardly recognised in his lifetime. However, he did once say "I, too, have written some beautiful things".

PROGRAM NOTES BY TAMARA SMOLYAR,
DOBBS FRANKS AND BRONIA KORNHAUSER



TAMARA SMOLYAR, PIANO

"... an interpreter of great virtuosity, ... the suppleness, elegance and flexibility of Tamara Smolyar's playing unifies the multiple stylistic segments ..."

"MUZICA" NO.3, JULY-SEPTEMBER, BUCHAREST, ROMANIA, 2008

"... technically brilliant and the interpretations truly convincing ..."

"MERCURY", APRIL, HOBART, 2007

Tamara Smolyar represents the finest traditions of the famous Russian piano school and comes from a family with a musical background, which spans over four generations. Born in Kiev, Ukraine, Tamara began her formal piano lessons at the age of four. She studied with professors O.Orlova (pupil of K.Mikhailov), I.Ryabov (pupil of J.Zaak), E.Rzhanov (pupil of J. Fliere) and Y.Lotakov (pupil of V.Topilin). Tamara graduated from the Kiev State College of Music and the Kiev State Conservatorium of Music with High Honours. She participated in masterclasses with world famous pianists E.Malinin, A.Nasedkin, L.Berman, T.Nikolaeva, T.Kravchenko, V.Topilin, V.Sechkin, V.Neilson and E.List. In the former USSR, Tamara performed nationwide in solo, concerto and chamber music recitals as well as on radio and television. She is a winner of First National Chamber Music Competition (Ukraine) and

also was awarded the special Prizes of Best Accompanist and Chamber Musician of Ukraine and USSR. In 1994, Tamara gained her Master in Music (Performance) from the University of Melbourne, where she studied with A Semetsky (pupil of E.Gilels) and Professor R. Farren-Price (pupil of C.Arrau).

Since arriving in Australia in 1990, Tamara has been in constant demand as a teacher, lecturer, adjudicator and performer. Tamara has numerous Radio and TV recordings for national

and international broadcasters, commercial CDs on Move, Vox Australis and Cantor Productions. With her recitals, concerto and chamber music performances she graced many prominent venues across Australia, Asia, Europe, New Zealand and Russia. Her wide repertoire comprises pieces of many styles and this has led to a number of composers writing music for her as a soloist and a chamber music performer. Tamara played with many internationally renowned musicians and conductors from Australia, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, UK, USA, Japan, Switzerland, Russia and Romania. She has given masterclasses at various music schools, colleges and universities in Russia, Australia, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore and Romania. Tamara performed at the Symposium of the International Musicological Society, International Double Reed Society Conference, International Bucharest Contemporary Music Festival, Yamaha Concert Series, "Steinway Spectacular" Concert Series, "Music in the Round" Festival, Melbourne Recital Hall Local Heroes Concert Series to name a few. She was a member of the Board of Jury for Piano National Award Competition (Australia, 2010), First Indonesia-Pusaka International Piano Competition (Indonesia, 2011) and ILT National Young Performer Competition (PACANZ, New Zealand, 2012).

Tamara is a Founding Member of the chamber music ensemble Duo Chamber Melange with internationally renowned violinist Ivana Tomaskova.

Over more than twenty five years of teaching experience Tamara has been fostering and developing the talents of the musicians under her tutelage to a high level of music performance.

She instils in her students a strong technique

and opens their ears to the vast scope of the piano literature. Tamara's aspiration is that students develop as musicians as well as innovative studio teachers and leaders in their profession. The success of her approach is evidenced by the fact, that a number of Tamara's former students now hold positions as pianists and teachers both nationally and internationally.

At present, Tamara is Senior Lecturer in Music Performance and Coordinator of Piano and Ensemble Studies at the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.

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1 32 VARIATIONS IN C MINOR
(1806) ... 10'26"

FREDERIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

2 NOCTURNE OPUS 62 NO. 2
IN E MAJOR (1846) ... 5'33"

3 NOCTURNE OPUS 72 NO. 1
IN E MINOR ... 3'54"

SERGEI RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

4 ELEGIE OPUS 3 NO. 1
IN E FLAT MINOR ... 5'32"

5 PRELUDE OPUS 32 NO. 12
IN G SHARP MINOR ... 2'23"

6 ETUDE-TABLEAU OPUS 39
NO. 1 ... 3'39"

DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

7 8 PRELUDE AND FUGUE
OPUS 87 NO. 14 IN E FLAT
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CÉSAR FRANCK (1822-1890)

9 PRELUDE ... 4'26"

10 CHORALE ... 5'12"

11 FUGUE ... 8'54"

TAMARA SMOLYAR PIANO