

13 WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE GOLDBERG: Bach Reimagined

ABOUT THIS ALBUM

The music on this recording looks back to Bach through different lenses, and calls back to Bach with different voices. It tells a story about musical evolution, about the balance of inheritance connecting generations, and variation creating change across centuries. It tells about musical lineages and legacies, about how everything old is new again.

Bach's *Goldberg Variations* are what I remember as my first music. It's such a vivid memory: a little girl in my father's big chair, listening to Glenn Gould's 1955 recording of the Goldbergs, wondering at the twists and turns of Bach's creation and Gould's imagination. My sound memory of the music is indelibly combined with a visual one – that iconic Columbia record jacket with its collage of wildly expressive photos of Gould in his studio sessions, transported by his travels through Bach. Transported, as all of us have been by Bach, at one time or another.

13 Ways of Looking at the Goldberg is a set of new variations on the Goldbergs, written by a group of today's most remarkable composers. The collection is astonishing proof of the permanence of Bach's music, its ability to travel through time to influence today's musical voices in myriad ways.

Along with *13 Ways*, I've chosen Bach-inspired works by two great American composers, Dave Brubeck and Lukas Foss, who have both, in their inimitable and sometimes surprising ways, been deeply shaped by their love of Bach.

And to bring this musical journey to its end – or back to its beginning - I turn to another piece of music that brought me early and forever to Bach, the sublime *Sarabande* from the *Fifth French Suite*.

13 WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE GOLDBERG

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

Stanza V: 13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird
-Wallace Stevens

These thirteen reimaginings of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* evoke both the beauty of inflections and the beauty of innuendoes. They pull from Bach's music inspiration that ranges from the concrete to the metaphoric, from the tangible to the intuitive. These new works echo and respond to the melodic lines, the beating pulse and the timeless humanity of Bach's magnificent piece of music, which has inspired countless listeners in countless ways, for over 250 years.

In 2004, thirteen composers were asked to write new variations based on Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. They were an eclectic and diverse group, coming from musical backgrounds and languages far and wide. They created their contributions independently, without consultation or collaboration. The result is, like Wallace Stevens' poem that inspired this project's title, a set of thirteen short and totally separate pieces that represent a panoramic span of perspectives on the Goldbergs: an extraordinary collection of contemporary responses to this most extraordinary and timeless work of art.

To accept the challenge of putting notes to paper in tribute to Bach is an act of considerable courage and humility. The thirteen composers who have met this challenge so beautifully have my greatest admiration and appreciation.

BRUBECK: CHORALE

Dave Brubeck's *Chorale* is the second movement of his *Chromatic Fantasy Sonata*, a large-scale concert work inspired by Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*. Brubeck's fascination with Bach has been life-long, with numerous Bachian moments surfacing throughout his monumental musical output. In 2006, Brubeck was the subject of *Vanity Fair* magazine's Proust Questionnaire. In answer to the question: "If you could choose what to come back as, what would it be?" Dave answered: "Johann Sebastian Bach."

FOSS: PRELUDE IN D

Lukas Foss was one of the great Bach interpreters of the last century. As a pianist and conductor he returned time and again to Bach; as a composer, his work was influenced from the very beginning by his passion for Bach. His lush, elegiac *Prelude in D* reminds me of Bach's arioso preludes from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

BACH: SARABANDE

The *Sarabande* from the 5th French Suite is the piece that made me fall in love with playing Bach, when I first learned it as a 7-year-old. I include it here in acknowledgement of everything that Bach has been in my life, and in the collective life of all of us who make music in the world.

-Lara Downes

LARA DOWNES

A captivating presence both on and offstage, critically acclaimed American pianist Lara Downes has garnered wide acclaim as one of the most exciting and communicative pianists of today's generation. Lauded by NPR as "a delightful artist with a unique blend of musicianship and showmanship" and praised by the Washington Post for her stunning performances "rendered with drama and nuance," Lara presents the piano repertoire - from iconic favorites to newly commissioned works - in new ways that bridge musical tastes, genres and audiences.

Lara's fresh and insightful interpretations have captivated audiences at Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Queen Elizabeth Hall London, the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Salle Gaveau Paris, the American Academy Rome, San Francisco Performances, the Portland International Piano Festival, Le Poisson Rouge NYC, the Montreal Chamber Music Festival, and the University of Washington World Series, among many others. Her performance projects have received support from prominent organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition, and American Public Media.

Ms. Downes' chamber music appearances include collaborations with other noted soloists and ensembles, including violinists Rachel Barton Pine and Lara St. John, cellists Zuill Bailey and Denis Brott, the Miami and Alexander String Quartets, and the Brubeck Institute Jazz Quintet. Commissions and premieres of new works for Lara have come from composers Aaron Jay Kernis, David Sanford, Benny Golson, Eve Beglarian and Dan Coleman, among others.

Lara's previous solo recordings have met with tremendous critical and popular acclaim. Her debut CD, *Invitation to the Dance* (2000), was called "a magical recording" by NPR, and her second release, *American Ballads* (2001), was ranked by Amazon.com among the four best recordings of American concert music ever made. *Dream of Me* (2006), was praised for "exquisite sensitivity" by American Record Guide.

Lara's busy performance career is strongly driven by her commitment to expanding and developing new audiences for the arts. She is the Founder and President of the 88 KEYS® Foundation, a non-profit organization that fosters opportunities for music experiences and learning in America's public schools, and she regularly works and performs with the next generation of talented young musicians as Curator of the Young Artists program at the Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts at UC Davis, where she serves as Artist in Residence.

Lara Downes is a Steinway Artist.

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LARA DOWNES, solo piano
Recorded June 15 and 16, 2011 at Patrych Sound Studios, The Bronx, NY
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Photography: Rik Keller - Art Director/Designer: Lydia Weber

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In memory of Glenn Downes and Glenn Gould

TRACKS

13 Ways of Looking at the Goldberg	
1. J.S. Bach: Aria, from Goldberg Variations BWV 988	3:48
2. Fred Lerdahl: Chasing Goldberg	2:09
3. Jennifer Higdon: The Gilmore Variation	2:13
4. Bright Sheng: Variation Fugato	2:48
5. Lukas Foss: Goldmore Variation	3:02
6. Derek Bermel: Kontraphunktus	2:31
7. Fred Hersch: Melancholy Minuet	3:40
8. C. Curtis-Smith: Rube Goldberg Variation	3:09
9. Stanley Walden: Fantasy Variation	2:03
10. Ryan Brown: Ornament	3:23
11. Mischa Zupko: Ghost Variation	3:53
12. David Del Tredici: My Goldberg (Gymnopedie #1)	3:54
13. William Bolcom: Yet Another Goldberg Variation	2:06
14. Ralf Gothóni: Variation on Variation with Variation	3:54
15. J.S. Bach: Aria (Reprise), from Goldberg Variations	4:12
16. Dave Brubeck: Chorale, from Chromatic Fantasy Sonata	6:45
17. Lukas Foss: Prelude in D	3:05
18. J.S. Bach: Sarabande, from French Suite V, BWV 816	4:31

Total Playing Time (61:16)

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