

for  
**lenny**

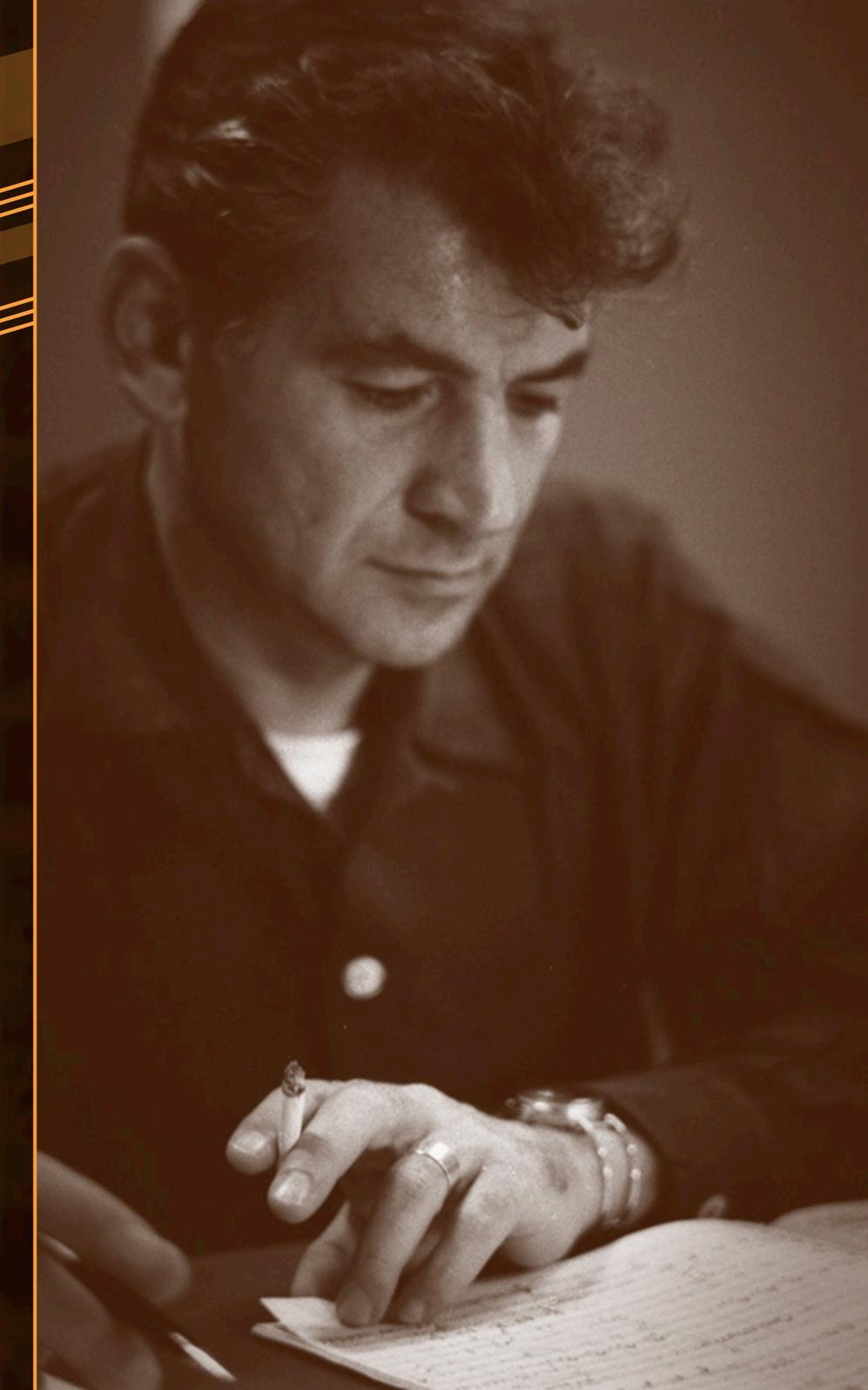
An intimate tribute to  
**Leonard Bernstein**  
and his American legacy

**LARA  
DOWNES**  
& friends

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Rhiannon Giddens  
Thomas Hampson  
Javier Morales-Martinez  
Kevin "K.O." Olusola

*With an essay by  
Adam Gopnik*





Of all the many musicians who inspire me, it's Leonard Bernstein who turns up, more or less every day, by my side, over my shoulder, reminding 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 remember what happened to American music when Lenny came along, everything he changed. He never stopped searching, questioning the status quo, redefining the possible, imagining the future. *Something's coming...*

This album is a tribute to Lenny's vision for American music. The artists who join me here - the composers who have written new Anniversaries for Lenny; the performers who sing and play and reimagine his songs - we're only here together at all because of the rules he broke and the doors he knocked down, the future he imagined. We come from all over the landscape of American music, from bluegrass to beatbox, conservatory to cabaret, the Met to the multiplex. Because of Lenny's legacy, there's a place for us.

This is a celebration of his life, his music and his imagination. It comes with joy and gratitude - for Lenny, with love.

- Lara Downes

## LARA & LENNY

The sound rises from the hotel room speakers, the mix of the percussive and the poignant – the Gershwin-esque rhythms and blue notes, but with a kind of modernist discipline too, a refusal of the easy chord or swoony resolve, and past that, a singular kind of piercing high-hearted emotion that we rarely encounter in any music. It has to be, it can only be, Bernstein. We recognize it with a smile, immediately, and we may feel especially grateful when we hear the swoops and on-a-dime turns and audacious intervals of what can only be his melodies. What a natural composer he is, we think, and how easily he accessed a distinct and, yes, American vein of emotion. And a special joy to hear pieces of music – hell, call them tunes – that have been previously obscure: *Story of My Life*, cut from *On the Town*, turns out to have all the ‘quality’ we know already from *West Side Story* and *Candide*: the elegantly audacious intervals and sudden twists that resolve as a quiver of the heart more than the mind, intelligence and soul knit together by ambition.

And then we stop to admire the piano playing: its precision, its perfect punctuation, its elegant italicizing of phrases, the sense it gives of power held in reserve, all clearly rooted in an impeccable classical technique and yet swingingly open at the heart to the broadest horizons of American music -- and we think, it has to be it can only be, Lara Downes. Lara and Lenny, together at last, as the tabloid writers would say – it seems fated, a match made, if not in heaven, then in a music lover’s mind. Made for each other exactly because they’re made of the same basic materials, high classical mastery mixed with an urge to participate fully in the great revolution that American music of all kinds brought about in the twentieth century.

Lara Downes, throughout her career, has been striving to expand the range of what counts as concert music, in part by not worrying too much whether the music she's playing is made for a concert, or for a gig, or for a second-grade class. Anyone who has listened to her play the solo piano version of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* knows what virtuosity allied to swing sounds like. But it is her insistence on expanding the range of her repertory to ever bolder corners that marks her out even from the other gifted pianists of her generation. Though not a jazz pianist in the traditional sense – an improviser on familiar themes taken from pop songs – she is certainly a pianist who plays and understands jazz; she can take Billie Holiday's music and transform it into a new and coherent musical statement that stands alongside the originals, not as a tribute so much as an extension, a reminder that the American indigenous traditions are just as rich and capable of being continually rearticulated to each generation as European music has ever been. No, she's neither a jazz player nor a concert pianist nor pop nor 'third way'. She's an American musician, making American music of every kind and origin. 'Diversity', too often a cheap political slogan in our times, becomes in her work a living thing – she shows us diversity as delight, and cultural pluralism as pure pleasure.

For her tribute to Leonard Bernstein on his hundredth birthday Lara Downes has not only taken Bernstein's own music and lovingly restored and burnished it, she's taken the legacy that Lenny left behind and turned that into music, too. The album is rich in Bernstein's tributes to his friends - in the form of the evocative *Anniversaries* he wrote for their birthdays – and even more in tributes that his friends wrote for him, some in his lifetime, many more newly produced for this occasion. For Bernstein was friendship. As one reads through his life, tormented as it was in many ways, the one golden thread that runs through it is his absolute belief in the power of family and friendship to heal the world. And so, the tributes he wrote for others, these birthday songs, as much

as the beautiful ones that come bouncing back now, aren't just part of a dutiful mentor-to-protégé call and response. When we listen to a piece as beautiful as Craig Urquhart's *Remembering Lenny* what we hear is the musical articulation of Bernstein's deepest values. Music wasn't sound for Bernstein; it was truth. It was life. And then, as we listen to Lara Downes employ her own distinct pianistic voice – and 'voice' is surely the right word here for her singing, italicized attack, each note struck or bent as the emotional occasion demands – we feel a family portrait of a certain vein of American culture, one that never renounced the means of popular music – melody, rhythmic excitement - but never resolves in mere sentiment.

Friendship, family, identity – of all the elements that rose from Lenny's life to illuminate his times - it is this last, perhaps, that is the most powerful and the most poignant. How do we count ourselves among others? Where do we fit? What identity do we claim? Broadway or the concert hall, jazz or European serialism, television performer or Olympian conductor – for that matter, gay or straight or both at once? The questions of identity that shaped his life and music have become, for another generation, affirmations of possibility. In the grace of her playing, and the expansiveness of her embrace, this new music by Lara Downes reminds us that each of us can have an identity as large as, well, a piano, and that American possibility is always at least eighty-eight keys long.

// Adam Gopnik  
OCTOBER 2017

An iconoclastic pianist whose artistry has been called “luscious, moody and dreamy” by the The New York Times and “ravishing” by Fanfare Magazine, Lara Downes takes inspiration where she finds it, going beyond labels to make music that is timeless and timely, starts conversations, and resonates with the world we live in. She engages audiences of all ages with her charismatic presence, intellectual curiosity, and masterful command of her artistic voice. She is a trailblazer onstage and off - a communicator who understands that music is a dialogue between artist and audience, as life is a balance between speaking and listening, giving and receiving.

Not surprisingly, Lara is comfortable in a diverse range of venues, from Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center to Le Poisson Rouge (NYC) and Yoshi's (SF). An artist who has found her own way and carved her own path through American music, her artistic journey has found direction in unexpected places, drawing on the legacies of family, history, art and culture to form a unique creative vision that the Huffington Post has called “addicting - Downes plays with an open, honest heart.”

Born in San Francisco and raised in Europe, Downes' interest in connecting music to a wide and inclusive breadth of human experience mines her own mixed African American and Eastern European background and her peripatetic upbringing. Her recent chart-topping release, *America Again* (Sono Luminus, 2016) was selected by NPR as one of “10 Albums that Saved 2016”, and hailed as “a balm for a country riven by disunion” by the Boston Globe.

In her own words: “I’ve traveled all around this country and played for audiences in small towns and big cities. I’ve learned that my music is a bridge to unexpected friendships with people who come from very different versions of America than my own. There is no such thing as a typical American life, and there are millions of American stories. American music has a complicated history, full of contrasts and contradictions, just like my own, and I’ve learned that what is most beautiful about me comes down to my contradictions and contrasts.”

A laureate of the prestigious Sphinx Organization Medal of Excellence and the Chancellor’s Innovation Award from the University of California, Lara has been recognized as a leader in expanding the reach of the arts, as a performer, an entrepreneur, and a cultural visionary. She enjoys creative collaborations with a range of leading artists, from cellist Yo-Yo Ma to former U.S. Poet Laureate Rita Dove, and her partnerships with prominent composers span genres and generations to bring significant new contributions to the 21st Century repertoire.

Lara’s essays and memoirs have been published in *The Rumpus*, *Huffington Post*, *The Establishment*, *Readers Digest*, *Listen Magazine*, and other national outlets. She is a favorite of national radio audiences, heard on *NPR Music*, *Sirius XM*, *American Public Media’s Performance Today* and *Marketplace*, and over 100 public radio affiliates nationwide.

When not on the road recording or performing, Lara serves as Artist in Residence at the Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts, UC Davis, where she mentors the next generation of young musicians as Director of the Mondavi Center National Young Artists Program. She is the founder of the national community transformation initiative *My Promise Project*, and serves on the Advisory Board of the *Time In Children’s Arts Initiative*. She is a Steinway Artist.

# LARA DOWNES

“Downes reminds us just who we are, a nation of diverse voices and experiences.... On display here — with all its regret, hope and pride — is America.” - **NPR Music**

LARADOWNES.COM





Photo:  
Araeon Mosbacher

## RHIANNON GIDDENS

2017 MacArthur Fellow Rhiannon Giddens is a singer, instrumentalist, and songwriter enriching our understanding of American music by reclaiming African American contributions to folk and country genres and revealing affinities between a range of musical traditions, from gospel and Celtic to jazz and R&B.

In her recordings and live performances, Giddens has mined the history of the African American string band tradition, introducing new audiences to the black banjoists and fiddlers whose influences have been left out of popular narratives of the lineage of folk and country music. Giddens is a native of the Piedmont region of North Carolina, and she trained as an opera singer before returning to North Carolina to immerse herself in traditional American roots music through study of archival recordings and the mentorship of the octogenarian fiddler Joe Thompson. Having honed her skills on the fiddle and 5-string banjo, she co-founded with two other band mates the Carolina Chocolate Drops in order to share this tradition with a new generation of listeners.

With extraordinary vocal abilities and emotional range afforded by her classical training, Giddens is a powerful presence on stage, and her explanations of the historical and social contexts for the music she performs further demonstrate how discrete musical approaches can inform one another. Giddens's drive to understand and convey the nuances, complexities, and interrelationships between musical traditions is enhancing our musical present with a wealth of sounds and textures from the past.

Her albums include the GRAMMY-award winning *Genuine Negro Jig* (2010), the GRAMMY-nominated *Tomorrow is My Turn* (2015) and *Freedom Highway* (2017). She has performed at national and international festivals and venues, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the White House, the Spoleto Festival, the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and the Newport Folk and Jazz Festivals, among many others.

Thomas Hampson, America's foremost baritone, has received many honors and awards for his probing artistry and cultural leadership. Honored as a Metropolitan Opera Guild "Met Mastersinger" and inducted into both the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and Gramophone's "Hall of Fame," Hampson is one of the most respected and innovative musicians of our time. With an Opera repertoire of over 80 roles sung in all the major Opera houses of the world, his discography comprises more than 170 albums, which include multiple nominations and winners of the Grammy Award, Edison Award and the Grand Prix du Disque. He received the 2009 Distinguished Artistic Leadership Award from the Atlantic Council in Washington, DC, and was appointed the New York Philharmonic's first Artist-in-Residence. In 2010 he was honored with a Living Legend Award by the Library of Congress, where he has served as Special Advisor to the Study and Performance of Music in America. Furthermore, he has received the famed Concertgebouw Prize, and was named ECHO Klassik's "Singer of the Year" in 2011 for the fourth time in 20 years. Hampson was made honorary professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Heidelberg and holds honorary doctorates from Manhattan School of Music, New England Conservatory, Whitworth College and San Francisco Conservatory, as well as being an honorary member of London's Royal Academy of Music. He carries the titles of Kammersänger of the Vienna State Opera and Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres of the Republic of France, and was awarded the Austrian Medal of Honour in Arts and Sciences. 2017 Thomas Hampson received the Hugo-Wolf-Medal from the International Hugo-Wolf-Academy together with his long-time musical companion Wolfram Rieger for their outstanding achievements in the art of song interpretation.

Thomas Hampson enjoys a singular international career as an opera singer, recording artist and "ambassador of song," maintaining an active interest in research, education, musical outreach and technology. Through the Hampson Foundation, which he founded in 2003, he employs the art of song to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding.



Photo: David Smadja

# THOMAS HAMPSON



Javier Morales Martinez, age 16, first began his clarinet studies with his father, who plays clarinet in traditional Mexican Banda ensembles, as did his father before him. Javier is currently a senior at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. He is a recipient of a Herbert Zipper Scholarship at the Colburn Community School of Performing Arts, where he studies clarinet with Michael Yoshimi.

In 2017, Javier appeared on NPR's nationally broadcast program, *From the Top*, where he was awarded the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship. This year he also won top awards in the Mondavi Center Young Artists National Competition, the Backun International Clarinet Competition, the International Clarinet Association's High School Solo Competition, the National YoungArts Awards, and The Music Center's Spotlight Awards.

Javier was awarded the Emerson Scholarship in the summer of 2015 to attend the Interlochen Center for the Arts, has attended Boston University's Tanglewood Institute, and has been a recipient of the Young Musician's Foundation's David Weiss Memorial Scholarship. He has been selected for Carnegie Hall's NYO2, a program of the National Youth Orchestra of the United States, for two consecutive summers.

# JAVIER MORALES- MARTINEZ

When it comes to breaking boundaries in the world of music, Kevin “K.O.” Olusola is no stranger. He is best known as the beat boxer of the Grammy-winning vocal quintet Pentatonix. To date, Pentatonix has released 5 albums, each landing in the top 15 of Billboard’s Top 200 Album Chart and cumulatively selling roughly 1.7 million albums.

Kevin grew up in the small town of Owensboro, Kentucky, the son of a Nigerian psychiatrist and a Grenadian nurse. At an early age, Kevin began learning piano, cello and saxophone. He performed at Carnegie Hall twice as soloist on the cello and saxophone and has appeared on NPR’s From The Top. After finishing high school at Phillips Academy Andover, Kevin enrolled in and graduated from Yale University where he was pre-med and majored in East Asian Studies. He spent 18 months in Beijing becoming fluent in Chinese as a part of his Yale fellowship.

While in college, Kevin began developing his “celloboxing” skills and in 2009, he won second place in the “Celebrate and Collaborate with Yo-Yo Ma” international competition. Ma would call Kevin’s celloboxing version of “Dona Nobis Pacem” both “inventive and unexpected.” In 2011, Kevin’s “Julie-O” celloboxing YouTube video was featured by CBS, AOL, Huffington Post and Washington Post, among others. Kevin was also named one of 100 “History Makers in the Making” by NBC’s TheGrio and was hand-chosen by Quincy Jones to represent him in concert at the 2012 Montreux Jazz Festival alongside Bobby McFerrin and Chick Corea.

In March 2015, Kevin released his first solo album, The Renegade EP, courtesy of RCA Records. The album features classically reimaged versions of popular songs like “All of Me”, “Stay With Me”, and “Heart Attack”, as well as Kevin’s original composition “Renegade”. The album debuted #1 on Billboard Traditional Classical and Classical Crossover charts, in addition to staying #1 on iTunes classical albums for weeks. As Kevin puts it: “I think this is the beginning of a different sound I’m trying to popularize, just like Pharrell did, just like Quincy Jones did. I’m still developing..but I’m excited for the journey.”

# KEVIN “K.O.” OLUSOLA



Producer: Adam Abeshouse

***Something's Coming*** and ***Cool*** recorded at the Colburn School, Los Angeles - October 2 and 3, 2017.

***So Pretty*** recorded at Manifold Studio, Pittsboro NC by Ian Schreier - October 7, 2017.

***A Simple Song*** recorded at Question de Son Studio, , Paris - October 19, 2017.

All other tracks recorded May-August 2017 by Adam Abeshouse in Pelham, NY.

Kevin "K.O." Olusola appears courtesy of RCA Records.

Rhiannon Giddens appears courtesy of Nonesuch Records.

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Cover photo: Shervin Lainez

Design: Ian Titus

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***It would be nice to hear someone accidentally  
whistle something of mine, somewhere, just once.***

– LEONARD BERNSTEIN

# for lenny

Producer: Adam Abeshouse

<b>01</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Something's Coming – with Kevin “K.O.” Olusola</b>	<b>2:21</b>
<b>02</b>	JOHN CORIGLIANO	<b>Anniversary for Lenny*</b>	<b>1:41</b>
<b>03</b>	STEPHEN SCHWARTZ	<b>Anniversaire for Lenny*</b>	<b>1:47</b>
<b>04</b>	ELEONOR SANDRESKY	<b>Romance for Lenny*</b>	<b>2:08</b>
<b>05</b>	MICHAEL ABELS	<b>Iconoclasm/for Lenny*</b>	<b>3:29</b>
<b>06</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Big Stuff (arr. Luke Russell)</b>	<b>3:03</b>
<b>07</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Anniversary for Johnny Mehegan</b>	<b>0:46</b>
<b>08</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Anniversary for Aaron Copland</b>	<b>1:17</b>
<b>09</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Anniversary for Stephen Sondheim</b>	<b>1:27</b>
<b>10</b>	STEPHEN SONDHEIM	<b>I Remember (arr. Ethan Treiman)</b>	<b>2:08</b>
<b>11</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Cool – with Javier Morales-Martinez</b>	<b>1:07</b>
<b>12</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>The Story Of My Life (arr. Jed Distler)</b>	<b>2:34</b>
<b>13</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Greeting (arr. Lara Downes)</b>	<b>2:16</b>
<b>14</b>	MARC BLITZSTEIN	<b>Innocent Psalm, for the Bernstein Baby</b>	<b>1:12</b>
<b>15</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Anniversary for Nina</b>	<b>1:59</b>
<b>16</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Anniversary for Felicia on our 28<sup>th</sup> Birthday (and her 52<sup>nd</sup>)</b>	<b>1:26</b>
<b>17</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>So Pretty – with Rhiannon Giddens</b>	<b>2:27</b>
<b>18</b>	DARON HAGEN	<b>Anniversary in Memoriam (for Lenny)</b>	<b>3:34</b>
<b>19</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Anniversary for Lukas Foss</b>	<b>1:44</b>
<b>20</b>	LUKAS FOSS	<b>For Lenny, Variation on New York New York</b>	<b>1:54</b>
<b>21</b>	RICKY IAN GORDON	<b>What Shall We Remember?</b>	<b>4:12</b>
<b>22</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>A Simple Song – with Thomas Hampson</b>	<b>4:21</b>
<b>23</b>	SHULAMIT RAN	<b>Exuberance (for Lenny)*</b>	<b>0:58</b>
<b>24</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Anniversary for Craig Urquhart</b>	<b>1:11</b>
<b>25</b>	CRAIG URQUHART	<b>Remembering Lenny*</b>	<b>4:09</b>
<b>27</b>	THEO BLECKMANN	<b>Goodbye Chorale (for Lenny)*</b>	<b>2:40</b>
<b>26</b>	NED FOREM	<b>Youth, Day, Old Age and Night</b>	<b>2:25</b>
<b>28</b>	LEONARD BERNSTEIN	<b>Some Other Time (arr. Jed Distler)</b>	<b>3:30</b>

\*World Premieré Recording

# LARA DOWNES & friends

