

FRINGEARTS



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Swarthmore College and FringeArts Presenting the North American Premiere of CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO in October

Polish actress Barbara Wysocka, accompanied by The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, performs both of Chopin's Piano Concertos – without a Piano

A fraught undertaking. A tightrope walk. A dare.

[CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO](#), is a radically original theater production that comes to the US from Poland in October for its North American debut. Replacing the piano parts of Fryderyk Chopin's two piano concertos with penetrating dramatic monologues, the work is staged by Michał Zadara, the most distinguished Polish director-playwright of his generation, and the consummate actress Barbara Wysocka, the founders of the acclaimed Polish theater company CENTRALA. Wysocka is expertly accompanied by The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, who will be led by conductor Bassem Akiki from the Warsaw National Opera. In this transformative work, Wysocka hijacks the piano with her physical, virtuoso performance and proceeds to explore cultural, political, and philosophical tensions of the composer's time that feel strikingly contemporary. Performed in Polish with English supertitles, this new form of concert theater captures the composer as a dynamic living presence within the full force of his music. During CENTRALA's 2-week residency at Swarthmore College outside Philadelphia, CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO will premiere on Saturday, October 24, 2015 in Lang Concert Hall on the Swarthmore campus. The production then moves to FringeArts in Philadelphia for four performances, October 28 through 31.

The premiere at Swarthmore College is free and open to the public. Tickets for the dates at FringeArts are \$25 and can be purchased at <http://www.chopinwithoutpiano.com/>. After the performances in the Philadelphia area, the production goes to Boston for five performances November 11 through 14 at Arts Emerson, where Wysocka is accompanied by The Boston Conservatory Orchestra. Major support for the Pennsylvania performances of CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage with additional support from the William J. Cooper Foundation (Swarthmore College) and the Adam Mickiewicz Institute (CULTURE.PL, Warsaw).

CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO reveals new possibilities for theater and music to intersect in performance. Theater critic Łukasz Drewniak, attending the work's Warsaw premiere at The Warsaw National Opera last December, proclaimed, "CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO was a revelation. The production turned out to be a dizzying manifesto of artistic freedom. Wysocka and Zadara [...] reminded us that Chopin was revolutionary, and, above all, they created a non-hermetic language to talk about the emotions generated by classical music."

This bold new work is a passionate mediation on Chopin's life and art. It tells the story of a young composer who writes two piano concertos months before he leaves Poland, furious at the political reality of his situation and suffering the loss of both his family and his country. It also tells the story of our generation – a generation who feels his anguish and his uncertainty as to what will come next. By combining the sensibility and style of a solo theatrical

performance combined with imaginative video projections and lucid probing text, CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO transforms the composer and his music into a visceral and provocative experience on several levels.

"For me, CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO is a guerrilla piece," declares Zadara. "It bears the marks of violation or sacrilege. It aims to reinvent the possibility of a dialogue about the event of a concert, about music, Poland, and about culture in the broadest sense." Zadara goes on to explain, "In his native Poland, Chopin's legacy has been turned into a paralyzing myth that ignores the fact that he was an artistic revolutionary and innovator," observes director and co-author Zadara. "To challenge this, we created a piece that is unquestionably still 100% Chopin and simultaneously 100% new music."

For Zadara, this production provides the return to where his passion for Polish culture and theater took flight. Kuharski points out that "FringeArts is the single best place in the country to witness this production, for several reasons. FringeArts was the first arts venue anywhere in the US to present a CENTRALA theater piece." In 2009, FringeArts brought CENTRALA to Philadelphia and the US for the first time when it presented *Operetta*, written by Witold Gombrowicz and directed by Zadara. *Operetta* was also a collaboration with Swarthmore College and Kuharski. Since then, FringeArts has been seeking an opportunity to bring Zadara and CENTRALA back.

"I'm a big fan of Michał Zadara," says FringeArts President and Producing Artistic Director Nick Stuccio. "He's a young, bright voice in international theater. He's a rule breaker who takes epic risks. In CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO, he is rendering these classical concertos through the sieve of his physical theater practice and creating something brand new."

Producer Barbara Milewski is a professor at the Swarthmore College Department of Music and Dance. She is fascinated by how CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO forces audiences to re-evaluate the legendary composer. "Chopin has a reputation as a composer of virtuosic piano music, and that has kind of put him in a restrictive box," says Milewski "It may be a stretch to convince classical audiences otherwise, but I think when they hear his orchestral writing exposed in this way, they may be surprised to learn that what has historically been understood as compositional shortcomings may actually be revealed as intentional delicacy and individual formal experimentation. They'll have a chance to hear the concertos with new insight."

Lost Pianos

A parallel effort with CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO, *Lost Pianos* are ten unwanted but still working baby grand pianos (boldly stenciled with the words CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO) that are being displayed in highly visible public spaces on the Swarthmore College campus and around in-town Philadelphia neighborhoods. By taking an artifact associated with parlors and concert halls and abandoning these objects outdoors the producers wish passersby to ask: *Why are they here? What is their history? Where do they belong in our lives today? Are they objects of alienation or community?*

According to Milewski, "The pianos are a provocation to help us think more deeply about the sustaining value of music, and the tradition of live classical performance. Reactions to these pianos thus far are a powerful indication, an argument even, that we are not yet ready to part with what these pianos represent: the tradition of music making in our homes, in our lives, and in our communities."

Milewski adds, "The piano symbolizes our culture's connection to live music like nothing else, in large part because unlike any other instrument we encounter in our daily lives, this one is so very hard to ignore, or to discard. As Swarthmore students worry about the wastefulness of decent pianos being destroyed by the elements, they must also confront the fact that they are also complicit in the piano's declining presence in our lives. Perhaps these particular lost pianos are a gentle reminder of that deep, ever more urgent human need for balance."

Interactive Panel Discussions – October 25 and 31, 2015

Continuing the conversations around CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO as a work for theater and as a musical experience, the public is invited to attend two important roundtable discussions. See details below.

CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO – North American Premiere

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

8 pm Saturday, October 24

Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore College

500 College Ave., Swarthmore, PA 19081

Free and Open to the public without advance reservation.

Chopin's Voice: Chopin's Music in Performance

Sunday October 25, 3 pm - Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore College

Participants: Michał Zadara, Barbara Wysocka and Bassem Akiki with Jeffrey Kallberg (University of Pennsylvania) and David Kasunic (Occidental College)

Moderator: Barbara Milewski (Swarthmore College)

PHILADELPHIA

8 pm Wednesday – Friday, October 28 – 30

2 pm Saturday, October 31

FringeArts

140 N. Columbus Blvd. (at Race St.), Philadelphia, PA 19106

\$25 / \$15 for Students and anyone 25-and under

<http://fringearts.com/event/chopin-without-piano-3/2015-10-28/>

Chopin's Body: Chopin as Theater

Saturday October 31, 4:15 pm (immediately following the 2 pm performance)

FringeArts - 140 N. Columbus Blvd. (at Race St.), Philadelphia

Participants: Michał Zadara, Barbara Wysocka and Bassem Akiki with Tom Sellar (Yale School of Drama) and Tamara Trojanowska (University of Toronto)

Moderator: Allen Kuharski (Swarthmore College)

NOTE: After the performances in the Philadelphia area, the production goes to Boston for five performances November 11 through 14 at Arts Emerson, where Wysocka is accompanied by The Boston Conservatory Orchestra. For details, visit <https://artsemerson.org/>

PRODUCING PARTNERS & PERFORMERS

CENTRALA

Founded in 2013 by Michał Zadara, the most important Polish theater director of his generation, CENTRALA is a Polish theater company unlike any other. To date they have created seven pieces that dismantle and reassemble the institutions required for art-making. CENTRALA's new ways of production, creation and presentation have resulted in collaborations with Warsaw's Modern Art Museum, the Warsaw Uprising Museum, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, and a 24-hour kebab shop in Warsaw run by Yemeni immigrants. "CENTRALA is a group of people creating plays that are innovative in every respect: from their aesthetic appeal to the relationship with the audience and the way they are produced." - Michał Zadara

BARBARA WYSOCKA – actor, co-author

Born in 1978 in Warsaw, Wysocka graduated from the Acting and Directing Departments of the Theatre Academy in Krakow. Previously she studied violin at the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany. She has performed and directed at the Stary Teatr in Krakow, the Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz, Scena STU Theatre in Krakow, Wrocław Contemporary Theatre, the Polish National Opera in Warsaw, and the Maxim Gorki Theater and Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz in Berlin. She has starred in the films *Am Ende kommen Touristen*, *Nachmieter*, *Polnische Ostern*, and *Fremde Farben*. She has also directed at the National Theatre in Warsaw and the Kammerspiele in Munich. She won the Polityka Passport Award in 2009. With CENTRALA, she has performed in *CHOPIN WITHOUT PIANO*, *All Were Turned Away*, *10 Political Songs*, *Szapocznikow: State of Weightlessness/No Gravity*, *A Primer*, *Pupil*, and *Adventure Warsaw*. She is also the screenwriter and director of the play *Szapocznikow: State of Weightlessness / No Gravity*.

MICHAŁ ZADARA – director, co-author

Director and CENTRALA co-founder Michał Zadara, born in 1976 in Warsaw, is a graduate of an international high school in Vienna, the Departments of Political Science and Theater at Swarthmore College, and the Directing Department of the Theatre Academy in Krakow. He has created some fifty performances, installations, and independent films in Poland, Austria, Germany, Israel and the US. In 2013, he founded CENTRALA so that together with a team of creative, independent artists and administrators he could create works beyond institutional norms.

Zadara was the featured director of the 2008 Warsaw Theater Meetings Festival, and he has received the prestigious Passport and Swinarski awards for his directing work in Poland. In 2014, he was given the Silver Cross for Service by the President of Poland for his work creating an unprecedented memorial to the civilian victims of the Warsaw Uprising in World War II.

BASSEM AKIKI - conductor

Lebanese-Polish conductor Bassem Akiki is now established in Warsaw. As guest conductor he performs with many orchestras and music theaters. He began his musical studies at the High National Conservatory of Music in Beirut (Lebanon). Simultaneously he studied philosophy at the Lebanese University in Beirut (Lebanon). Bassem Akiki received his masters degrees at the Academy of Music in Cracow (2008) and at the Academy of Music in Wrocław (2010). His interest in the relationship between philosophy and music led him to complete a PhD thesis at the F. Chopin University in Warsaw in 2013.

THE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA OF PHILADELPHIA

A founding resident company of The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia is a 33-member professional ensemble led by Music Director Dirk Brossé, a conductor and composer of international acclaim. For half a century, The Chamber Orchestra has earned a sterling reputation around the world for distinguished performances of repertoire from the Baroque period through the 21st century. The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia has commissioned and premiered over 70 new works and has performed with such internationally acclaimed artists as Plácido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti, Mstislav Rostropovich, Issac Stern, Rudolf Serkin, The Eroica Trio, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Julie Andrews, Bernadette Peters, Elvis Costello, and Sylvia McNair, among others. This fall,

Chamber Orchestra completed a successful national tour with Branford Marsalis. The Chamber Orchestra performs from September through May in the Kimmel Center's intimate, 600-seat Perelman Theater and performs one concert program each year in the Kimmel Center's Verizon Hall as well as selected concert programs at Lincoln University. The Chamber Orchestra also performs with other musical ensembles throughout the region and travels regularly across the United States, Europe, and Israel.

PRESENTERS

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AND DANCE

Each year the Department of Music and Dance hosts performances, residencies and master classes by distinguished musicians and dancers from around the world. These have included: Simone Dinnerstein, David Dorfman Dance, Vijay Iyer, Soledad Barrio and Noche Flamenco, Warren Jones, the Philadelphia Dance company Idiosyncrazy, David Kim, Trisha Brown Dance Company, Judith Mendenhall, Rennie Harris Puremovement, Pamela Frank, Bernard Woma (Ghanaian master gyil player) and Saakuma Dance Troupe, Sanford Sylvan, Sally Wolf, Jane Comfort and Company, and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. For over 20 years, the music program has also hosted Swarthmore College's Ensemble-In-Residence, Orchestra 2001, one of the world's premier ensembles for new music. The department has also annually hosted the 140-voice Chester Children's Chorus and Tamagawa Taiko Drum and Dance Ensemble. The music program frequently partners with and presents regional organizations such as Play on, Philly! Network for New Music, Piffaro, Astral Artists, and Mélomanie.

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF THEATER

The Department of Theater at Swarthmore College has a unique and distinguished history of preparing future directors and launching independent companies. In addition to Michał Zadara, the Department's graduates include the founders of Philadelphia's Pig Iron Theater, director/designer Lars Jan (Early Morning Opera, Los Angeles), Jon Stancato (Stolen Chair Theatre Company, New York), and the collaborative team of actor/playwright Suli Holum and playwright Deborah Stein. These artists and others have been supported by The Swarthmore Project in Theater, an artist-residency program sponsored by the Department, and have regularly appeared in the Philadelphia Fringe Festival over the years in addition to performing widely nationally and internationally. The Department of Theater has a long history of academic and professional exchanges with international theater and dance artists, and with Poland in particular. For his earlier work on this score, professor and chair Allen Kuharski has received the Order of Merit in Polish Culture and the Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz Award from the Polish Ministry of Culture and the Polish chapter of the International Theatre Institute/UNESCO, along with a FringeFirst Award in Edinburgh.

FRINGEARTS

FringeArts is Philadelphia's home for contemporary performance, presenting progressive, world-class art that stretches the imagination and boldly defies expectation. As the city's lead experimenter in the arts, FringeArts exposes audiences to unpredictable dance, theater and music performances by accomplished and emerging innovators who are pushing the boundaries of art-making and redefining the artistic landscape worldwide. Year-round programming is presented at FringeArts' state-of-the-art center on the Delaware River Waterfront—a renovated historic building that also houses a restaurant and beer garden. Each September, the organization presents the annual Fringe Festival, a 17-day celebration that fills the city's neighborhoods with more than 1,000 curated and independently produced contemporary performances. As a catalyst for cultural and community development, and a destination that brings artists and audiences together, FringeArts amplifies the vibrancy of the city's arts community and enriches the lives of those who reside, work and visit here.

FUNDERS

PEW CENTER FOR ARTS & HERITAGE

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage (the Center) is a multidisciplinary grantmaker and hub for knowledge-sharing, dedicated to fostering a vibrant cultural community in Greater Philadelphia. The Center invests in ambitious, imaginative projects that showcase the region's cultural vitality and enhance public life, and we engage in an ongoing exchange of ideas concerning artistic and interpretive practice with a broad network of cultural practitioners and leaders.

ADAM MICKIEWICZ INSTITUTE

The Adam Mickiewicz Institute constantly lend credence to Poland as an irreplaceable link in the international circulation of ideas, values and cultural goods of the highest order. They advocate Poland abroad, and actively participate in cultural events in the world such as festivals, fairs or exhibitions; create and update an integrated system of information about Polish culture and disseminate this information - in different languages - through global internet resources; create and collect information and promotional material (multilingual publications, illustrations, recordings, films, literary programs, exhibition projects) and provide these materials to interested persons and institutions in Poland and abroad; prepare for foreign culture professionals, researchers and specialists from various fields necessary materials and information about Poland and Polish culture; organize study visits of international curators, promoters, selectors, critics and artists.

WILLIAM J. COOPER FOUNDATION

The William J. Cooper Foundation provides a varied program of lectures, performances and exhibitions which enriches the academic work of Swarthmore College. The Foundation was established by William J. Cooper who specified that the income from his gift should be used 'in bringing to the college eminent citizens of this and other countries who are leaders in statesmanship, education, the arts, sciences, learned professions and business.'

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