



# Chopin Notes

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## Upcoming Events:

*Chopin Recital*  
**Marc Laforet, piano**  
 May 6, 2007 7:00 pm  
 Roswell Cultural Arts Center  
 Roswell, GA  
 For tickets, call 770.641.1260  
 or online at www.chopinatlanta.org

*Chopin Recital*  
**Kevin Kerner, winner of the  
 1990 International Chopin  
 Competition in Warsaw, and  
 Piazzoforte Quintet**  
 October 21, 2007 7:00 pm  
 Roswell Cultural Arts Center  
 Roswell, GA  
 For tickets, call 770.641.1260  
 or online at www.chopinatlanta.org

*Fourth Annual Chopin's Life  
 and Works Competition for  
 Atlanta Youth*  
 November 2007  
 Steinway Piano Galleries  
 Atlanta, GA

*Annual Fundraising Event*  
 November 2007

*"Keep an eye on the Chopin  
 Society of Atlanta."*  
 ~ Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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## In Natural 'Osmosis' with Chopin

Pianist Marc Laforet talks about his love for Chopin

by Bożena U. Zaremba

What do Vladimir Ashkenazy, Mitsuko Uchida, Ingrid Fliter and Marc Laforet have in common? Besides being brilliant pianists with distinguished international careers, they all won the Second Prize at the International Frederic Chopin Competition in Warsaw, and later proved that it is often the runners-up who make their name in the music world

Chopin Society of Atlanta had the great pleasure of hosting Ingrid Fliter in October 2005, and now we will have a chance to admire yet another remarkable talented pianist from the list above, Marc Laforet, whose poetic touch has been widely appreciated. Audiences world wide are ecstatic, and critics are raving: "Laforet's way of playing Chopin...defies time and space," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*; "Laforet plays like one writes poems," *La Tribune*; "Laforet fascinates the audience by...the extent of his expressive palette from deepest melancholy to passionate fervor," *Darmstadter Echo*; "...musicality plus intelligence supported by perfect technique and supple, willing fingers," *Het Parol*.



Photo: Archives

Laforet has won other prestigious awards, including First Place at the Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York (1985), and thus joined a list of its laureates, which includes such famous artists as Pinchas Zukerman, Emanuel Ax, Dawn Upshaw and Jean-Yves Thibaudet. When I talked to him about the stress involved with participating in music competitions, he confessed that during all those competitions he did not feel any pressure, and that certainly helped him to be successful. "Which honor do you cherish most?" I asked. "It was of course the different awards I won during the Warsaw Chopin Competition," he said. "It is really a magical competition for pianists, especially for me, because, having been inexperienced in competitions, I had no particular expectations or objectives." With the recognition at these renowned competitions came great success at major concert halls all over the world and collaboration with the greatest conductors, like Daniel Barenboim and Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Along with Vladimir Ashkenazy and Murray Perahia, Marc Laforet has also given master classes. When I asked him how he would compare their teaching approaches to his, he said, "I am lucky to know and to be acquainted with these two fantastic musicians, and to benefit from their precious advice. I do not have the pretension to compare my teaching approach to theirs. I would only say that Murray Perahia tends to aim his advice through his unlimited knowledge of harmony, and wants to give structure to pieces. Vladimir Ashkenazy uses more of his exceptional musical feeling to communicate life and color to every piece he plays."

Laforet's talent was recognized at a very early age, and he had the great honor and pleasure of studying with Arthur Rubinstein. "These were some magical and unforgettable moments of

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**"Chopin Society of Atlanta...makes exquisite programming choices."**

~ Pierre Ruhe, Atlanta Journal-Constitution

## Chopin Goes Jazz—Unique and Outstanding Concert

by Brian Mitchell

On March 3, 2007, Atlanta was treated to a unique and outstanding concert at Oglethorpe University given by vocalist Grazyna Auguscik and the Andrzej Jagodzinski Trio. In a

concert filled with jazzed-up Chopin classics and Polish folk songs, the audience experienced a concert that was entirely new and

original. When one hears of works by a classical master being transformed into jazz, the phrase “approach with trepidation” instantly comes to mind. However, knowing that the composer was Chopin—a composer and performer noted for his legendary improvisational powers—the idea of marrying it with jazz makes sense. The Chopin arrangements were inventive and delightful, and the smoky vocals of alto Grazyna Auguscik were heartfelt and communicative.

The concert featured Chopin piano classics such as the *Preludes in E minor* and *C minor* and the *Nocturne in E-flat major* alternating with Polish folk songs such as “Matulu moja” (“O, My Mother”),

“Dancing All Around” and “Oberek.” The trio primarily performed the Chopin tunes with Auguscik joining them for the Polish folk songs. Her breathy, sultry delivery was perfect for songs such as the

haunting “Matulu moja.” More upbeat songs such as “Dancing All Around” featured fine scat improvisations with snappy delivery. Between works Auguscik explained the lyrical content of the next folk song or told an anecdotal story to put the work in context. Her explanations of the songs and sense of humor enhanced the performance tremendously. The trio’s performance of the transformed Chopin

compositions was tight and inventive. Jagodzinski and Cegielski typically took turns improvising on the different compositions with the occasional solo or fill by the drummer Bartkowski. It would have been nice to hear more intricate arrangements featuring independent contrapuntal lines between the piano and bass, but the tunes worked well over all.

The clear standout of the evening was the pianist Andrzej Jagodzinski. His

highly original arrangements of Chopin’s piano works were fantastic and surprising. Typically, each work would start with jazz-infused piano riffs, which would then reveal familiar themes from the Chopin work from which it was derived. Jagodzinski’s technique was flawless and the tone he conjured from the piano was warm and full, an absolute treat to listen to. His improvisations on the Chopin themes were layered and extensive. Listening to Jagodzinski perform throughout the evening, one felt as though he was listening to a musician that was quite possibly at the height of his powers.

The concert was thoroughly enjoyed by the full house audience, with the trio and

vocalist Auguscik receiving a standing ovation and performing an encore. One can only hope that more original concerts such as this will grace the metro Atlanta area. ■

Brian Mitchell is an active composer/guitarist who has written music for film and concert stage. He has received commissions from The High

Museum of Art in Atlanta and wrote the score for the Cine Award winning documentary *More Than Words Can Say*. He is currently on faculty as instructor of guitar at Georgia Perimeter College and the University of West Georgia.



Photo: Archives



Picture by Janusz Komor

## Mazovian Willows - Chopin’s Nocturne, Opus 9

By Linda Nemeč Foster

What has happened to my heart?  
I can hardly remember how they  
sing at home. - Chopin

Did the strain of a mazurka split you in two? Don’t tell me lightning, wind, harsh betrayal of nature—anything that has logic. As much logic as a Polish composer with a French name who wrote scores of music for a single instrument; who was in love with a strong woman that adopted a man’s name because she liked simplicity. No logic there, old tree, stark willow. You probably gave Frédéric his inspiration: one

note at a time drowning out the sky, changing your life from a single vision to a double one. A split trunk resembling a pair of hands in prayer, bruised fingers of the émigré. Your country not even listed on the map. Perhaps it wasn’t a mazurka that cut your heart in two: one side listing to the West, the other firmly planted in Mazovia, despite itself. Perhaps it was a simple nocturne, the last fading light before night comes and eyes close. Music of good-bye, farewell; the knowledge of never going home again. Music

of exile that almost forgets the language of the earth.

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Linda Nemeč Foster is a distinguished poet, whose poems have appeared in more than 250 journals and magazines in the U.S. and Europe. Foster has published six collections of poems and her newest book, *Amber Necklace from Gdansk* has been nominated for a number of major book awards, including the Laughlin Award from the Academy of American Poets. Music inspired by her poetry chapbook *Contemplating the Heavens and composed by acclaimed jazz pianist Steve Talaga* has been nominated for this year’s Pulitzer Prize in music.  
[www.lindanemecfoster.com](http://www.lindanemecfoster.com)



my youth!" he recalls. "When you are 8 years old, to find yourself in front of your idol, who takes time to give you lessons, who gives you advice and makes you laugh at the same time, it leaves a mark on you for the rest of your life! Of course, it contributed to my passion towards Chopin."

Chopin's music has an essential place in Marc Laforet's vast repertoire; he has recorded Chopin's concertos, waltzes and preludes. He finds it difficult, however, to choose a favorite Chopin piece. "One can always find the sparks of genius in them, even in those considered to be minor," he adds. "Since my childhood,



Photo: Archives

Chopin has been my favorite composer, who is deeply connected to my spirit and my heart, and with whom I feel to be in a natural 'osmosis.'"

On October 17, 1999, on the very night of the 150th anniversary of Chopin's death, Marc Laforet played in the composer's house on Place Vendôme in Paris. He was thrilled by this event, which he called "a very special experience, and also an honor! At that very moment, the entire world was celebrating the commemoration, and there I was, at the heart of the event. That special evening I felt a very strong emotional force, which generated a 'supplement' of inspiration."

Marc Laforet is an artistic adviser of the annual European Young Concert Artists Auditions in Paris, where he is in charge of the selection for the preliminary auditions and co-president of the jury throughout the entire competition. In 2003, he founded and has since been artistic director of Les Grands

Crus Musicaux, a music festival that takes place every July in prestigious



Place Vendôme, Apartment on second floor belonged to Chopin. Photo by D. Lato

castles around Bordeaux, France, and is accompanied by wine tasting. "I created this festival because I wanted to build an artistic project to gather prestigious musicians but also young and less known ones, in a friendly, yet atypical and exceptional setting."

Marc Laforet will be playing an all-Chopin recital on May 6, 2007, at 7:00 pm at the Roswell Arts Cultural Center. For the pianist's full biography, please visit [www.chopinatlanta.org](http://www.chopinatlanta.org).

## Historical Chopin Posters

Please visit our newly redesigned Website [www.chopinatlanta.org](http://www.chopinatlanta.org) to enjoy an exhibition of posters from the Chopin Society of Atlanta archives.

Here is what Maria Kurpik, Curator of The Poster Museum at Wilanow, Poland, wrote about the posters:

"It's not only by the written word that artists have attempted to describe and explain Frederic Chopin's music. There is one other field of art beautifully representing his music in visual: the poster, artistic miniatures playing a grand concert to honor the ingenious composer. These small forms are created on different occasions, for Chopin's concerts, festivals, competitions, as well as exhibitions devoted to a presentation of the artist's life and works.

The graphic designer's fascination with

the beauty of the music gives rise to works that translate the magic world of sound into the language of visual experience. It is a difficult task to turn music into an image without losing the powerful emotions contained in musical notes. Music, which is believed to be the least tamed of the arts, inspires and finds a reflection in another dimension: poster art.

Depending on the occasion, the piece and the

individual graphic designer's sensibility, the posters that are created are color or monochrome visions pulsating with a richness of moods and symbols.

Poland, the land of melancholy landscape, romantic insurrections, the homeland of many artists creating music, poetry, and painting is included in the world artistic pantheon.

This Poland is also the place where in the 1950s the artistic phenomenon known far and wide as the Polish School of the Poster came into existence."



# Just for Kids...

by Beata Olszok

## Part I:

Match the name and the description with the picture.

- a) Franz Liszt - the Hungarian pianist, composer and conductor, friend of Chopin.
- b) Vincenzo Bellini - the quintessential composer of Bel canto opera, friend of Chopin.
- c) Robert Schumann - the German composer and pianist, great admirer of Chopin's work.



1.



2.



3.

## Part II:

Whom did Chopin never meet in person?

- a) Eugene Delacroix
- b) Franz Liszt
- c) Ludwig van Beethoven
- d) George Sand

Answer—Part I: a-3, b-1, c-2 Part II: Ludwig van Beethoven

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