



**For Immediate Release:
Fear No Music Shines a Light on Female Poets with
“Because of Her, We Make Songs”**

“FNM’s many concerts featuring works by young composers, women composers, composers from ‘shithole’ countries, and so on, cultivate a very Portland sense of civic art. ‘Think globally, act locally,’ as the bumper stickers used to say.” - Oregon ArtsWatch

February 15, 2018; Portland, OR: This Women’s History Month, Fear No Music continues to champion underrepresented artists with a unique exploration of poetry by female writers, enhanced through the lens of new music. Gorgeous settings by some of today’s most adept vocal composers conjoin to create a lush bouquet of sonic variety which breathes fresh life into timeless words from deeply sensitive and spiritual women.

“Because of Her, We Make Songs: Music For Female Poets”

(title borrowed from a poem by Luci Tapahonso, the first Poet Laureate of the Navajo Nations)

Monday, March 25 at 7:30pm

The Old Church Concert Hall in Downtown Portland

Tickets available at fearnomusic.org

At the heart of this concert is a collection of five different musical settings of the universally relatable poem *I’m Nobody* by Emily Dickinson, one of America’s most beloved and iconic female poets. Running the gamut from playful and charming to reflective and emotional, decisive and extroverted to tender and personal, these songs hold up mirrors to reflect a myriad of possible emotions behind Dickinson’s deceptively straightforward lyrics. Composers for these songs are Lori Laitman, OBIE Award-winner Ricky Ian Gordon, Latin Grammy-winner Zeca Baleiro, and Guggenheim Fellows Vincent Persichetti and Jake Heggie.

Special guest soprano Arwen Myers, praised for her “crystalline tone and delicate passagework,” (*San Francisco Chronicle*) shines in this program accompanied by the incredibly talented and effortlessly graceful pianist Monica Ohuchi. In addition to the Dickinson set, the duo will perform *Lady of the Harbor* by Lee Hoiby, featuring poetry by Emma Lazarus. Lazarus’ unforgettable inscription on the Statue of Liberty, “From her beacon hand/ Glows world-wide welcome,” inspired the current Fear No Music season titled “Worldwide Welcome.” Through music and poetry, Fear No Music recommits to a national identity that is inextricably linked to diversity and inclusivity.

Myers and Ohuchi also perform British composer Jenni Pinnock’s beautiful and soulful setting of the ostracized and controversial poet Elinor Wylie’s *Bells in the Rain* ([listen here](#)), and Florence Price’s

settings of Georgia Douglas Johnson's *The Heart of a Woman* and Julia Johnson Davis' *To My Little Son*. As the first African American female composer to have her work performed by a major symphony orchestra, Florence Price is experiencing a posthumous revival thanks in large part to major music publisher G. Schirmer acquiring and promoting her excellent catalogue of work. Georgia Douglas Johnson, an African-American poet, was also one of the earliest African-American female playwrights.

Other chamber music on the program includes the Portland premiere of leading Mexican composer Hilda Parades' substantial duo for solo viola and speaker, *Condice de adivinanzas* which sets the words of well-known Mayan poet Briceida Cuevas Cob. Chilean poet-diplomat, educator and humanist Gabriela Mistral was the first Latin American writer to receive a Nobel Prize in Literature "for her lyric poetry which, inspired by powerful emotions, has made her name a symbol of the idealistic aspirations of the entire Latin American world." (nobelprize.org) Mistral's *Piececitos*, a meditation on motherhood, migration and exile, receives a dramatic setting for violin, cello, piano, and soprano from Moroccan-American composer Joelle Wallach (also a Portland premiere). Latin American dance rhythms interweave with haunting melodies, songs, lullabies and laments. Pulitzer Prize and two-time Grammy-winner Jennifer Higdon's *Love Suite* utilizes the same quartet combination to depict fellow Pulitzer Prize-winner Amy Lowell's imagist writing. The piece incorporates extended instrumental techniques to great effect ([listen here](#)).

A short poem titled *Shiny Kiss* by San Juan Island based composer Alex Shapiro forms the basis for her solo flute work of the same name. In the poet-composer's own words, "This highly lyrical piece refers to the way stage lights bounce and reflect off of a metal flute and how a flutist's mouth graces the embouchure. This simple hollow tube is the vehicle for such passionate expression, and just watching expert lips coaxing music from it can be a nearly voyeuristic experience."

This concert is made possible with generous support from the Multnomah County Cultural Coalition and Ronni Lacroute.

Fear No Music promotes music education through the high quality public performance of modern and contemporary classical music, and by offering groundbreaking youth mentorship in composition. We promote living composers and expose audiences to contemporary classical music being made both locally and globally through a uniquely relevant annual concert series. We educate and train the next generation of young composers in our community by way of the Young Composers Project. *Fear No Music* is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

For additional information, media materials and interview inquiries, please contact:

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Soprano Arwen Myers
& Pianist Monica Ohuchi

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