

barbican



Classical Music

Concert programme

**Her Stories
with Samantha Ege**

Sun 1 Dec 4pm

Milton Court Concert Hall

Important information



When does the concert start and finish?

The concert begins at 4pm and finishes at about 5.45pm, with a 20-minute interval.



I'm running late!

Latecomers will be admitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



Please ...

Switch any watch alarms and mobile phones to silent during the performance.



Please don't ...

Take photos or recordings during the performance – save it for the curtain call.



Use a hearing aid?

Please use our induction loop – just switch your hearing aid to T setting on entering the hall.



Need a break?

You can leave at any time and be readmitted if there is a suitable break in the performance, or during the interval.



Looking for refreshments?

Bars are located on Levels -1, G and 1.



Looking for the toilets?

The nearest toilets, including accessible toilets, are located on Levels G, 1 and 2.



Carrying bags and coats?

Drop them off at our free cloak room on Level -1.

Her Stories with Samantha Ege

Sun 1 Dec 4pm, Milton Court Concert Hall

Samantha Ege piano

Florence Price Piano Sonata

- 1 Andante – Allegro
- 2 Andante
- 3 Scherzo

Camila Cortina Bello *Bravura*

Interval 20 minutes

Odaline de la Martinez *Studies in Rhythm*
world premiere

- 1 Distant Drums
- 2 3s and 4s
- 3 Simple Melody
- 4 Con Salsa

Chen Yi *Variations on Awariguli*

Gabriela Ortiz *Preludio e Estudio No 3*

Produced by the Barbican

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Samantha Ege makes an eagerly anticipated return to Milton Court for a programme that marries the music of her beloved Florence Price with that of other under-represented composers, taking us from Cuba and Mexico to China.

This afternoon's programme *Her Stories* is inspired by Samantha Ege's first book *South Side Impresarios: How Race Women Transformed Chicago's Classical Music Scene*. The book dives into the musical community of Florence Price and starts with her journey on the South Side of Chicago.

Ege explains:

'As a pianist, however, I wanted to bring multiple stories in dialogue with Price's. As a result, the programme takes the audience on a journey through Price's Chicago to a variety of folk tales and sounds from Cuba, China and Mexico.'

Florence Price's Piano Sonata in E minor dates from 1932. It was written during a period of financial difficulty and despair. However, it was during this time that she found great support among her fellow composers Nora Holt and Margaret Bonds (the South Side sisterhood). This sonata reflects this dynamic network. It follows a traditional compositional form and its melodies are derived from African-American spirituals. The melodies feature syncopations, pentatonic scales and different modes.

Afro-Cuban composer, pianist, educator and musicologist Camila Cortina Bello was born in Havana where she studied classical piano and ethnomusicology. After she finished her studies in Cuba, Bello worked in Singapore and later relocated to Boston to study jazz composition and global jazz performance at the Berklee College of Music. Her music uses Cuban sounds and rhythms while incorporating jazz, classical and world music. Bello and Ege had



formed a collaborative bond since meeting a few years earlier in Singapore. Bello had grown familiar with Ege's work and when the latter asked her to write a piece based on the themes of sisterhood and fortitude, she fully embraced the opportunity. *Bravura* was the result, commissioned in 2023 to celebrate the musical legacies of the South Side sisterhood.

Ege writes:

'I had been interested in the title "Bravura" for a while, its feminine ending and masculine connotations intrigued me; the word floated around until finally settling on this project.'

The work is built on a Florence Price-inspired theme from her *Fantasia nègre* No 1 in E minor (1929), which is in turn based on the Negro Spiritual, 'Sinner Please Don't Let this Harvest Pass' and a theme from Margaret Bond's 'Troubled Water' (1967). As Ege writes in *South Side Impresarios*:

"'Troubled Water' is a work in which I hear the classical strand of the Black Chicago Renaissance and the contrapuntal lives of its musical Race women skillfully interwoven – women such as Maude Roberts George, Estella Bonds, Katherine Dunham, Nora Holt, Shirley Graham and, of course, Price. This piece is based on the Negro Spiritual "Wade in the Water"."

Bello links these themes with an injection of jazz, 19th-century Romanticism and Afro-Cuban influences. As a result, *Bravura* adds new perspectives on the legacies of the South Side sisterhood.

Cuban-born composer and conductor Odaline de la Martinez was raised in the US and studied at the Royal Academy of Music and the University of Surrey. In 1976 she founded the ensemble Lontano and in 1992 founded Lorelt Records which

promotes recordings by underrepresented composers and neglected music. Eight years before this, in 1984, she became the first woman to conduct a BBC Prom at the Royal Albert Hall. Her music has influences from her Cuban heritage and today sees the premiere of *Studies in Rhythm*, which was a special commission for *Her Stories*.

Chen Yi's *Variations on Awariguli* is based on the Chineke folk song 'Awariguli', named after a beautiful girl from the Uygur ethnic group in Xinjiang. The work was written for solo piano during Yi's first year at Beijing's Central Conservatory of Music and was premiered in 1979 by her sister Chen Min. The piece features Yi's love for Western and Chinese musical ideas and is made up of nine variations ending with a dramatic and energetic coda.

Gabriela Ortiz was born to a musical family in Mexico City, where she had a multifaceted musical education. She started off learning the charango (an Andean string instrument of the lute family which is similar to a ukulele), guitar and piano. She began her compositional studies with renowned Mexican composers Marion Lavista and Julio Estrada, later studying composition at City University here in London. Her music draws inspiration from Mexican ideas but she is also interested in incorporating elements of different musical worlds, ranging from traditional and popular icons to multimedia works.

Preludio e Estudio No 3 for solo piano was written in 2005. It is based on a fictional character named Jesusa Palancares, who in turn was based on a real woman who fought in the Mexican Revolution. Ege finds that 'there is a lot of mystery in the prelude and rage in the study'.

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Samantha Ege

Dr Samantha Ege is an Anniversary Research Fellow at the University of Southampton. She was the Lord Crewe Junior Research Fellow in Music at Lincoln College, University of Oxford (2020–22). She holds a PhD in Musicology from the University of York and a BA in Music from the University of Bristol. She taught music internationally for almost a decade after graduating from Bristol.

Dr Ege is a leading scholar and interpreter of the African American composer Florence B Price. Her work illuminates Price in the context of the Black Chicago Renaissance and Black women's dynamic networks of advocacy and empowerment. Her first book, *South Side Impresarios: How Race Women Transformed Chicago's Classical Music Scene*, and first edited collection, *The Cambridge Companion to Florence B Price*, are important culminations of the research she has shared in journal articles, lecture-recitals, paper presentations, and more.

As a concert pianist she specialises in the music of 20th- and 21st-century composers. Her performances bring her research to life, sounding new narratives that are so often unheard in the modern-day concert hall. She seeks to communicate the diversity of classical music's past, present and future through her performances, and foster a sense of belonging for everyone. As a result, her performances take on different formats, sometimes entwining narration and conversation alongside more conventional programming.

Dr Ege released her debut album, *Four Women*, in 2018 (Wave Theory Records). She followed this with *Fantasia Nègre* in 2021 and *Black Renaissance Woman and Homage* in 2022 (all on Lorelt). She is currently working on two new albums: featuring the piano concertos of Julia Perry and Doreen Carwithen with the Lontano Orchestra for Lorelt and the orchestral music of Avril Coleridge-Taylor with the BBC Philharmonic for Resonus Classics.

She made her Barbican debut as a pianist in 2021 in a recital including the UK premiere of Vítězslava Kaprálová's *Sonata appassionata*. This followed her London debut at the 2021 London Festival of American Music in which she gave the world premiere of Florence Price's complete *Fantasia Nègre* set.

Whether sharing the Black Renaissance repertoire of Florence Price and Margaret Bonds, or displaying the postmodernisms of Undine Smith Moore and Julia Perry, or championing the British concertos of Avril Coleridge-Taylor and Doreen Carwithen, or celebrating the contemporary works of Bongani Ndodana-Breen and Odaline de la Martinez, storytelling is at the heart of everything she does. In widely varied programmes Dr Ege explores the connections between research and repertoire, and the narratives that shape our communities and connect us as individuals.

With thanks

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