

Samuel Barber (1910-1981) *Sonata for Piano Op 26*

1. *Allegro energico*
2. *Allegro vivace e leggiro*
3. *Adagio mesto*
4. *Fuga: Allegro con spirito*

Barber, one of America's most famous and frequently performed composers, was born in Pennsylvania, 1910. A student of the voice and piano, his first operetta was composed at the age of ten, titled *The Rose Tree*. Barber was also one of the first students to attend the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where at the age of 13, he began compositional studies with Rosario Scalerò. Between 1935 and 1937, he was awarded the Prix de Rome and the Pulitzer Prize for composition. Barber is well known for his composition *Adagio for Strings* as well as his many vocal works, including *The Hermit Songs*.

The *Sonata for Piano Op 26* was commissioned in 1947 by Irving Berlin and Richard Rodgers to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the League of Composers. However, it wasn't until two years later that Barber finished the work, the date of completion being June 1949. Vladimir Horowitz premiered the sonata in New York on 23 January, 1950, claiming that the work was "the first truly great native work in the form". The sonata features compositional devices associated with modernism, such as serialism in the first 3 movements through the use of 12-note rows. The final movement, an impressive and difficult fugue, leaves the listener breathless with its energy. Olin Downes of the New York Times stated: "We consider it the first sonata really to come of age by an American composer of this period".