

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



New Orleans pianist to perform in rescheduled hurricane concert

For Immediate Release

**February 03, 2006
13-06**

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WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University has rescheduled a cancelled benefit concert for victims of Hurricane Katrina. Soviet-born pianist and composer Faina Lushtak, who lost her New Orleans home, will perform on Saturday, February 18.

Lushtak will perform a variety of works, including some of her own compositions, during a concert at 8 p.m. in Laurier’s Maureen Forrester Recital Hall. Net proceeds from ticket sales, estimated at \$4,000, will be donated to the Mennonite Central Committee’s Hurricane Katrina response efforts.

The program includes works by Mozart, Chopin, Liszt, Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff. Laurier voice professor Daniel Lichti, who invited Lushtak after meeting her at the Schlern International Music Festival in Italy this summer, will perform the Michelangelo Lieder by Hugo Wolf with Lushtak. She will finish the concert with her own compositions.

“We are very pleased to have been able to reschedule this extremely worthy event,” said Lichti. “Faina is an exceptional performer and person, who was soon thinking of others even as her own home was destroyed.”

Lushtak’s home in New Orleans was among those devastated by Katrina. “We lost photo albums and a great many personal effects, but the greatest loss was of my piano,” she said. “Steinways are all different. Like people, they all have different personalities.”

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But no sooner was the damage reviewed, than Lushtak was confirming existing engagements and booking new ones. “One has to have a certain degree of optimism in order to leave the Soviet Union,” she explains.

Lushtak was born and raised in the Soviet Union. A child prodigy, she began her piano and composition studies at the age of six. She graduated from the Stolyarskii Special Music School for Musically Gifted Children and later earned her degrees in piano performance and composition from the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory.

Since her debut at the age of 10, Lushtak’s concert performances have inspired audiences throughout her native Russia, in Western halls from Austria to Italy, and in the United States. She has performed both as a solo recitalist and as a guest artist with numerous symphony orchestras, under the batons of William Henry Curry, Maxim Shostakovich, Alfred Slavia, John Paul and Larry Cullison.

A dedicated teacher, Lushtak is on the faculty of the Schlern International Music Festival in Italy. She is also the Downman Professor of Music at the Newcomb music department of Tulane University, where she heads the piano division and is music director of Tulane’s concert piano series.

Lushtak was originally scheduled to perform on January 6 and conduct a masterclass the following day. A new family crisis, following just months after the hurricane, forced her to cancel. Scheduling difficulties prevent the teaching of the masterclass.

Tickets for the concert are \$30 per person; \$20 for students and seniors. Laurier’s faculty of music is suggesting that patrons, whether supportive of music or Katrina victims, might give tickets as gifts for Valentine’s Day. They are available from Laurier’s faculty of music at (519) 884-0710 ext. 2150.