

PRESS RELEASE – 21 January 2010

Renowned American soloists in Dublin for Samuel Barber Centenary

World-famous soprano Roberta Alexander and up and coming award-winning Irish-American baritone Brian Mulligan make their Irish concert debut at the **Samuel Barber - Echoes of Ireland** concert on **Tuesday 9th March in the National Concert Hall, Dublin**. The concert is the centrepiece of a weeklong series of events celebrating the centenary of the birth of the great American composer and his deep connections with Ireland. His trademark work, the haunting and beautiful *'Adagio for Strings'*, is widely considered one of the most popular and instantly recognisable pieces of modern classical music ever and has featured in several movies including *'Platoon'* and *'Elephant Man'*. The concert has already been singled out by the Irish Times as one of the highlights of the 2010 music calendar.

Roberta Alexander and Brian Mulligan will be accompanied by piano virtuoso Lilia Boyadjieva and the RTÉ Vanbrugh String Quartet, which will also perform the composer's masterpiece *'Adagio for Strings'* on the night.

'Velvety, evenly and effortlessly produced baritone and nuance-phrasing'... 'commanding presence and booming sound' are just some of the descriptions given to **Brian Mulligan**, aged 32, whose parents hail from Ballinamore in Co. Leitrim. He has performed in some of the major American and English opera houses and in the US, is ranked as one of the Top 100 Irish-Americans in music, dance and acting, alongside such other names as Daniel Day-Lewis, Robert Downey Snr and Jnr, Suzanne Farrell and Fionnuala Flanagan.

Among the most compelling singing actresses of our time, **Roberta Alexander** has established herself as one of the leading American sopranos, both on the operatic stage and as an orchestral soloist. She has recorded with several major labels, including BMG, Philips, Sony, and Teldec and her latest albums include *Songs My Mother Taught Me* and *With You*, the latter an anthology of Broadway songs.

A second concert on **Friday 12th March**, also at the **National Concert Hall**, is **Samuel Barber - The Piano Works**, a lunchtime piano recital by Lilia Boyadjieva at which the audience will experience the blues and jazz influences of Barber's early years, alongside his Nocturne for John Field, and the pathos, power and pace of his Sonata for Piano.

The Samuel Barber centenary celebrations are being organised by Conor Daly of independent music promotion company, Nóta, who promises an auditory feast for music lovers in general, not just those interested in classical and opera. Conor said *"While Barber composed orchestral, opera, choral and piano music, he is most loved for his songs. Many of his them have deep connections to Ireland and Irish culture and works by Joyce, Yeats and Stephens, as well as the medieval Irish monks provided the texts for many of his finest songs. That is why his connections to Ireland are the focus of our centenary celebrations.. and anyone who appreciates music, poetry and topnotch singing performances will enjoy both events."*

Samuel Barber's biographer, New York music historian Barbara B. Heyman, will give multimedia pre-concert lectures at both events. On Tuesday 9th March, she will cover

Barber's gift for vocal music and the influence of Irish poets on his work. The second lecture on Friday 12th March will give the background to the piano works being played by Lilia Boyadjieva.

Conor Daly continued, "Samuel Barber was world-famous in his day, as composer, performer and radio celebrity and is still one of the most performed American composers. His music has a very broad appeal as he was influenced by many different styles, including jazz and blues and this diversity is reflected in his output. He ploughed his own furrow, and was not afraid to ignore the trends and fashions which swept his contemporaries along."

Tickets and timings for the lectures, gala concert and lunchtime piano recital from the NCH box office or online at www.nch.ie

A calendar listing of other events in March, May and June 2010 celebrating the Samuel Barber Centenary is on the Nóta website. www.nota.ie

RTÉ Lyric FM is the broadcast sponsor and will be recording the concerts on Tuesday 9th and Friday 12th March for later broadcast in Ireland and overseas. The Irish Times is the media partner for the event.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

Nóta is a Dublin-based independent music promotion company established in 2007 by musician, singer, linguist and business consultant Conor Daly to promote new and classical music and artists. www.nota.ie

Composer Samuel Barber was born on 9th March 1910 of Scots-Irish ancestry and died in New York in 1981. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Music twice: in 1958 for his first opera *Vanessa*, and in 1963 for his *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*.

Born in Virginia into a musical family, Roberta Alexander enjoys international renown for her riveting, incisive characterizations, miraculous vocal and dramatic range and has played principal roles with some of the world's leading opera houses. She recently had particular success performing Ravel's *Shéhérazade* with André Previn and the NDR Sinfonieorchester, which was telecast throughout Europe..

Born in New York of Irish parents, baritone Brian Mulligan is the 2006 winner of the International Hans Gabor Belvedere Vocal Competition, only the third American in competition's history to win this prize. He is a graduate of the Juilliard School.

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