

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Michelle Bradley, soprano

Brian Zeger, piano

Sunday, January 31 – 3:00 PM

American Philosophical Society

SELECTION OF PROGRAM NOTES

Proses Lyriques

Claude Debussy

Born: August 22, 1862, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France

Died: March 25, 1918, Paris, France

Composed: 1892-1893

Duration: 20 minutes

Claude Debussy wrote *Proses Lyriques* for voice and piano, L. 84, in 1892-93 and penned the poems himself. This constitutes one of the stranger experiments of the composer's career. He was no poet, but for listeners who are interested in charting the evolution of his psychological and artistic development, they are a revealing set of songs. The attempt to write his own lyrics comes with an idea he had about being a writer that stayed with him throughout the 1890s.

Chanson perpétuelle

Ernest Chausson

Born: January 20, 1855, Paris, France

Died: June 10, 1899, Limay, France

Composed: 1898

Duration: 7 minutes

Chanson perpétuelle has an air of disenchantment and conveys the oppressive degree of Chausson's post-romantic world. The verse is a declaration of love to an absent lover and is taken directly from Charles Cros's poem "Chanson perpétuelle." The piece is for voice, piano, and orchestra (or string quartet/quintet), and Chausson implies the title's perpetual recurrence by developing the work's introductory bars, a phrase in the minor mode, which rises to a fifth and falls to the third and tonic, as a predominant accompanimental figure to the tenderly longing syllabic vocal line. The only formal repetition of the piece is found within verse seven, when the music of the first verse is repeated. *Chanson Perpétuelle* is a moving representation of the clarity and conciseness that appeared in Chausson's final works.

Morgen, Op. 27, No. 4

Richard Strauss

Born: June 11, 1864, Munich, Germany

Died: September 8, 1949, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

Composed: 1894

Duration: 11 minutes

This set of songs is among Strauss's greatest. Perhaps the surest indication that the composer thought well of it is that he dedicated it to "my beloved Pauline" and gave it to the singer Pauline de Ahna on their wedding day. She often performed these songs. Strauss had become acquainted with a circle of poets in Berlin that included Kaspar Schmidt (whose real name was Max Stirner), John Henry Mackay, and Karl Henckell. All were socialists. Stirner was felt to be such a radical that he made Karl Marx seem tame, and Mackay was even more of a rabble-rouser than Stirner. However, Strauss tended to pick the gentlest, most bourgeois, and most Romantic poetry from among the works of this group.

Rückert Lieder

Gustav Mahler

Born: July 7, 1860, Kaliště, Czechia

Died: May 18, 1911, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1901-1902

Duration: 17 minutes

These five songs were published together with "Revelge" and "Der Tambourg'sell" as Seven Last Songs, and were not intended as a cycle. This is illustrated by the lack of connection between the songs and by the different combinations of instruments. Although often performed together, there is no particular order. Mahler conceived all but one of these songs for orchestral accompaniment; he wrote "Liebst du um Schönheit" for piano accompaniment. Unlike Mahler's earlier "Wunderhorn" songs, these songs are, with one exception, completely in the lyrical Lied style. The folk song element of Mahler's earlier songs is entirely absent.