

# PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

ECCO

Friday, February 26 – 6 PM

*American Philosophical Society*

PREVIEW  
NOTES

## PROGRAM

### ***Last Round***

**Oswaldo Golijov**

**Born:** December 5, 1960, La Plata, Argentina

**Composed:** 1996

**Duration:** 14 minutes

“Astor Piazzolla, the last great Tango composer, was at the peak of his creativity when a stroke killed him in 1992. I composed *Last Round* in 1996, prompted by Geoff Nuttall and Barry Shiffman. They heard a sketch of the second movement, which I had written upon hearing the news of Piazzolla's stroke, and encouraged me to finish it and write another movement to complement it. The title is borrowed from a short story on boxing by Julio Cortázar, the metaphor for an imaginary chance for Piazzolla's spirit to fight one more time (he used to get into fistfights throughout his life). The piece is conceived as an idealized bandoneon. The first movement represents the act of a violent compression of the instrument and the second a final, seemingly endless opening sigh (it is actually a fantasy over the refrain of the song *My Beloved Buenos Aires*, composed by the legendary Carlos Gardel in the 1930s). But *Last Round* is also a sublimated tango dance. Two quartets confront each other, separated by the focal bass, with violins and violas standing up as in the traditional tango orchestras. The bows fly in the air as inverted legs in crisscrossed choreography, always attracting and repelling each other, always in danger of clashing, always avoiding it with the immutability that can only be acquired by transforming hot passion into pure pattern.” -Oswaldo Golijov

### ***Where Springs Not Fail* [Philadelphia Premiere]**

**Hanna Benn**

**Composed:** 2015

**Duration:** 8 minutes

A composer, vocalist, and genre-spanning collaborator, Hanna Benn has been creating music for over a decade. Her multi-disciplinary approach has incorporated dance, opera, and theater—submerging boundaries and discovering new sonic

landscapes in the process. *Where Springs Not Fail* is a lush and melancholy sojourn for string orchestra, commissioned by the Northwest Symphony Orchestra.

### ***Starburst***

**Jessie Montgomery**

**Born:** 1981, New York, NY

**Composed:** 2012

**Duration:** 3 minutes

“This brief one-movement work for string orchestra is a play on imagery of rapidly changing musical colors. Exploding gestures are juxtaposed with gentle fleeting melodies in an attempt to create a multidimensional soundscape. A common definition of a starburst, ‘the rapid formation of large numbers of new stars in a galaxy at a rate high enough to alter the structure of the galaxy significantly,’ lends itself almost literally to the nature of the performing ensemble that premiered the work, the Sphinx Virtuosi, and I wrote the piece with their dynamic in mind.” –Jessie Montgomery

### ***Adagio for Strings***

**Samuel Barber**

**Born:** March 9, 1910, West Chester, PA

**Died:** January 23, 1981, New York, NY

**Composed:** 1936

**Duration:** 8 minutes

The Adagio comes from the slow movement of Barber's String Quartet No. 1, Op. 11 and has become one of the most familiar and popular pieces of American concert music. The music has something of the archaic dignity of Renaissance polyphony; a rhapsodic ascending phrase is repeated, inverted, expanded, and embellished before rising to a brittle climax, then fading into silence. The gradual build-up and slow release of tension gives the work an inexorable quality.

**Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48**

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

**Born:** May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, Russia

**Died:** November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg, Russia

**Composed:** 1880

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Written with an ear towards Mozart, one of Tchaikovsky's idols, this piece takes its title and structure from Mozart's serenades, though it is certainly Tchaikovsky's own particularly 19th century rendering of these older ideas. It seems to have been the composer's intention to a work in the vein of a classical piece, with four sections which contrast musically and, taken together, the four sections form a powerful and convincing whole.