

PCMS Anniversary Gala

Jeremy Denk, piano; Anthony McGill, clarinet; Alexi Kenney, violin; Peter Wiley, cello;
Dover Quartet

May 15, 2022 @ 7:30pm

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

Program:

Contrasts for violin, clarinet and piano

Béla Bartók

Born: March 25, 1881 in Sânnicolau Mare, Romania

Died: September 26, 1945 in New York, NY

Composed: 1938

Last PCMS performance: 2005

Duration: 18 minutes

The first movement is replete with swaggering rhythms and insinuating melodies, expansive, brilliant passage work. The Lento middle movement (*Pihenő rest*) conjures that mysterious kind of night atmosphere at which Bartók was an incomparable master. This is a world of dense black, of things stalking, and of frightening movement. The opening of the final movement is no less darkly evocative than the slow movement, but ultimately dynamism, syncopation and a violin cadenza endow the music with a blazing intensity.

Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 66

Felix Mendelssohn

Born: February 3, 1809 in Hamburg, Germany

Died: November 4, 1847 in Leipzig, Germany

Composed: 1845

Last PCMS performance: 2014

Duration: 30 minutes

The opening movement is cast in a traditional sonata form, with the first theme featuring a rather foreboding, dark, and almost stormy emotional tone. This movement is particularly indicative of Mendelssohn's rich harmonic language, constantly shifting and unfolding into unexpected places. Simple, lyrical, and beautiful—the second movement serves as a much-needed respite. The Scherzo is a tightly wound tour-de-force, equally challenging to each player. The final movement is a rollicking fast movement laced with a great deal of lyrical beauty, as well. Near the end, the chorale tune returns, now in a triumphant C major, as if to cast away the storm of the beginning.

Principal Brothers No. 3

James Lee, III

Born: 1975, St. Joseph, Missouri

Composed: 2020

Last PCMS performance: 2020

Duration: 6 minutes

In 2020, during the time of the COVID-19 health crisis, wearing masks, and high racial tensions, James Lee, III decided to compose four short solo woodwind works for flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon. He was inspired to compose them after hearing Igor Stravinsky's three short pieces for clarinet. Each work honors one of Lee's African-American male colleagues in the orchestral music world: Demarre McGill, Principal Flute of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra; Titus Underwood, Principal Oboe of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra; Anthony McGill, Principal Clarinet of the New York Philharmonic; and Bryan Young, Principal Bassoon of the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra. All four works are rhapsodic in nature with elements of improvisation.

Piano Quintet in A Minor, Op. 84

Edward Elgar

Born: June 2, 1857 in Broadheath, United Kingdom

Died: February 23, 1934 in Worcester, United Kingdom

Composed: 1918

Last PCMS performance: 2016

Duration: 35 minutes

The first movement begins with an eerie introduction: an austere piano motif that is interrupted repeatedly by muttering strings, followed by a sighing motif and a plaintive rising phrase from the cello. The main body of the movement bursts out with a vigorous march and a lilting, Spanish-sounding dance. The exquisitely beautiful Adagio, which develops from the viola's spacious opening melody, is as calming as the first movement is unsettling. A striking feature of the Quintet is its variety of textures, which range from clean lines to a Brahmsian thickness. The third movement begins with a quotation from the first movement's eerie opening, and other uneasy references later creep in. Although the ghosts reappear, by the end they are triumphantly banished.