

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Jeremy Denk, *piano*

Thursday, November 12 – 7:00 PM

PROGRAM

Kinderszenen, Op. 15

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810, Zwickau, Germany

Died: July 29, 1856, Endenich, Bonn, Germany

Composed: 1838

Duration: 18 minutes

The 13 pieces that constitute Robert Schumann's *Kinderszenen* for piano (*Scenes from Childhood*), Op. 15 showcase their creator's musical imagination at the peak of its poetic clarity. As a result, they have long been staples of the repertoire as utterly charming yet substantial miniatures, the sort of compact keyboard essays in which Schumann's genius found full expression. *Kinderszenen* was one of the projects Schumann worked on during the spring of 1838 to get through a difficult period of separation from his fiancée, Clara Wieck, who was on tour as a pianist and whose father objected to the idea of her marriage to the composer. The *Kinderszenen* are a touching tribute to the eternal, universal memories and feelings of childhood from a nostalgic adult perspective.

Three Romances

Clara Schumann

Born: September 13, 1819, Leipzig, Germany

Died: May 20, 1896, Frankfurt, Germany

Composed: 1853

Duration: 10 minutes

After moving to Düsseldorf in early 1853, Clara and Robert Schumann finally lived in a house large enough for Clara to practice and compose without disturbing her nervous husband. During that summer, she produced several works, among them the Three Romances for violin and piano, Op. 22. In 19th century Germany, the vague term "romance" often meant simply a short piece for piano, or for another instrument with piano accompaniment. Clara Schumann dedicated her Three Romances to violinist Joseph Joachim (1831-1907).

Bolts of Loving Thunder

Missy Mazzoli

Born: October 27, 1980, Lansdale, PA

Composed: 2013

Duration: 10 minutes

"*Bolts of Loving Thunder* was composed in 2013 for pianist Emanuel Ax. When Manny asked me to write a piece that would appear on a program of works by Brahms, I immediately thought back to my experiences as a young pianist. I have clear memories of crashing sloppily but enthusiastically through the Rhapsodies and Intermezzi and knew I wanted to create a work based on this romantic, stormy idea of Brahms, complete with hand crossing and dense layers of chords . . . Brahms' "F-A-F" motive (shorthand for "frei aber froh" or "free but happy") gradually breaks through the surface of this work, frenetically bubbling out in the final section." -Missy Mazzoli

Four Piano Pieces, Op. 119

Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833, in Hamburg, Germany

Died: April 3, 1897, in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1893

Duration: 15 minutes

Although the late piano works are brief, they are among the most complex, dense, and reflective works ever composed for the instrument. Most likely composed in the summer of 1893, the *Klavierstücke* (Piano Pieces), Op. 119, were published in Berlin by Simrock in 1893. They were first performed in London in January 1894. Brahms was uncomfortable with descriptive titles for his pieces, and often resorted to the noncommittal "Klavierstücke." Occasionally unsure as to what title, if any, he should give an individual piece, Brahms came to use the term "intermezzo" as a rubric under which he could file anything that was not especially whimsical or fiery. Thus, the three Intermezzi of Op. 119 are not all constructed alike.