

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Merz Trio

Brigid Coleridge, *violin* • Julia Yang, *cello* • Lee Dionne, *piano*

Lucy Fitz Gibbon, *soprano*

Wednesday, October 26 – 7:30 PM

Benjamin Franklin Hall, American Philosophical Society

PROGRAM INCLUDES

From *Holy the Firm*

James Primosch

In *Holy the Firm*, a five movement cycle written for soprano Dawn Upshaw and pianist Gil Kalish, James set texts ranging from the writings of 6th-7th c. monk John Climacus to contemporary poets including Annie Dillard and Susan Stewart. These two excerpted songs from the heart of the cycle invoke Christianity's central mysteries: the burning desire for certitude tempered by faith's unknowability, and the interwoven states of life and death itself.

Descent/Return

James Primosch

Born: 1956, Cleveland, OH

Died: April 26, 2021

Originally composed for large chamber ensemble, James Primosch arranged these movements from *A Sybil* for Lucy Fitz Gibbon and pianist Ryan McCullough in 2017. Susan Stewart's poems – written specifically for this piece – tell the story of the sybil, the seer of Virgil and Ovid who gives warning to Aeneas before his descent to the underworld.

"Who do you say that I am?"

James Primosch

James Primosch's Catholic faith was a central part of his identity as a human and as an artist -- both a composer and pianist, playing services at his church for many years. In Matthew 16:13-17, Jesus notes the many names he has been given by others but asks his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?"

Of Time and the Heart

Philip Maneval

Born: May 16, 1956, New York, NY

Composed: 2022

Maneval writes, "I wrote this piece shortly after Jim Primosch passed away, at far too young an age, and with him very much in

mind. Jim and I were friends and colleagues through four decades, since we met on the first day of graduate studies in the composition program of the University of Pennsylvania. Often, Jim and I shared our new pieces with one another. I always admired how he seamlessly blended traditional and modern musical elements into a distinctive style and voice. His works were exceptionally well-crafted, melodic, purposeful, expressive and enriched by his deep faith and spirituality. These have been my goals as well, and never less so than when composing *Of Time and the Heart*, a musical tribute to my beloved friend, who is dearly missed and very fondly remembered."

Piano Trio in C Major, Op. 87

Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany

Died: April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1880-1882

Duration: 29 minutes

Much of the C-major Trio's character is revealed in the opening bars of its first movement, in which the violin and cello, without the piano, state the broad, sweeping theme together in octaves. The piano, when it enters, almost immediately begins playing a figure that accents every other beat of the triple meter, which means that while the violin and cello are playing in three, the piano is playing in two. Both events are indications of what is to come.

La valse (Arr.)

Maurice Ravel

Born: March 7, 1875, Ciboure, France

Died: December 28, 1937, Paris, France

Composed: 1920

Duration: 12 minutes

La valse was intended to be the waltz to end all waltzes. Before the First World War, Ravel had planned a work entitled *Wien* (Vienna), but it had to wait until 1919 to begin taking shape as a "choreographic poem" in fulfillment of a commission from Serge Diaghilev. The Merz Trio's virtuosic new arrangement of Maurice Ravel's *La valse* is a full-fledged response to the dancelike, Viennese elements suggested throughout Brahms's trio.