

# PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW  
NOTES

**Barbara Hannigan, *soprano***  
**Bertrand Chamayou, *piano***

**Tuesday, December 10 – 7:30 PM**  
*Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center*

## **PROGRAM**

### ***Chants de terre et de ciel***

**Olivier Messiaen**

***Born:*** December 10, 1908

***Died:*** April 27, 1992

***Composed:*** 1938

***Duration:*** 25 minutes

Olivier Messiaen's *Chants de terre et de ciel* (Songs of Earth and Heaven) is a radiant cycle of six songs for soprano and piano, blending the sacred and the personal. The work reflects Messiaen's deep Catholic faith while celebrating his love for his first wife, Claire Delbos, and their newborn son. Each movement vividly portrays themes of nature, spirituality, and devotion, with Messiaen's signature harmonic language—richly colored and infused with rhythmic complexity. The cycle is an early testament to Messiaen's ability to fuse human emotion with cosmic wonder, offering listeners a transcendent musical journey.

### ***Poème-nocturne, Op. 61***

**Alexander Scriabin**

***Born:*** January 6, 1872

***Died:*** April 27, 1915

***Composed:*** 1912

***Duration:*** 8 minutes

Alexander Scriabin's *Poème-nocturne, Op. 61*, is a late masterpiece for solo piano that epitomizes his mystical and innovative style. Marked by lush harmonies, shimmering textures, and an ethereal quality, the work captures the dreamlike and transcendent atmosphere implied by its title. With its delicate interplay of sound and silence, this piece reflects Scriabin's fascination with spiritual and philosophical ideals, pushing the boundaries of traditional

tonality toward his unique harmonic language. The *Poème-nocturne* is a luminous example of Scriabin's ability to evoke profound emotions and otherworldly imagery through music.

### ***Vers la flamme, Op. 72***

**Alexander Scriabin**

***Born:*** January 6, 1872

***Died:*** April 27, 1915

***Composed:*** 1912

***Duration:*** 6 minutes

*Vers la flamme* (Toward the Flame) is one of Scriabin's final works for solo piano and a vivid reflection of his visionary style. The piece is a dramatic and tightly structured tone poem that unfolds in a gradual ascent of intensity, mirroring the composer's mystical belief in music's power to transcend earthly existence. Scriabin imagined this work as a depiction of a journey toward enlightenment, with its escalating harmonic tension and hypnotic textures evoking the transformation of matter into pure energy.

Scriabin was a deeply enigmatic figure, profoundly influenced by theosophy, a spiritual philosophy that emphasized the unity of all existence and the pursuit of divine wisdom. He believed himself to be a messianic figure destined to bring humanity closer to a mystical ecstasy through his music. His unique harmonic language, built on complex chordal structures often referred to as "mystic chords," reflects his quest to express the ineffable.

### ***Jumalattaret***

**John Zorn**

***Born:*** September 2, 1953

***Composed:*** 2015

**Duration:** 25 minutes

John Zorn's *Jumalattaret* is a mesmerizing exploration of sound and mythology, inspired by the Finnish epic *Kalevala*. The piece is part of Zorn's vast body of work that defies categorization, blending elements of classical, avant-garde, and world music. The title, meaning "Goddesses," reflects the piece's connection to themes of femininity and mysticism, with its vivid, contrasting soundscapes evoking a mythical, otherworldly atmosphere. Through innovative textures and a bold harmonic palette, Zorn creates a work that is both ethereal and strikingly intense, challenging the listener to engage deeply with its kaleidoscopic musical journey.