

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

SIR SIMON KEENLYSIDE, *baritone*
MALCOLM MARTINEAU, *piano*
Friday, December 7 – 7:30 PM
Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM (*Selection of Program Notes*)

Selection of Lieder

Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833, in Hamburg, Germany

Died: April 3, 1897, in Vienna, Austria

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Brahms' vocal works displayed a dichotomy of simplicity of melody, yet complexity of composition. He composed nearly 200 lieder between 1853 and 1896, many of which included an emotional intensity and expressive impact that is unique to his compositions. Strong base lines provide contrapuntal interplay between voices, and inner voices enrich chromatic inflection, typical of the romantic era. Brahms used varied strophic forms and included many folk characteristics. In addition to solo lieder, Brahms arranged 100 folk songs, and incorporated folk and dance idioms.

Histoires naturelles

Maurice Ravel

Born: March 7, 1875, in Clibouze, France

Died: December 28, 1937, in Paris, France

Composed: 1906

Duration: 17 minutes

Ravel's *Histoires Naturelles* is considered to be among the very greatest of the French song cycles. This is so even though the texts for these pieces are highly unusual for the classic French *mélodie*; they consist not of poetry, but prose—so-called prose-poems by Jules Renard. All of this sophistication and subtlety of execution is at the service of absolutely charming subjects: four birds and an insect.

Le travail du peintre

Francis Poulenc

Born: January 7, 1899, in Paris, France

Died: January 30, 1963, in Paris, France

Composed: 1956

Duration: 10 minutes

In 1948 Poulenc thought of writing a song cycle on poems about painters in Paul Éluard's book *Voir*. Poulenc wanted a closing poem on Matisse so as to be able to end the cycle "...in joy and sunshine," as he wrote in his *Journal de mes mélodies*. The poet's death in 1952 made that impossible. After concluding other work including his great opera *Dialogues of the Carmélites* Poulenc was finally able to write this cycle in tribute to Éluard. The songs are reactions more to the poems than to the painters or their pictures. This song cycle has his characteristic mixture of energy and lyricism, of hard "modern" harmonies alternating with sweetness or tenderness.

Selection of Lieder

Franz Schubert

Born: January 31, 1797, in Vienna, Austria

Died: November 19, 1828, in Vienna, Austria

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Schubert is credited with single-handedly transforming the German Lied from its status as a form of home entertainment mostly cultivated by amateurs, and largely ignored by serious composers, into a worthy vehicle for artistic expression at the highest level. What distinguished Schubert's contributions to the genre was the way in which he brought the full range of musical resources – harmony, texture and declamatory style – to bear on the expression of the poetic text, as the selections on Mr. Keenlyside's program amply demonstrate.