



## The Trees Turned Silver

December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
5:30pm MT | 7:30pm ET

In The Wand of the Wind.....Lee Hoiby (1926-2011)

The Doe

Sonata for Horn and Piano.....Margaret Brouwer (b. 1940)  
1. Hymn

Night .....Florence Price (1887-1953)

To My Little Son

Christmas Lullaby.....Leslie Adams ( b. 1932)

Lullaby (For a Black Mother) .....Florence Price (1887-1953)

Dreams

The People Could Fly.....Alice Jones (b.1982)

On Imagination

The Parting Glass.....Irish Traditional, arr. Alice Jones (b.1982)

### Amity Trio

Katie Dukes, soprano  
Dr. Michael Walker, horn  
Kimberly Carballo, piano

*With special guests*  
satsu, movement and direction  
Dr. Marquese Carter, tenor  
Dr. Alice Jones, composer

## **In the Wand of the Wind**

John Fandel

This was a day the trees turned silver  
In the wand of the wind  
And wild flowers opened the eyes  
Even of the blind.

The meadow grasses polished  
The green sickle of wind  
And finches fashioned the sun  
Ringing in the mind.

This was a day the trees turned silver  
And finches fashioned the sun.

## **The Doe**

John Fandel

Through the snow  
The graceful doe  
Gently slow  
Heel and toe;  
Precisely so.  
Through drift, and blow  
Of drift, and glow  
Of moon and snow,  
The leaping doe  
Her form and shadow,  
Near pines, a row  
Thatched with snow,  
I watched the doe  
Come, and go.

## **Night**

Louise C. Wallace

Night comes, a Madonna clad in scented blue.  
Rose red her mouth and deep her eyes,  
She lights her stars, and turns to where,  
Beneath her silver lamp the moon,  
Upon a couch of shadow lies  
A dreamy child,  
The wearied Day.

## **To My Little Son**

Julia Johnson Davis

In your face I sometimes see  
Shadowings of the man to be,  
And, eager,  
Dream of what my son shall be,  
Dream of what my son will be,  
In twenty years and one.  
When you are to manhood grown,  
And all your manhood ways are known,  
Then shall I, blissful, try to trace  
The child you once were in your face.

## **Christmas Lullaby**

by Leslie Adams

Sleep, baby, sleep.  
Sleep, baby, sleep.  
Mary and Joseph watch as you slumber,  
Sleep, baby, sleep.

Rest your weary head  
On your tiny bed.  
Angels guard you, shepherds surround you.  
Rest your weary head.

The Wise Men travel from afar  
Bringing gifts and led by a star,  
Journey to the manger low  
To find the child the whole world will know:  
"Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Praises to the newborn King!"

So sleep, you baby, sleep.  
Little Lord Jesus, sleep.  
As we pray and sing this lullaby.

## **Lullaby (For a Black Mother)**

by Langston Hughes

My little dark baby,  
My little earth-thing,  
My little love-one,  
What shall I sing  
For your lullaby?

Stars,  
Stars,  
A necklace of stars  
Winding the night.

My little black baby,  
My dark body's baby,  
What shall I sing  
For your lullaby?

Moon,  
Moon,  
Great diamond moon,  
Kissing the night.

Oh, little dark baby,  
Night black baby,

Stars, stars,  
Moon,  
Night stars,  
Moon,  
For your sleep-song lullaby.

## **Dreams**

Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams  
For when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow.

## On Imagination

Phillis Wheatley Peters

... How bright their forms!

... To tell her glories...  
Ye blooming graces, triumph in my song.

Now here, now there,

Imagination! who can sing thy force?  
Soaring through air ...

And leave the rolling universe behind:  
... From star to star,  
Measure the skies!

... There in one view we grasp the mighty whole,  
Joy rushes on the heart  
A pure stream of light overflows the skies.  
The monarch of the day,  
And all the mountains tipped with radiant gold.

Winter austere forbids me to aspire.  
Northern tempests...  
Chill the tides. ...  
Cease then, my song, cease ... .

## Parting Glass

Of all the money that e'er I had  
I spent it in good company  
And all the harm I've ever done  
Alas, it was to none but me.

And all I've done for want of wit  
To memory now I can't recall,  
So fill to me the parting glass  
Good night and joy be to you all.

So fill to me the parting glass  
And drink a health whate'er befalls,  
Then gently rise and softly call  
Good night and joy be to you all.

Of all the comrades that e'er I had  
They're sorry for my going away.  
And all the sweethearts that e'er I had  
They'd wish me one more day to stay.

But since it fell into my lot  
That I should rise and you should not,  
I'll gently rise and softly call  
Good night and joy be to you all.

## Program Notes

### Sonata for Horn and Piano

Inspired by conversations on imagery elicited by the music, and a musician's tactile experience of sound, Satsu created a visual complement to Margaret Brouwer's "Sonata for Horn and Piano: I. Hymn": HUM, a dance film. Captured as a movement meditation, the piece explores themes of growth, limit, slowness, in/visibility, and gravity.

- satsu

### On Imagination

When Amity Trio approached me in the summer of 2020 to write a work for them, I immediately had a vision of the richness and warmth that this piece would eventually have. They graciously left the choice of text to me, and I sought out text that I felt would honor the power of Katie's voice, the colorful subtlety of Mike's horn playing, and the incredible facility of Kim's piano playing, all while remaining true to a commitment I feel to uplifting the work of Black artists.

The work is in three large sections, mirroring the creative or imaginative process: before an idea can even be said to be an idea (mm 1-29), the thrill of being absorbed in imaginative thought (mm 30-108), and the cold snap back to reality, when we resign ourselves—or are forced—to temper the rush of possibility with restrictions or limitations, our responsibilities, or the wet blanket of naysayers (mm 109-120).

At first glance, Phillis Wheatley Peters' poem "On Imagination," published in 1773, is a pleasant ode to the human capacity to imagine, the electrified rush of our ability to conjure nearly anything simply with the power of our minds. The 53-line work, composed in rhyming couplets and replete with striking imagery and Classical allusions that send a modern reader to explanatory footnotes, contrasts the regality, freshness, and openness of "imagination" or "fancy" with the austerity, cold, and stillness of "winter," representing the moments when we must shut down the joy of our mental exploration. In the poem I am struck by the enthusiasm for the very experience of imagining at all, the indulgence in the sensation of one's own power

when the mind has space to play. For this setting, I excerpted the most vivid and musical passages that allowed me to remain true to Peters' original arc.

The power of this poem, for me, also comes from how defiant its very existence is. Peters was enslaved as a young child, uprooted from West Africa and sold to a Boston family who taught her to read and write. They supported her poetry writing—and we cannot forget that the very people who encouraged her to write would have been the same ones with the power to stop it at any moment—but even Peters' skill was not enough to ensure that her work would be published.

"On Imagination" comes from a collection of 28 poems Peters published in 1773, and the number of white men who stood in the path to that feat as gatekeepers is staggering. American colonists didn't believe that Peters could have written her own poetry, and she was forced to prove her capacity in court. She was examined by a group of 18 white men chosen for their upstanding reputation in Boston society rather than their expertise in poetry, and when she performed to their satisfaction they signed an attestation that this "young Negro Girl, who was but a few Years since, brought an uncultivated Barbarian from Africa, and has ever since been, and now is, under the Disadvantage of serving as a Slave in a Family in this Town." Among them were Jon Erving, Reverend Charles Chauncy, John Hancock, Thomas Hutchinson (the governor of Massachusetts), and Andrew Oliver (the lieutenant governor of Massachusetts). That any one of them could have quashed its very existence is what makes her act of *imagining*—as a young girl laying claim to the most human of experiences in the face of a world that would rather deny her fundamental right to them—so audacious.

In light of the biographical and publication context of the work, I read the poem in which "winter" is not only a chill that snaps a joyful daydreamer back to reality, but also the rigidity of a social structure that forbids imagination unless it is palatable to the oppressor. The metaphorical winter is an ever-present reminder of how fragile the mental world the imaginer has built is and how starkly that imagined world's vibrancy contrasts with the disappointment of the real world.

About the poet: Phillis Wheatley Peters (1753-84)

Peters was enslaved in Senegal or West Gambia at the age of 7. The ship that carried her across the Atlantic—*The Phillis*—took her and other newly enslaved people to Boston, where she was purchased by the Wheatleys, a prominent family whose children taught Peters to read (in English, Greek, and Latin) and write. The texts she was given by them—the Bible, astronomy, John Milton, Alexander Pope, Virgil, Ovid—are evident in Peters' style and literary allusions, and her first poem was published when she was 13.

By the time she was 18, Peters had a collection of 28 poems ready for publication. Supported by Mrs. Wheatley, Peters ran advertisements for subscribers to her collection, but no colonial readers were interested. Peters and the Wheatley's oldest

son traveled instead to London, where Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, connected Peters to bookseller Archibald Bell. *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* by Phillis Wheatley, *Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley, of Boston, in New England* was published in 1773, making Peters not only the first female American poet, not only the first Black American poet, but the first American poet to publish a collection of poetry. (Jupiter Hammon, a Black American poet, had already published a poem in 1761. He also wrote "An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatley" in 1778, an attempt to steer her to a Christian life when he thought she had fallen in paganism.)

Peters was released from slavery in 1774, just before Mrs. Wheatley's death, and she remained a servant and lived with the Wheatleys until 1778 when she married John Peters, a handsome, wig wearing, cane carrying, proud, ambitious, and gentlemanly free Black man whose professions varied from practicing law to barkeep, grocer, writer, orator, and other sundry tasks that came his way. The war, and the color of their skin, made finding work nearly impossible, and they spent their marriage in poverty, with at least three children dying in infancy. She continued to write poetry and ran 6 advertisements in late 1779 for a new volume of 33 poems and 13 letters—among her correspondence partners were Reverend Samson Occom, John Thornton, and George Washington. She garnered no support from the American public. 5 Under the name Phillis Peters, she did publish a handful of poems in 1784, her final year of life—an ode to the US, a lamentation on the death of her infant son, and an elegy on the death of a leading Boston minister, Reverend Samuel Cooper. She died in December, while John was incarcerated for debt.

Some contemporary critics diminished her writing by describing it as the mere product of a religious education (Thomas Jefferson), while others praised its quality (Voltaire, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington). In the two centuries since her death, reception history of Peters has been mixed. She has been described as a derivative of Alexander Pope, as an important figure although not a great poet, and also as a source of disappointment for narratives of Black liberation. Peters doesn't discuss slavery in a way that easily fits modern narratives—she doesn't describe the horrors of the Atlantic crossing, and one of her first poems, written around age 16, praises her enslavers for saving her from the barbarism of Africa ("On Being Brought from Africa to America"). Peters must be regarded with a lens of grace and empathy for an enslaved child whose access to the literary world was not only defined by but could be taken away—at any moment, as the story of her attestation suggests—by her oppressors. Throughout her works there are striking passages of intensely personal introspection and universal sensations, as well as powerful moments articulating the cognitive dissonance between Christianity and slavery. One can sense the balance she had to strike between artistic integrity and deference to her social status.

Finally, I refer to her as "Peters" throughout the passage above because, although taking a husband's name in 2020 can be interpreted as an erasure of one's identity, it was an act of identity assertion for her: her names came from the ship that



kidnapped her and the family that owned her—but it was when she chose to marry John Peters that she had the power to refer to herself by the name of a man she loved.

-Dr. Alice Jones

### **The Parting Glass**

This piece was commissioned by The Amity Trio as part of their 2020-21 season. I'm often drawn to the sensation of a shapeless, inchoate idea, like a memory that you can't—or won't—look at head on, and this song achingly sits right in that emotional realm.

As I sat down to set this well-known song, I began to imagine the speaker of the poem as a person who, like so many stoic members of my Scottish family, know full well they've been an ass but don't rightly know how to say they're sorry. They'll get as far as saying something elusive and pregnant with meaning, beautiful in its implications and open-armed in its invitation for reconciliation, but the gesture comes too late, and the damage has been irreparably done—and they know it. I think of the second strain ("Of all the comrades...") as the speaker finally finding their footing and gathering steam in their yarn, becoming so wrapped up in the beauty of what they're doing to realize no one is coming along with them emotionally. I love the unresolved dissonance throughout the poem between the speaker's self-awareness and their inability to directly say, without emotional manipulation, that they love the people they've wronged. I hope that this musical setting does that justice.

Dr. Alice Jones