

# PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW  
NOTES

**Karim Sulayman, *tenor***

**Sean Shibe, *guitar***

**Sunday, October 20 – 3 PM**

*Benjamin Franklin Hall, American Philosophical Society*

## PROGRAM (selection of notes)

### ***Broken Branches***

#### ***Music for a While***

**Henry Purcell**

***Born:* September 10, 1659**

***Died:* November 21, 1695**

***Composed:* 1692**

***Duration:* 3 minutes**

Composed as part of the incidental (background) music for John Dryden's play *Oedipus*, this aria masterfully intertwines a delicate, flowing melody with a ground bass that repeats throughout the piece. The lyrics, which speak of music's ability to soothe and bring about temporary relief from sorrow, are set to Purcell's characteristically elegant and sensitive musical phrasing. *Music for a While* remains one of Purcell's most enduring works, showcasing his genius in marrying text and music to evoke deep emotion.

### ***Praeludium & Fantasia No. 7***

**John Dowland**

***Born:* January 2, 1563**

***Died:* February, 20, 1626**

***Composed:* c. 1590 - 1600**

***Duration:* 6 minutes**

Originally composed for lute, John Dowland's *Praeludium* and *Fantasia* are brief yet intricate works that exemplify the expressive depth and technical brilliance of Renaissance music. *Praeludium* serves as an introduction, showcasing Dowland's mastery in crafting intricate melodies and harmonies, while *Fantasia* employs forward-looking counterpoint and varying rhythmic patterns to drive the musical narrative.

### ***Time Stands Still***

**John Dowland**

***Born:* January 2, 1563**

***Died:* February, 20, 1626**

***Composed:* c. 1590 - 1600**

***Duration:* 6 minutes**

An apt opening track for Karim and Sean's duo album, *Broken Branches*, *Time Stands Still* is a poignant song that epitomizes the melancholic beauty for which Dowland is renowned. With its contemplative text and gently flowing melody, the piece captures the timeless theme of love's enduring yet bittersweet nature. Dowland skillfully pairs the lyrics with a delicate accompaniment, allowing the voice and guitar to intertwine seamlessly, creating an intimate and reflective atmosphere. The song's evocative title and serene mood invite listeners to pause and reflect, as if time itself were standing still.

### ***Si dolce è'l tormento***

**Claudio Monteverdi**

***Born:* 1567**

***Died:* November 29, 1643**

***Composed:* c. 1624**

***Duration:* 4 minutes**

Monteverdi's *Si dolce è'l tormento* first appeared in *Quarto scherzo delle ariose vaghezze*, a Venetian songbook compiled and published by Carlo Milanuzzi in 1624. A four-verse canzonetta (short song) set in triple meter, the text for this solo often served as a popular setting for 17th-century composers. Monteverdi makes great use of the poetry with subtle phrasing and dissonance, occasionally emphasizing metrical displacement of the text to unique effect.

### ***La Prima Vez***

#### **Traditional Sephardic song**

**Duration:** 4 minutes

*La Prima Vez* is an evocative example of Sephardic music, which reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Sephardic Jewish community. Originating from the Jewish diaspora in Spain, this song has traveled through time and geography, carrying with it the emotional depth and lyrical beauty characteristic of Sephardic folk music. The title, meaning "The First Time," evokes themes of nostalgia and longing, often addressing the complexities of love and memory. Through its melodic simplicity and expressive lyrics, the song offers a glimpse into the enduring traditions and heartfelt experiences of the Sephardic people.

### ***Lamma bada yatathanna***

#### **Traditional Arab Andalusian song**

**Duration:** 3 minutes

*Lamma bada yatathanna* is a classical Arabic song featuring a hauntingly beautiful melody that is still popular in the Arabic community today. The title translates to "when she starts to sway" and the lyrics often evoke themes of beauty and romantic longing, painting vivid pictures of elegance and grace.

### ***El Helwa Di***

#### **Sayed Darwish**

**Born:** March 17, 1892

**Died:** September 10, 1923

**Composed:** 1923

**Duration:** 4 minutes

Sayed Darwish's *El Helwa Di* depicts a hopeful vignette of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Egyptian life. Regarded as the father of Egyptian popular music, Darwish was praised for blending western instruments and harmony with classical Arab forms and Egyptian folklore, all while amplifying the yearnings and moods of the masses. His work addressed the rising national sentiment against British occupation, the passion of the people, and social justice. Darwish also often criticized the negative aspects of Egyptian society, making his music both a reflection of and a commentary on his time.

### ***Li Beirut***

#### **Fairuz**

**Born:** November 21, 1934

**Composed:** 1989

**Duration:** 4 minutes

Nouhad Haddad, known professionally as Fairuz, was born to a Maronite Christian family and began her singing career on local radio stations and at small school concerts in her native Lebanon. She soon emerged as a national icon after performing at the Ba'albek Festival in 1957, where she took on various roles depicting traditional village life in Lebanon.

*Li Beirut* was recorded at the height of the Lebanese Civil War and became a poignant expression of the divided patriotism for which the Lebanese people paid a high price. Sean Shibe also pays special tribute to Joaquín Rodrigo, the original composer of the song's main melody, which is featured in the second movement of Rodrigo's concerto for guitar.

### ***In the woods: I. Wainscot Pond***

#### **Toru Takemitsu**

**Born:** October 8, 1930

**Died:** February 20 1996

**Composed:** 1957

**Duration:** 3 minutes

Toru Takemitsu, regarded by many in both the East and the West as the greatest Japanese composer of the twentieth century, was deeply influenced early in his career by the music of Debussy and Messiaen. Takemitsu wrote *In the Woods*, a series of three independent works for solo guitar, after receiving a postcard from a friend showing a picturesque landscape while he was hospitalized in 1995. He later confessed that he did not know where Wainscot Pond was located in the United States (it is, in fact, a lake in the Hamptons), but the result is a beautiful and thoughtful reflection on music and nature. The premiere of *Wainscot Pond*, performed by Norio Sato, took place at Takemitsu's funeral service in Tokyo on February 29, 1996.

### ***Songs from the Chinese***

#### **Benjamin Britten**

**Born:** November 22, 1913

**Died:** December 4, 1976

**Composed:** 1957

**Duration:** approx. 10 min

One of Britten's lesser-known works, *Songs from the Chinese* is nonetheless an outstanding addition to the repertoire of songs for voice and guitar. It seems to reflect changes in Britten's life, particularly his realization that, at nearly 45, he had entered middle age. Britten and tenor Peter Pears had traveled extensively, especially enjoying various East Asian cultures. Pears had recently begun a recital partnership with the brilliant young guitarist Julian Bream, making it natural for Britten to choose the guitar to accompany the tenor. The song cycle consists of six songs with texts from Arthur Waley's translations of classic verses, published in 1946 under the title *Chinese Poems*. The writing is remarkably condensed and terse, with the sparseness of the guitar texture seeming to reflect the spirit of the Chinese lute or koto aesthetic.