

THE ST. OLAF COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
presents in
GUEST ARTIST RECITAL

Jorja Fleezanis, *violin*
David Pharris, *clarinet*
Joseph Johnson, *cello*
Karl Paulnack, *piano*
Stephen Yoakam, *narrator*

Music of
Merritt and Messiaen

SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2019 • 8:15 P.M. • URNESS RECITAL HALL

PROGRAM

Ithaka (2016)

Justin Merritt (b. 1975)

Jorja Fleezanis, *violin*
David Pharris, *clarinet*
Joseph Johnson, *cello*
Karl Paulnack, *piano*
Stephen Yoakam, *narrator*

As you set out for Ithaka
hope the voyage is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
angry Poseidon — don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
wild Poseidon — you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.
Hope the voyage is a long one.
May there be many a summer morning when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you come into harbors seen for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind —

as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to gather stores of knowledge from their
scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you are destined for.
But do not hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you are old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.
Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you would not have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.
And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have
fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of
experience,
you will have understood by then what these
Ithakas mean.

~ C. P. Cavafy; translated by Edmund Keeley & Philip Sherrard

Quartet for the End of Time (1941)

Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992)

David Pharris, *clarinet*
Jorja Fleezanis, *violin*
Joseph Johnson, *cello*
Karl Paulnack, *piano*

- I. Liturgie de cristal
- II. Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps
- III. Abîme des oiseaux
- IV. Intermède
- V. Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus
- VI. Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes
- VII. Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps
- VIII. Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus

NOTES ON ITHIKA

According to the Poetry Foundation, “C.P. Cavafy (1863-1933) is widely considered the most distinguished Greek poet of the twentieth century,” yet for most of his life he was an obscure clerk at the Ministry of Public Works in Alexandria, Egypt, specializing in irrigation. Many of his writings reveal his love for ancient history. In an essay, E.M. Forster admired Cavafy’s renderings of ancient Greece and called the poet’s perspective “intensely subject: scenery, cities and legends all re-emerge in terms of the mind.”

Cavafy’s poem *Ithaka*, the inspiration for this music, is clearly born of his fascination with ancient cultures. The central reference for the poem is of course Homer’s *Odyssey*, which tells the story of Odysseus’ ten-year journey home to Ithaca after the battle of Troy. The poem’s narrator tells the traveler that what really matters is not the destination, but the journey, which must be experienced and enjoyed thoroughly, with the intellect and all the senses fully engaged: this is life’s true reward.

The musical work *Ithaka*, scored for a chamber ensemble, begins with a bittersweet, nostalgic introduction that gives way to the recitation of the first stanza. This stanza is about the hero’s struggle and victory over creatures such as the “Laistrygonians and Cyclops, angry Poseidon” that stand between him and home. Here the violinist takes the role of hero in a wild, high-speed cadenza. Cavafy reminds us that most of life’s greatest problems are self-created, and most of life’s battles are internal.

The second stanza begins to unspool the central message of the poem: enjoy the journey; don’t expect the destination to make you happy. Soak in every drop of pleasure, experience every exotic location as a fresh adventure, and never stop learning. I set this stanza as an ancient, Mediterranean inspired dance. From a slow and sensual beginning, it builds gradually to an ecstatic frenzy.

I set the final stanza as a song of remembrance for a life fully lived — by one who has seized every opportunity offered and met every challenge with an open heart and a courageous spirit. Recognizing the wealth of experiences life has given us, and emerging unbowed from its struggles, we will reach our final destination knowing that we have lived each moment to the utmost.

~ notes by the composer

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*This concert is made possible by a generous donation by the Richard A. and Mari A. Carlson Charitable Fund at Vanguard Charitable.
St. Olaf College thanks them very much for their devotion to chamber music.*

C. P. Cavafy, "The City" from C.P. Cavafy: Collected Poems. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Translation Copyright © 1975, 1992 by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Reproduced with permission of Princeton University Press.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Jorja Fleezanis was concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra from 1989 to 2009 — the longest-tenured concertmaster in the orchestra's history and only the second woman in the United States to hold the title of concertmaster in a major orchestra when appointed. Fleezanis has had a number of works commissioned for her, including by the Minnesota Orchestra with the John Adams Violin Concerto and *Ikon of Eros* by John Tavener, the latter recorded on Reference Records. Her recording of the complete violin sonatas of Beethoven with the French fortepianist Cyril Huvé was released in 2003 on the Cyprés label. Other recordings include Aaron Jay Kernis' *Brilliant Sky, Infinite Sky* on CRI, commissioned for Fleezanis by the Schubert Club, and, with Garrick Ohlsson, Stefan Wolpe's Violin Sonata for Koch International. Fleezanis studied at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and the Cleveland Institute of Music.

David Pharris, a member of the Minnesota Orchestra since 2005, served as Acting Associate Principal Clarinet from 2014 to 2016. Pharris — both of whose parents played clarinet — is a graduate of Northwestern University, where he studied with Robert Marcellus and Clark Brody.

Joseph Johnson has been heard throughout the world as a soloist, chamber musician and educator. Highlights of Joseph Johnson's 2018–19 season include concerto performances of the Brahms Double Concerto with Jonathan Crow and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Principal cellist of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra since the 2009–10 season, Mr. Johnson previously held the same position with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Joseph Johnson earned his master's degree from Northwestern University. Awards and honours include a performer's certificate from the Eastman School of Music and first prize from the American String Teachers Association National Solo Competition. Mr. Johnson performs on a magnificent Paolo Castello cello crafted in Genoa in 1780.

Hailed by the Boston Globe as “a firecracker of a pianist” and “master of his instrument,” **Karl Paulnack** has partnered vocal and instrumental soloists, chamber groups, orchestras, conductors and opera companies in well over a thousand concerts throughout North America, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Macedonia, Norway, Romania, and Russia. Engagements of recent and current seasons include the festivals of Bard College, Madeline Island, Round Top, Royaumont, Sonic Boom, and Tanglewood, as well as the Bridge, Noe Valley, Stillwater, Walker Museum, Williams College, UC Davis, UT Austin, and University of Oregon concert series. A frequent performer of new music, Dr. Paulnack has been privileged to work closely with many of the important composers of our time including John Adams, Elliott Carter, George Crumb, Karel Husa, Steve Reich, and Joan Tower in preparing performances of their works. Dr. Paulnack holds a B.M. in piano performance from the Eastman School of Music, and the M.M. and D.M.A. degrees from the University of Southern California, where his teachers included Gwendolyn Koldofsky and Brooks Smith. He is also a graduate of the Boston University Institute for Non-Profit Management and Leadership.

Stephen Yoakam is an actor who has appeared in several motion pictures and television movies. He also guest starred in the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episodes “When It Rains...” and “The Dogs of War” as the Romulan Subcommander/General Velal. In 2017 he played Lear in the Guthrie production of *King Lear*. Yoakam often narrates productions of *Peer Gynt* with the Minnesota Orchestra. He has been a member of the acting company of the Guthrie Theatre for over 20 years.

Composer **Justin Merritt** was the youngest-ever winner of the ASCAP Foundation Rudolph Nissim Award. He is also the winner of a host of other awards including the McKnight Fellowship, the Copland Award, and the Polyphonos Prize. His music has been played by the Minnesota Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony, and on A Prairie Home Companion. His evening length cantata, *The Path*, was premiered at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis in April of 2018. The work is a setting of a collection of Buddhist Pali scriptures translated by the composer and set for multiple choirs, soloists, and large orchestra.

He received his bachelors from Trinity University and his masters and doctorate from Indiana University. He studied composition with Samuel Adler, Sven-David Sandstrom, Claude Baker, Timothy Kramer, Don Freund, and electronic and computer music with Jeffrey Hass. He is currently Professor and Chair of Music at St. Olaf College. He resides in Northfield, Minnesota with his wife Faye and their children Cullen and Molly.