

Merz Trio

Lee Dionne, piano | Brigid Coleridge, violin | Julia Yang, cello
in

"Night Journey"

Merz Trio embarks on a journey exploring all things night: night as a time of both darkness and light and as a time of the imagination that harbors our deepest fears and most radiant dreams.

From Hildegard von Bingen to Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Thelonius Monk to Florence Price, our night journey brings together creative voicing across the centuries, pairing the mystery of the unknown with the unexpected intimacy of the emotions we might encounter therein.

Four Songs of Alma Mahler and Alban

Die Stille Stadt (from Five Songs, No. 1)
Traumgekrönt (from Seven Early Songs, No. 4)
Laue Sommernacht (from Five Songs, No. 3)
Sommertage (from Seven Early Songs, No. 7)

arranged and assembled by Merz Trio

Alma Mahler (1879 - 1964)
Alban Berg (1885 - 1935)
Alma Mahler
Alban Berg

Hymn O ignee spiritus

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)
arr. Merz Trio

My Fleeting Angel (2005)

1. Larghetto
2. Allegro spiritoso e scherzoso
3. Allegretto eleganza

Cheryl Frances-Hoad (b. 1980)

Intermission

Round Midnight (1944)

Thelonius Monk (1917 - 1982)
arr. Merz Trio

Episodi e canto perpetuo (1985)

2. Misterioso

Pēteris Vasks
(b. 1946)

"Erlkönig", Op. 1, D. 328

Franz Schubert (1797 - 1828)
arr. Merz Trio

Gypsy Songs, Op. 55 (1880)

4. Songs my Mother Taught Me

Antonín Dvořák (1841 - 1904)
arr. Merz Trio

Night (1946)

Florence Price (1887 - 1953)
arr. Merz Trio

Adagio in E-flat major, Op. 148 'Notturmo' (D. 897)

Franz Schubert (1797 - 1828)

Artist's Note

With our San Antonio Chamber Music Society performance, we've had a chance to draw on some of the best of Merz Trio's programming, unified here through the theme of night and its mythic symbolism for humans across time.

Often in these works the darkness of night is balanced by moments of luminosity and revelation. In the song arrangements of Alma Mahler and Alban Berg, written between 1907 and 1910, the nighttime of their expressionist texts suggests a darkness of the soul that is always transformed by a vision from a child, friend, or beloved. In Hildegard's 13th-century monastic darkness, the "fiery spirit" of music blazes forth through the vehicles of the "tympanum" and "lyre". And in Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *My Fleeting Angel*, based on a short story of Sylvia Plath, "The Wishing Box," we encounter a world of fantastic colors, though we later learn that they take place only in dreams.

In our second half, night gains an atmospheric and expressive heft, beginning with Thelonius Monk's *Round Midnight*, presented here in a smoky and phantasmagorical arrangement by Miles Walter made for the Merz Trio. The Monk dissolves into the even eerier, more ominous landscape of Latvian 20th-century composer Peteris Vask's *Misterioso*, from his *Episodi and Canto Perpetuo* for Piano Trio. From the Vasks we segue into a trio of parent-child portraits: night as a time of fear and consolation. We begin with the nightmare of Schubert's "Erlkönig:" a boy pursued by the fearful "Erl-king" while riding on a horse with his father at night. The demonic chase and its terrifying ending are released only in the catharsis of Dvorak's "Songs my Mother Taught Me," which responds in a mix of nostalgia, grief, and love. Finally, we slip into Florence Price's *Night*, a lullaby with its image of maternal night lighting the stars, taking up her lantern the moon, and watching over her sleeping child, the wearied day.

From here, we end with one of the most classic depictions of night – Schubert's 'Notturmo,' which opens as a serenade, later interrupted by glorious, golden visions and finally ebbing back into a twinkling, transcendent farewell.

With our arrangements and juxtapositions of various composers, we've attempted to bring together disparate voices through the specific medium of the piano trio, but of course we are presenting only the smallest corners of these composers' vastly rich musical worlds. We encourage you to explore any and all of these worlds further in your listening beyond the concert. While our program is thematically unified by "nighttime" and often directly unified through the various texts of the original songs, we encourage you to form your own narrative and connections as you come along with us for this journey.