

## **Program Notes**

Anthony McGill, clarinet

Anna Polonsky, piano

### **Brahms: Clarinet Sonata No. 2**

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was close to retiring when he heard a performance by clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld and was so deeply moved by his musical artistry that he deferred his retirement to compose four final works, all of which feature the clarinet in a starring role, including the two Clarinet Sonatas.

The second sonata Opus 120, No. 2 in E-flat Major is made of up of four movements. The first movement is imbued with a sweetness that reflects Brahms's own musical directions to the performers: *Allegro amabile*, a directive to play "...in a charming, gracious" manner. The second movement is a tour de force, marked "*Apassionato, ma non troppo allegro*" meaning with passion and features a *Sostenuto* middle section that is lyrical and dignified. The gentle third movement consists of a set of variations and is followed by a fourth movement defined by exuberance and joy.

### **James Lee III: *Ad Anah?***

James Lee III was born in Michigan in 1975. His major composition teachers include William Bolcom, Susan Botti and James Aikman. He was a composition fellow at Tanglewood Music Center in the summer of 2002, where he studied with Osvaldo Golijov and Kaija Saariaho. Mr. Lee's works have been performed by orchestras including The National Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Dr. Lee, who earned a DMA in composition at the University of Michigan in 2005, is a Professor of Music at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland.

This beautiful composition, *Ad Anah?* means "How Long?" It is based on a Hebrew Prayer, and in the words of Anthony McGill before a recent performance, this short song reflects "...what we're going through in this time...the struggle."

**Clarinetist Anthony McGill** serves as the principal clarinetist for the New York Philharmonic and serves on the faculty of the Juilliard School, the Curtis Institute of Music and Bard College Conservatory of Music. He performed at the inauguration of President Barack Obama, premiering a piece written for the occasion by John Williams, and performing alongside violinist Itzhak Perlman, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, and pianist Gabriela Montero.

Earlier this week, it was announced that McGill received the 2020 Avery Fisher Prize, "...given in recognition of musicians who represent the highest level of music excellence and whose vision and leadership have expanded the reach of classical music." Shortly after the killing of George Floyd, McGill launched a musical protest video calling for people to #TakeTwoKnees in demonstration against the death of Mr. Floyd and historic and systemic racial injustice. He is a staunch proponent of music education in underserved populations and will donate \$30,000 as part of the Avery Fisher Prize to support a newly formed endowment fund at the Music Advancement Program (MAP) of the Juilliard School. McGill currently serves as Artistic Director of that program.

**Pianist Anna Polonsky**, a Steinway Artist, is widely in demand as a soloist and chamber musician, and has performed all over the world, including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. She is a recipient of a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship and the Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award. She has collaborated with the Guarneri, Shanghai Quartets, as well as such musicians Yo-Yo Ma, David Shifrin and Emanuel Ax.