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Lyric Fest Presents Sincerely Yours - Letters Set to Music

Commission project celebrates the most personal of all communication and a dying art

Philadelphia, Pa March, 2016

The final Lyric Fest concert of this season premieres newly commissioned works by Philadelphia composers Benjamin C.S. Boyle, John Conahan and Thomas Lloyd, as well as Abbie Betinis, Daron Hagen, Lori Laitman, and Logan Skelton. Each has chosen a letter from as intimate as Richard Feynman facing the death of his wife to Abigail Adams' historic call "to remember the ladies" and even a child's wistful wishes to Santa Claus. The program is rounded out with letters set by numerous American composers. Performances are Saturday, April 2, 8 pm at Haverford College and Sunday April 3, 3 pm at Academy of Vocal Arts, 1920 Spruce Street.

In this day and age of texting and immediate response, letter writing has become almost obsolete. Emily Dickinson once said of letter writing, "A letter always seemed to me like immortality because it is the mind alone without corporeal friend." Two of her letters appear in the program.

"Consider written communication today," said co-artistic director Suzanne DuPlantis, "we dash off a quick text for even the most important moments of our lives." She continues, "A letter is personal, a frozen moment in time, written in the hand of those closest to us. What our composers have done is taken these real words preserved on paper and created an emotional sound world around them. The singer and pianist step in to tell us the story."

Singers Kelly Ann Bixby, Andrew Fuchs, Katy Pracht and Keith Phares take a detour from settings of verse into letters and their stories. Laura Ward is at the piano.

The concert also premieres the winner of Lyric Fest's young composer competition, Isabella Ness, who set a letter of Vincent Van Gogh written to his brother, describing the colors of the Mediterranean. Ness is studying music composition at Temple and is the student of Maurice Wright who has premiered his own work with Lyric Fest in 2014. Lyric Fest is committed to supporting Philadelphia's talent and offers this contest yearly to emerging composers under the age of thirty.

Tickets are \$20 for advanced purchase on the [secure website](#) and \$25 at the door. Special student tickets are \$5 cash at the door with ID. More info at www.lyricfest.org.

New Commissions for Sincerely Yours...Letters Set to Music

Abbie Betinis

3/31/1776 letter by Abigail Adams "Remember the Ladies"

Daron Aric Hagen

11/21/1864 letter attributed to Abraham Lincoln "The Bixby Letter"

Logan Skelton

Letters to Santa

Juliana Hall

6/8/1851 letter from Emily Dickinson to Austin Dickinson

John Conahan

"I love my wife. My wife is dead." This letter was written by physicist Richard Feynman to his first wife Arline, shortly after she succumbed to tuberculosis at the age of 25 in 1946.

Benjamin C.S. Boyle

spring 1919 letter from Zelda Fitzgerald to F. Scott Fitzgerald

Lori Laitman

Mike Gioia's Stanford application essay "Dear Future Roommate" 2010s

Thomas Lloyd

2/7/1931 letter from Amelia Earhart to George Palmer Putnam before their wedding

About Lyric Fest

"Compulsively enterprising..." (David Patrick Stearns, Philadelphia Inquirer)

Lyric Fest was founded in January 2003 as a 501 c.3 and is currently led by two of its founders, Artistic Directors Suzanne DuPlantis and Laura Ward. Dedicated exclusively to the voice recital, Lyric Fest occupies a singular place in the Philadelphia artscape and expands the definition of the song recital by jointly featuring regional and internationally recognized artists.

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