

# Los Angeles Musical Salon

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## **MAKING MUSICAL HISTORY IN LOS ANGELES** **Rare Brahms Work Debuts in Chamber Repertoire**

LOS ANGELES, May 10, 2012—On Saturday, May 19, the exhilarating Brahms *Triumphlied* will get a new lease on life with the world premiere of its transcription for piano quintet by composer and concert pianist Marek Zebrowski. The May 19th concert marks the culmination of a challenging three-year-long project commissioned from Zebrowski by the Los Angeles Musical Salon.

Brahms scored the *Triumphlied* (1871) for large symphonic orchestra, soloists, double chorus and organ. This majestic work is so rarely performed that it has become virtually lost to the symphonic repertoire.

L.A. Musical Salon president Terry Tegnazian explains, “A few years ago I stumbled across a CD of a piano-four-hands version of the *Triumphlied*, and was totally captivated by this glorious music. It’s an exciting, uplifting piece that one can listen to over and over again. I really wanted to bring it to the L.A. Musical Salon as a chamber piece, but was having a hard time finding the right composer to do a transcription.”

Zebrowski takes up the story: “Terry contacted me as a result of a referral from one of her Artists in Residence at the time, cellist Lars Hoefs, with whom I have performed many times. I was immediately intrigued by the project. This is such a rare piece that I had never heard of it—my first challenge was finding a copy of the score, both for the original orchestral/choral work and for the piano-four-hands transcription which was prepared by Brahms himself. I had no luck in California, but finally tracked down an original copy published in the 1870s via interlibrary loan from Harvard.”

Zebrowski, who is a Steinway Artist, was born in Poland. He began studying piano at age five, graduated with highest honors from the Poznan Music Lyceum, studied with Nadia Boulanger and Robert Casadesus in France, and received his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from the New England Conservatory of Music. He has taught at MIT, UMass and UCLA.

In addition to his international performing career as a concert pianist, chamber musician and recording artist, Zebrowski is also active as composer. Now based in Los Angeles, for the past several years he has collaborated with film director David Lynch. Zebrowski has authored a number of books on music and film, and currently serves as Program Director of the Polish Music Center at USC and Artistic Director of the annual Paderewski Festival in Paso Robles. He has been honored with several awards, including the Silver Gloria Artis Medal and the Golden Cross of Merit conferred upon him by the President of Poland.

"First I listened to recordings of both versions, then studied both scores," Zebrowski says, "before deciding that I had to work from the full orchestral/choral version rather than the piano-four-hands version—although it was fascinating to see the choices that Brahms had made in transcribing his work for piano four-hands."

Zebrowski then called Tegnazian to accept the commission. "He told me that he wanted to score it for piano quintet with double bass," she recalls. "Usually piano quintets are written for piano, two violins, viola and cello. Marek was going to remove one violin and add a double bass—which happens to be the same instrumentation used by Schubert in his popular 'Trout' quintet."

"My challenge was how to get the sort of intensity, color, texture and richness of the orchestral/choral version for a small group. I literally had to go bar by bar, to figure out what voices and timbres to allocate among the piano and the different strings," Zebrowski says. "There is simply no formula for creating a transcription like this—it is a matter of aesthetic judgment and artistic taste, of finding the right balance. And there is more fine-tuning during rehearsals."

Chamber music transcription of large works is a long and honored musical tradition. Before the era of hi-tech audio equipment and recordings, transcriptions were the only way to bring music from the concert hall into the home. Transcription was also a way for music students and virtuosos to stand out—to make a piece of music their own by adding things that only they could perform.

"Transcription is an art form that has been neglected in recent decades. Now, thanks to Terry's vision," Zebrowski concludes, "a lost piece of beautiful music is finding fresh life, and we have a new, important addition to the repertoire for piano quintet with double bass."

The Upstream Ensemble will premiere the *Triumphlied* piano quintet at the May 19th concert, with Zebrowski at the piano joined by Joel Pargman, violin; Thomas Lea, viola; Simone Vitucci, cello; and Maggie Hasspacher, double bass. Also on the program is the Variations movement from Schubert's "Trout." The *Triumphlied*, in three movements, runs just under thirty minutes. Sheet music will be available from the L.A. Musical Salon later this summer.

Zebrowski, an accomplished and engaging speaker and frequent lecturer, is available for interviews—he can be reached at 213-740-9369 or 213-821-1356, or by email at [marek@thornton.usc.edu](mailto:marek@thornton.usc.edu). The Los Angeles Musical Salon is a nonprofit based in Westwood, whose mission is to nurture new generations of both talent and audience.

### **Concert Details:**

**DATE: Saturday, May 19, 2012; 6:30 p.m. Reception, followed by concert and dinner**

**PLACE: The Italian Cultural Institute, 1023 Hilgard Ave., LA 90024 (Westwood Village)**

**TICKETS: *Reservations required.* \$175/person (discounted to \$150/person for those who join the LA Musical Salon), covers concert and dinner with wine, tax and tip included.**

**FURTHER INFO: Call 310-470-0770 or go to <http://www.lamusicalsalon.org/>**

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