



PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY
CONCERTS

A black and white photograph of four musicians performing. In the center is a woman with short, light-colored hair, wearing a dark turtleneck, looking upwards. To her left are two men playing violins. To her right is a man playing a double bass. The background is a dark, textured blue.

EMILY

NO PRISONER BE

JOYCE DIDONATO MEZZO-SOPRANO

TIME FOR THREE STRING TRIO

RANAAN MEYER DOUBLE BASS/VOCALS

NICOLAS KENDALL VIOLIN/VIOLA/VOCALS

CHARLES YANG VIOLIN/VOCALS

25/26 SEASON



Dear Friends,

Welcome to *Emily—No Prisoner Be*. It is a special pleasure to share this afternoon with you.

We deeply value our long and creatively adventurous relationship with Joyce DiDonato, and this performance is one of several explosively imaginative, multidisciplinary projects she has brought to Princeton. Each has challenged and inspired us in new ways, and we are grateful—as always—for her artistic generosity and vision. We are also delighted to welcome back our friends in Time for Three, whose virtuosity and curiosity make them such compelling collaborators.

In the spirit of connection that defines this project, we were especially pleased to work with Princeton professor Susan Wolfson who offered a class to community auditors to explore Emily Dickinson's poetry in advance of tonight's performance—creating a meaningful bridge between Princeton's scholarly inquiry and the live experience we now share. As Dickinson herself wrote, "The Soul should always stand ajar." This evening, I invite you to listen with that same openness—to poetry, to music, and to the space where they meet.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Marna Seltzer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent flourish at the end.

Marna Seltzer
Director of Princeton University Concerts

Sunday, February 22, 2026 at 3PM • Richardson Auditorium, Alexander Hall

JOYCE DIDONATO Mezzo-Soprano

TIME FOR THREE String Trio

Ranaan Meyer, Double Bass/Vocals

Nicolas Kendall, Violin/Viola/Vocals

Charles Yang, Violin/Vocals

EMILY—NO PRISONER BE

Written for Joyce DiDonato and Time for Three

Music by Kevin Puts

Poetry by Emily Dickinson

Andrew Staples, Director, Lighting/Sound Designer

Lars Braun, Stage Manager

William Reynolds, Lighting Designer

Colin Egan, Sound Engineer

Askonas Holt, Tour Management/Producer

Park Avenue Artists, Time for Three General Management

David Ross, Time for Three Tour Management

Metamorphoza, Dress Designer

Joyce DiDonato, Ranaan Meyer, Nicolas Kendall, Charles Yang, Producers

This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

*Emily—No Prisoner Be has been generously supported by Mary Ellen Clark,
Helen Berggruen for Five Arts Foundation, Gordon P. Getty,
and Elaine Camarda & Morris Williams.*

*The creation of Emily—No Prisoner Be was made possible by
the Lead Commissioner Bregenzer Festspiele and Co-Commissioners
Cal Performances at University of California, Berkeley and
University of California, Santa Barbara Arts & Lectures.*

PROGRAM

They shut me up in Prose
I was the slightest in the House—
The Soul selects her own Society
Again—his voice is at the door—

Interlude No. 1

I dwell in Possibility
Because I could not stop for Death—
A Bee I personally knew (Bee Scherzo No. 1)

I Felt a Funeral in my Brain

I reason, Earth is short—
A little Snow was here and there
I tie my Hat—I crease my Shawl

“Hope” is the thing

Interlude No. 2

The Props assist the House
There is a solitude of space
Could I but ride indefinite (Bee Scherzo No. 2)

So set its Sun in Thee

Her face

Tell Her

His Feet are shod with Gauze (Bee Scherzo No. 3)

Wild Nights!

There is another sky
'Tis true—They shut me in the Cold—
If I can stop one Heart from breaking
(*On Praetorius' "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"*)

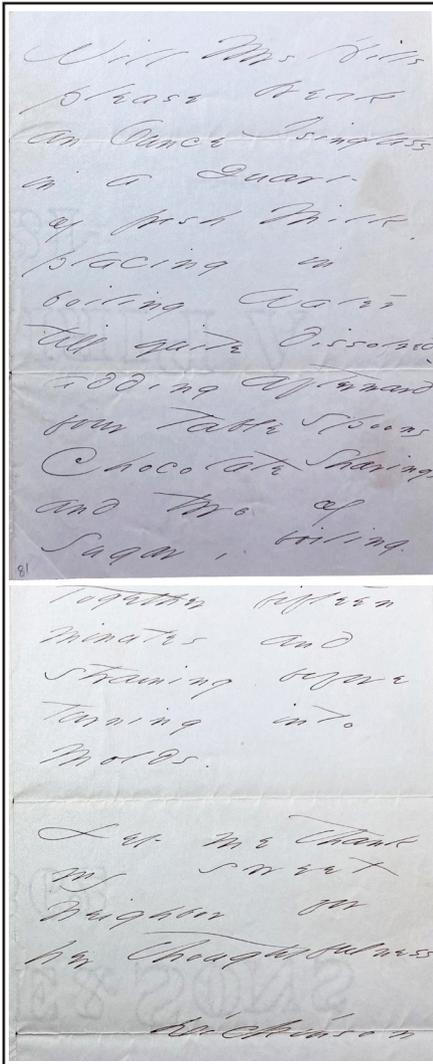
No Prisoner be—

*This afternoon's performance will last approximately 75 minutes
and is performed without intermission.*

EMILY DICKINSON'S PUDDING RECIPE

Sent with this note to her neighbor Adelaide Hills in roughly 1872.

This autograph recipe and first editions of Emily Dickinson's works are in Princeton University Library's Special Collections.



Will Mrs Hills
please break
an ounce Isenglass
in a quart
of fresh milk
placing in
boiling water
till quite dissolved
adding afterward
four table spoons
chocolate shavings
and two of
sugar, boiling
together fifteen
minutes and
straining before
turning into
molds.

Let me thank
my sweet
neighbor for
her thoughtfulness.
Dickinson



About the Program

By Composer Kevin Puts © 2026

Pulitzer Prize and Grammy®-winning composer Kevin Puts has established himself as one of America's leading composers. He has been commissioned and performed by leading organizations around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, and has collaborated with world-class artists such as soprano Renée Fleming, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, and conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin, among others.

Emily—No Prisoner Be emerged through my collaboration with great performers from two different realms. *The Hours*—an opera based on the novel by Michael Cunningham with a libretto by Greg Pierce—was commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera and featured a trio of stars including Joyce DiDonato, who created the role of Virginia Woolf to rapturous acclaim. My creative work during the Covid-19 pandemic toggled between this mammoth project and another: a triple concerto called *Contact* for the dynamic string trio Time for Three. At some point during our work on *Contact*, the members of Time for Three and I realized we were having too much fun and needed to look ahead to another project in the near future. When the idea of an album of songs arose, I had just the singer in mind! I had a strong feeling the deep musical intuition, larger-than-life personalities, and fiercely creative minds of all four of these powerhouse artists might gel in a very special way. I wasn't wrong.

But an album of songs based on what text? I stumbled upon this poem of Emily Dickinson and had the answer:

They shut me up in Prose –
As when a little Girl
They put me in the Closet –
Because they liked me “still” –

Still! Could themselves have peeped –
And seen my Brain – go round –
They might as wise have lodged a Bird
For Treason – in the Pound –

Himself has but to will
And easy as a Star
Look down upon Captivity –
And laugh – No more have I –

Though Juilliard- and Curtis Institute-trained musicians of the highest caliber, Time for Three exudes the energy of a rock/pop concert at its most exhilarating. I could imagine this energy right from the start, with “shredding” violin virtuosity ushering in Joyce’s first lines. The trio could even sing back her lines in counterpoint and provide harmonic support in the manner of Aretha Franklin’s backup singers. In short, I could see from the start this wasn’t going to be your grandmother’s Emily Dickinson song cycle.

The breadth of the entire work became vaguely apparent in my mind, a rather massive journey through Dickinson’s poetry framed by her refusal to be contained in “prose,” or—put less poetically—within the confines of conventional religious ideology, societal norms of the era, traditional social conventions, or even sexual identity. Though she famously cloistered herself in a room in her father’s house for much of her life, she would be a prisoner of nothing and no one.

To be sure, there is nothing groundbreaking in the choice to set Emily Dickinson’s poetry to music, and admittedly my mention of it caused a few eyes to roll in the early stages. In fact, according to David Nirenberg, Director of the Institute for Advanced Study, who graciously hosted the five of us for two immensely productive workshops, there have been over 3,000 musical settings of Emily Dickinson’s poetry. It positively cries out to be sung. There is music in every line, every word, and in the spaces between the words. It inspires rhythm, harmony, melody, musical atmosphere—it leaps off the page in a way composers have been unable to resist.

So I simply began to set poems—some well-known, some more obscure—as I discovered them, writing quickly and with little sense of where each song might eventually appear sequentially in the cycle. This approach to form represented a departure from the way I normally work, and frankly it made me nervous. Not until I began workshopping the various songs with Joyce and Time for Three did I discover we could allow the *music* to dictate the course of things. Historians have relied on Dickinson’s handwriting to make rough guesses as to when in her life a poem was written, but we do not know the precise order. It seems she wrote them as the spirit moved her. So once I disavowed myself any obligation to preserve chronology or give the work a sequential thematic structure, isolated songs began to coalesce into small groups of songs.

Dickinson enjoyed a particular fascination with bees, judging from the number of poems written about them, so I found myself composing “bee scherzos” which serve the dual function of showcasing Time for Three’s virtuosity and giving Joyce’s voice a much-needed rest during this rather colossal cycle. In fact I was delighted to find that, in her indispensable book *Dickinson*, Helen Vendler fittingly describes the following as a “winsomely playful scherzo:”

Bee! I’m expecting you!
Was saying Yesterday
To Somebody you know
That you were due —

The Frogs got Home last Week —
Are settled, and at work —
Birds, mostly back —
The Clover warm and thick —

You’ll get my Letter by
The seventeenth; Reply
Or better, be with me —
Yours, Fly.

These scherzos also serve as connective material between clusters of songs. Sometimes I even found myself flipping through Dickinson’s 1,800 poems to find one whose musical setting might close a “gap” in a similar way within the arc of the whole piece. Though the intention of a poem like the wonderful “I dwell in Possibility” is clear enough, others are more resistant to interpretation, at least for this composer. Again to quote Vendler, “like all capacious writers, she baffles complete understanding,” yet these more enigmatic offerings often create the most alluring space for musical setting. For example, the following:

So set its Sun in Thee
What Day be dark to me—
What distance—far—
So I the Ships may see
That touch—how seldomly—
Thy Shore?

There is the sense of longing for something just out of reach, and there is the setting sun and the gentle rhythm of the tide. And for me, that is enough.

In my program note for *The Hours*, I described a rather metaphysical experience after spending so much time considering the predicaments and motivations of Virginia Woolf, albeit through a second-hand incarnation of the great writer formed in the mind of Michael Cunningham. It truly began to feel as if she was in the room with me as I grafted melodies and harmonies onto her story. I experienced something similar with the ghost of Georgia O’Keeffe as I mined hundreds of her letters to create *The Brightness of Light* for soprano Renée Fleming. Emily Dickinson also stopped by my little third-floor office in Yonkers, New York (it’s getting crowded up here!). And when I visited Dickinson’s house in Amherst, Massachusetts in summer 2024, I felt an odd familiarity and sense of recognition, though undoubtedly one formed by my own projecting and romanticizing. But this is, after all, what we do with our heroes.



Credit: Shervin Lainez

JOYCE DIDONATO

Joyce DiDonato has been hailed as one of the most extraordinary singers of our time, celebrated not only for the radiant beauty of her voice but also for the emotional honesty and humanity she brings to every performance. Kansas-born and a winner of multiple Grammy Awards and the Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera, she has inspired audiences and critics alike across the globe, described by *The New Yorker* as “perhaps the most potent female singer of her generation” and by *The Times* (London) as possessing a sound “nothing less than 24-carat gold.”

Her artistry defies simple categorization. With a repertoire spanning four centuries, from the dazzling virtuosity of Handel and Mozart to the passion of French Romanticism and the raw power of contemporary opera, Joyce has redefined what it means to be a 21st-century singer. Whether portraying heroines of myth and history or giving voice to modern figures like Virginia Woolf in *The Hours* or Sister Helen Prejean in *Dead Man Walking*, she unites technical brilliance with a deep sense of storytelling that resonates with audiences everywhere.

“The staggering, joyful artistry of Joyce DiDonato reminds us that in any generation there are a few giants. Joyce is not only a great, brave and inspiring artist—one of the finest singers of our time—but she is also a transformative presence in the arts. Those who know her repertoire are in awe of her gifts, and those who know nothing of it are instantly engaged. Joyce sings and the world is suddenly brighter.”

—Composer Jake Heggie

On the world’s great stages including the Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera House, and the Wiener Staatsoper, as well as concert halls in Berlin, Tokyo, Buenos Aires, and beyond, Joyce has forged unforgettable collaborations with leading conductors, orchestras, and directors. Her recitals and residencies at institutions such as Carnegie Hall and London’s Barbican Centre have further established her as a musical force whose programs invite listeners to journey across centuries and styles, discovering unexpected connections between past and present.

Her catalogue of recordings has been recognized with multiple Grammy Awards and international prizes, acclaimed for both its range and its depth. From large-scale operatic works to imaginative recital programs, these releases reflect the same imagination and integrity that define her live performances and have brought her interpretations to listeners around the world. Joyce’s impact also reaches beyond performance. A dedicated advocate for the transformative power of the arts, she has created ambitious global

projects that combine music with a call to reflection and action. Most recently, her EDEN initiative spanned more than 50 cities across four continents (including Princeton University Concerts in 2023), weaving together music, education, and community engagement to invite audiences into a dialogue about humanity's relationship with the natural world.

Among her many honors, Joyce has been recognized with the Concertgebouw Prize for her outstanding artistic contribution and has been named an Officière de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government. Through her collaborations, performances, and creative projects, Joyce has established a singular voice that reflects her mastery, vision, and unmistakable artistry.

This is Joyce DiDonato's seventh appearance at Princeton University Concerts, including a digital residency during the Covid shutdown. For her official biography, please visit joycedidonato.com.

TIME FOR THREE

Grammy and Emmy-winning ensemble Time for Three (TF3) defies convention and boundaries, merging classical, Americana, and singer-songwriter traditions into a singular, remarkable sound. Consisting of Ranaan Meyer (double bass, vocals), Nicolas "Nick" Kendall (violin, viola, vocals), and Charles Yang (violin, vocals), TF3 captivates audiences worldwide with their virtuosic playing and insatiable appetite for creativity that expands typical perceptions of a string trio.

TF3 appears this season with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Marin Alsop, Louisville Orchestra and Teddy Abrams, and St. Louis Symphony and Stéphane Denève. Their repertoire includes their newest commissioned concerto by composer Mason Bates, which received its premiere at Arizona Musicfest, with subsequent performances with San Francisco Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestra at SPAC.

TF3 won a Grammy Award for their album *Letters for the Future*, released by Deutsche Grammophon and featuring works by Kevin Puts and Jennifer Higdon, both recorded with the Philadelphia Orchestra. TF3 has enjoyed additional collaborations with Ben Folds, Natasha Bedingfield, Branford Marsalis, Joshua Bell, Jennifer Higdon, Chris Brubeck, William Bolcom, and Ario Guthrie. Time

for Three's solo shows have been praised for their "joy, mastery, creativity and supreme artistry" (*The Strad*). Their concert special, *Time for Three In Concert*, was produced by PBS and earned the trio an Emmy Award. *Time for Three's* affinity for creative boundary pushing, commitment to encouraging the next generation of musicians, and relentless pursuit of musical excellence have solidified them as one of the most exceptional groups on the scene today.

This is Time for Three's second appearance at Princeton University Concerts. For their official biography, please visit tf3.com.

KEVIN PUTS

Pulitzer Prize and Grammy®-winning composer Kevin Puts has established himself as one of America's leading composers, gaining international acclaim for his "plush, propulsive" music (*The New York Times*), and described by *Opera News* as "a master polystylist." His work has been commissioned and performed by leading organizations around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, Philadelphia Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, Opera Philadelphia, Minnesota Opera, and many more, and he has collaborated with leading artists such as soprano mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato, Renée Fleming, violinist Joshua Bell, conductors Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Marin Alsop, and Stéphane Denève among many others.

In March 2022 Puts' fourth opera, *The Hours*, had its world premiere on the concert stage by the Philadelphia Orchestra under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin and was hailed as an "historic event ... with a lush orchestration that hits you in the solar plexus" (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*). *The Hours* premiered to sold-out houses as a fully staged production at the Metropolitan Opera in November 2022 starring sopranos Renée Fleming, Kelli O'Hara, and mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato and was called "a stunning triumph" by *Variety Magazine*. The opera's revival in May 2024 marked the first instance in the Metropolitan Opera's history of a work returning the season after its premiere. Puts was invited to perform the final trio from the opera at the 2024 Grammy® Awards, accompanying its three leading ladies from the piano.

Puts' breakthrough opera *Silent Night*—for which he was awarded the 2012 Pulitzer Prize following its 2011 premiere by Minnesota Opera—was heralded as "remarkable" (*The New York Times*) and "stunning" (*Twin Cities Examiner*) and has

become one of the most-performed contemporary operas. Other major works include *The Brightness of Light*, a multi-media orchestral song cycle based on the letters of Georgia O’Keeffe, featuring soprano Renée Fleming and baritone Rod Gilfry, which premiered at Tanglewood in 2017 and received performances across the United States by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Opera, and many others. Written for Time for Three, his triple concerto *Contact* had its world-premiere in March 2022 with the Florida Orchestra and subsequently received performances around the world. A recording of the piece by the Philadelphia Orchestra and conductor Xian Zhang was released on the Deutsche Grammophon album “Letters for the Future” and was awarded “Best Contemporary Classical Composition” at the 2023 Grammy® Awards. Based on *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran, his *House of Tomorrow* for mezzo-soprano soloist, chorus, and orchestra was commissioned by the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra to commemorate the reopening of its renowned Powell Hall and was premiered in September 2025, led by Music Director Stéphane Denève with Joyce DiDonato as soloist.

Mr. Puts was named Musical America’s Composer of the Year in 2024. Since 2006, he has been a member of the Composition Faculty at the Peabody Institute. He also serves as Distinguished Visiting Composer at the Juilliard School as well as Director of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer’s Institute. All works by Kevin Puts are published worldwide by G. Ricordi & Co., New York, a Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen company.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Your help is critical to our future. Ticket sales cover less than half the cost of presenting the finest world-class music. The remaining support comes from a visionary endowment established by the Ladies' Musical Committee in 1929; the Philena Fobes Fine Memorial Fund and the Jesse Peabody Frothingham Fund; and, most importantly, from donors like you. We are deeply grateful to the individuals whose support at every level ensures that live musical performance continues to enrich Princeton, the community, and the region.

If you wish to make a donation to Princeton University Concerts or inquire about planned giving or sponsorship opportunities, please call Marna Seltzer at 609-258-2800 or visit puc.princeton.edu.

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—Pianist Stephen Hough,
who appeared with the Takács Quartet (2024/25 Season)

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The first concert in what is known today as Princeton University Concerts was presented on October 29, 1894, thus establishing one of the oldest continuous series of musical events in the country. From 1894 to 1914, the “Ladies Musical Committee” presented concerts by the Kneisel Quartet. After 1914, the programs diversified. In 1929, the Ladies Committee became the Princeton University Concerts Committee—a town and gown group of interested and knowledgeable music lovers—which has guided the University Concerts to date

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Spring 26

At the Princeton Public Library

Thursday, January 22 | 12PM | Book Group

**“HARD BY A GREAT FOREST”
BY LEO VARDIASHVILI**

Concert Classics Series

Thursday, February 5 | 7:30PM

**BENJAMIN BERNHEIM Tenor*
CARRIE-ANN MATHESON Piano***

Concert Classics Series

Thursday, February 12 | 7:30PM

MARMEN STRING QUARTET*

Special Event

Sunday, February 22 | 3PM

**JOYCE DIDONATO Mezzo-soprano
TIME FOR THREE**

All in the Family

Saturday, March 14 | 1PM & 3PM

**LITTLE LISTENERS Ages 3-6
“Time for Music”**

At the Princeton Garden Theatre

Wednesday, March 18 | 7PM | Movie Screening

“PORCELAIN WAR”

Concert Classics Series

Thursday, March 19 | 7:30PM

**TABEA ZIMMERMANN Viola
JAVIER PERIANES Piano***

Richardson Chamber Players / Special Event

Thursday, March 26 | 7:30PM

**PATRICIA KOPATCHINSKAJA Violin
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
CHAPEL CHOIR
RICHARDSON CHAMBER PLAYERS
“Dies Irae,” a staged reflection on the
end of the world**

Concert Classics Series

Wednesday, April 8 | 7:30PM

ÉBÈNE STRING QUARTET

Concert Classics Series

Thursday, April 23 | 7:30PM

**AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
RICHARD TOGNETTI Director**

Music & Healing

Wednesday, April 29 | 7:30PM

**LISA BATIASHVILI Violinist
“Sounding Defiance: Georgia & Ukraine”**

Concert Classics Series

Thursday, April 30 | 7:30PM

**LISA BATIASHVILI Violin
GIORGI GIGASHVILI Piano***

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25/26

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