

Pas de Deux

Program Note by the Composer

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Pas de Deux is scored for cello and piano.

Pas de Deux is one of the few works of mine that is overtly programmatic. It was a surprise commissioned by a dear friend Pamela Dillon for her husband Stephen's fortieth birthday. Over the course of numerous enthusiastic conversations with Pam it became clear to me that she had *very* concrete ideas for their piece. Pam wanted to somehow describe the course of an intimate relationship in ways that would be both specific to the two of them and universal for all. Knowing the special closeness that exists between Pam and Steve, and their strong personalities, the title *Pas de Deux* immediately came to mind. Rarely does one meet two people who are so joyfully intertwined in their daily existence while simultaneously keeping their individuality. Pam went so far as to supply me with a series of aphoristic writings that eventually provided a distinctive framework, a program, which made the process of composing this piece akin to text setting or theater composing. The work is one movement divided into four sections: I. Prologue; II. Youth; III. The Limits of Life, a. Dialogue and b. How Time Ends; and IV. Pas de Deux.

I had decided to revisit *Pas de Deux* during the summer of 2001, a year that would end up so full of unusually intense and raw emotional experiences. I felt that the original version of the work implied much more than it actually delivered. What I didn't expect was that the piece would take on a life of its own, expanding by almost half its original length, from thirteen to twenty-two minutes, or that events would transform the work. The middle section (III.) in particular, written throughout the late summer and well into the fall of 2001, took on a much darker hue as events gave the subject new more urgent meanings. As the work broadened and deepened it became much more virtuosic.

One of music's greatest strengths is its ability to seem to be both concrete and ephemeral in its meaning at the same time. In addition, we all bring our own experiences to a work and how we interpret it. Therefore, I will not dictate how the program must be realized in the music and who, or what, the various instruments, gestures, or sections should represent. I will allow the listeners to find any connections and symbolism for themselves.

— Joel Phillip Friedman

First Performance (unrevised version) February 26, 1995,
Kathryn Bache Miller Theatre, New York
Maria Kitsopoulos, cello; Allison Voth, piano
Recorded 2002, Fred Sherry, cello; Stephen Gosling, piano