

PROGRAM NOTES: “In the Shadow of Sirius”

In setting the poetry of W.S. Merwin to music (from his exquisite collection, “The Shadow of Sirius”), I realized that these poems say exactly what they need to say, and that an attempt by a composer (who thinks more in musical tones than in words) to create program notes, is a bit of an exercise in futility. I am also a firm believer in the power of poetry to speak to each individual, creating the perfect message for that person. What I take away from a poem will be different from the listener’s experience. Because of this philosophy, I decided to set the first poem twice, in two very different settings: once at the beginning and again at the conclusion. W.S. Merwin’s wonderful poetry illuminates and shadows us in our journeys through song. –Jennifer Higdon

Commissioned by The Cypress String Quartet

For
The Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation
in
The Library of Congress
and dedicated to
The memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky

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NOTE: ALL of the wording above, must be included in the program note, according to the legal agreements with the grant organizations, as well as the publisher and agent of Mr. W.S. Merwin.