

For Immediate Release
April 21, 2011

***EMMANUEL MUSIC ANNOUNCES
PREMIERE OF NEW JAMES PRIMOSCH MOTET,
Written In Memory Of Craig Smith,
Emmanuel Music's Founder***

APRIL 21, 2011- BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS On Sunday, May 1 during the Emmanuel Church liturgy at 10 am, Emmanuel Music will be performing the premiere of a new motet by James Primosch. The motet is written in memory of Emmanuel Music's founder, Craig Smith and is based on a text by Thomas Merton, entitled "Two Arms of the Harbor."

James Primosch on the motets he's written for Emmanuel Music:

Since 1994, Emmanuel Music has performed 6 of my motets, with the seventh to be premiered at the Eucharist on Sunday, May 1. Six of these seven were written specifically for Emmanuel, originally at the invitation of John Harbison. The texts I have set include poetry of Cummings, Wendell Berry, and Denise Levertov, the last of whom was at one time an Emmanuel parishioner.

The motet to be heard May 1, "Two Arms of the Harbor", sets a text by American monk, writer, poet, witness for peace, and zen master Thomas Merton, taken from one of his published journals, a book called "Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander". I find the text deeply consoling, and offer my setting as a memorial for the remarkable man and musician Craig Smith, founder of Emmanuel Music, who was kind enough to program my motets repeatedly through the years. Through the welcoming of these motets, I feel, in a modest way, part of the Emmanuel community, a gift for which I am profoundly grateful.

James Primosch on Emmanuel Music:

Emmanuel Music is an extraordinary group, and in this, the sixth piece I have written for them since 1994, I know they will meet all the challenges I have recklessly set for them, and do so with grace and beauty of sound. I do like hearing my music done by Emmanuel Music, not just because the choir is superb. It is a place where I can bring all my "concert music" skills to bear, unlike the communities where I have generally worked as a church musician myself, where amateur choirs and an almost exclusive emphasis on congregational singing mean my composing is usually in the quasi-pop idiom that predominates in Catholic church music today. Not only is the choir great at Emmanuel, but the worshipping assembly has "ears to hear" as scripture puts it: trained to listen intently by years of hearing the Bach cantatas and similarly nourishing offerings, I know they will hear my piece with attention and sympathy. There are other nice aspects to church performance – only a few people will know I am even there, at least until the coffee hour afterwards; there is no applause, no awkward bowing, no reviewers. Applause, bows and sometimes even reviews are nice, but it is healthy to forego them once in a while."

James Primosch biographical note:

When honoring him with its Goddard Lieberson Fellowship, the American Academy of Arts and Letters noted that "A rare economy of means and a strain of religious mysticism distinguish the music of James Primosch... Through articulate, transparent textures, he creates a wide range of musical emotion." Andrew Porter stated in *The New Yorker* that Primosch "scores with a sure, light hand" and critics for the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and

the Dallas Morning News have characterized his music as "impressive", "striking", "grandly romantic", "stunning" and "very approachable".

Primosch's compositional voice encompasses a broad range of expressive types. His music can be intensely lyrical, as in the song cycle Holy the Firm (composed for Dawn Upshaw) or dazzlingly angular as in Secret Geometry for piano and electronic sound. His affection for jazz is reflected in works like the Piano Quintet, while his work as a church musician informs the many pieces in his catalog based on sacred songs or religious texts.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1956, James Primosch studied at Cleveland State University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Columbia University. He counts Mario Davidovsky, George Crumb and Richard Wernick among his principal teachers.

Primosch's instrumental, vocal, and electronic works have been performed throughout the United States and in Europe by such ensembles as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Collage, the New York New Music Ensemble, and the Twentieth Century Consort. His Icons was played at the ISCM/League of Composers World Music Days in Hong Kong, and Dawn Upshaw included a song by Primosch in her Carnegie Hall recital debut. Commissioned works by Primosch have been premiered by the Chicago Symphony, Speculum Musicae, the Cantata Singers, and pianist Lambert Orkis.

Among the honors he has received are a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Guggenheim Fellowship, two prizes from the American Academy-Institute of Arts and Letters, a Regional Artists Fellowship to the American Academy in Rome, a Pew Fellowship in the Arts, the Stoeger Prize of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and a fellowship to the Tanglewood Music Center where he studied with John Harbison. Organizations commissioning Primosch include the Koussevitzky and Fromm Foundations, the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, the Folger Consort, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, the Barlow Endowment, and the Network for New Music. In 1994 he served as composer-in-residence at the Marlboro Music Festival. Recordings of eleven compositions by Primosch have appeared on the Albany, Azica, Bard, Bridge, CRI, Centaur, and New World labels, with new discs of vocal and choral works planned.

James Primosch is also active as a pianist, particularly in the realm of contemporary music. He was a prizewinner at the Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition in Rotterdam, and appears on recordings for New World, CRI, the Smithsonian Collection, and Crystal Records. He has worked as a jazz pianist and a liturgical musician. Since 1988 he has served on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, where he directs the Presser Electronic Music Studio.

Press Inquiries

Interviews & High Resolution Images

Dayla Arabella Santurri

617.828.9533

dayla@emmanuelmusic.org

Concert Information

Pat Krol, Executive Director

Emmanuel Music

617.536.3356

pat@emmanuelmusic.org

www.emmanuelmusic.org

**Emmanuel Music is the Ensemble-in-Residence at Emmanuel Church.
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