



# JOEL PHILLIP FRIEDMAN

## *Pas de Deux*

### Program Note by the Composer

(NB: these notes are free for use but cannot be altered/edited without the permission of the composer)

*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 meant as 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 existed 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 setting a text or composing theater music. 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 infuse the work with deeper meaning and transform it. 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 in New York City gave the subject new, more urgent meanings. As the work broadened and deepened it also became much more virtuosic.

Having said all of this, 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. Programmatic music is a tricky thing. If you heard *Pas de Deux* without having read this note beforehand would you "hear" all of the mentioned allusions in the music? Would that even be necessary? 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 connections and symbolism for themselves.

Joel Phillip Friedman (2012)