



Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Nowlin, Director

CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES  
Sunday, February 16, 2025 at 2:00 P.M.  
Cultural Arts Center  
Montgomery College  
Silver Spring, MD  
GySgt Robert Bonner, coordinator

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Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

“Peace” (2020)

*SSgt Nick Thompson, clarinet*  
*SSgt Dominic Muzzi, piano*

Jenni Brandon (b. 1977)

*The Sequoia Trio (2009)*

I. *Sequoiadendrom giganteum*: The Big Tree

*Tree Interlude One*

II. “A crowd of helpful young trees and saplings...”

III. The Three Graces

*Tree Interlude Two*

IV. The Noble Trees

*GySgt Kristin Bowers, clarinet*  
*SSgt Matthew Gregoire, bassoon*  
*GySgt Tessa Gross, oboe*

Libby Larsen (b. 1950)

*Ridge Runner, An Uninterrupted Suite (2012)*

*GySgt Robert Bonner, trumpet*  
*SSgt Alex Garde and SSgt Mary La Blanc, percussion*

## INTERMISSION

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Vaclav Nelhybel (1919–96)

*Ludus for Three Tubas (1975)*

*GySgt Landres Bryant, GySgt Simon Wildman,  
and SSgt Benjamin St. Pierre, tuba*

Paul Juon (1872–1940)

*Trio-Miniaturen, Opp. 18a, 24a*

*Rêverie, Op. 18 No. 3  
Humoreske, Op. 18 No. 7  
Elegie, Op. 18 No. 6  
Danse phantastique, Op. 24 No. 2*

*GySgt Parker Gaims, clarinet  
GySgt Clayton Vaughn, cello  
GySgt Christopher Schmitt, piano*

Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959)

*Suite from La Revue de Cuisine*

*Prologue: Allegretto  
Tango: Lento; Andante  
Charleston: Poco a poco allegro  
Finale: Marche; Allegretto*

*GySgt Lewis Gilmore, clarinet  
SSgt Matthew Gregoire, bassoon  
GySgt Robert Bonner, trumpet  
SSgt Dominic Muzzi, piano  
GySgt Foster Wang, violin  
GySgt Clayton Vaughn, cello*

# ***PROGRAM NOTES***

## **“Peace” (2020)**

Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

Jessie Montgomery’s “Peace” was commissioned by violinist Elena Urioste and pianist Tom Poster as part of their #UriPosteJukeBox series inspired by and recorded during the period of social distancing due to COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The composer later transcribed the work for clarinet or viola and piano.

Montgomery states how she wrote the work only a month after the first pandemic social distancing orders were announced. Like many others worldwide, she was shocked by the sudden isolation with an unknown end date and was “struggling to define what actually brings me joy.” Writing in May 2020, the composer reflected that “...I’m at a stage of making peace with sadness as it comes and goes like any other emotion. I’m learning to observe sadness for the first time not as a negative emotion, but as a necessary dynamic to the human experience.”

The work begins with an ascending figure in the piano that creates an air of dreaminess and uncertainty. The clarinet then enters with a plaintive melody over an ostinato in the piano. This melody and ostinato combination intensifies, showcasing the soaring upper and rich lower registers of the clarinet, combined with colorfully dense chords in the piano. The music eventually subsides and fades away as the work transitions to a second section. In this section, the piano primarily oscillates between only two chords while the clarinet plays a melody that slithers down chromatically, as if pleading with the piano to get out of its trance. With the help of the clarinet, the piano eventually overcomes its trance with a series of ascending chords. The duo fades away to nothing, ending the piece with a glimmer of hope.

## **The Sequoia Trio (2009)**

Jenni Brandon (b. 1977)

American composer Jenni Brandon is known for her melodies, often drawing on stories from her collaborators, the natural world, and poetry. Her catalogue of music contains over a hundred works for soloists, chamber ensembles, concertos, orchestras, and operas.

Brandon’s *The Sequoia Trio* uses quotes from John Muir’s *The Yosemite*, as well as the composer’s own visit to Sequoia National Park in California to inspire the music. In the first movement, the composer channels the “graceful compliance” of the trees as they sway gently in the breeze from the base of the growth all the way to the canopy. The second movement, “A crowd of helpful young trees and samplings” displays the hope, tenacity and resilience that a young tree must have in order survive. The third movement takes its name from John Muir’s description of the sequoia’s habit of growing in clusters of threes as the “Three Graces,” Muir’s reference to the Greek goddesses of charm, beauty, and creativity. In the movement the three instruments grow together over the course of the movement, though each instrument is given its own moment to shine. After movements one and three, there are two short “Tree Interludes” performed by solo clarinet. These interludes tell the story of a specific tree and the history it has witnessed over thousands of years. The work ends with a hymn-like tribute to the sequoia and its existence as a stunning feat of nature.

## ***Ridge Runner, An Uninterrupted Suite (2012)***

Libby Larsen (b. 1950)

Libby Larsen is an American born classical contemporary composer. One of America's most performed living composers, she has created a catalogue of over 220 works spanning virtually every genre. Her awards are numerous and includes a GRAMMY and draws influences from a number of places - poetry, architecture, painters. Libby Larsen's works are widely recorded, including over fifty albums of her work, she is constantly sought after for commissions and premieres by a wide range of ensembles and artists. She was appointed one of the Minnesota Orchestra's two composers-in-residence in 1983, making her the first woman to serve as a resident composer with a major orchestra.

*Ridge Runner* was commissioned by the International Women's Brass Conference and premiered by Karin Bliznik, trumpet; and Judy Moonert and Greg Secor, percussion at the International Women's Brass Conference at Western Michigan University. Larsen shares the following:

*Ridge Runner*, for Bb trumpet and percussion, is an uninterrupted suite in five sections. The term "ridge-runner" is American slang referring loosely to a number of characters—the southern farmer, the mountaineer, the moonshiner—people of wit, perseverance, and self-reliance, people who don't mind dealing with the elements. It struck me that solo trumpet performers are akin to ridge-runners in their spirit, energy, and daring. So I set about composing this piece by basing its personality in abstract vernacular music—banjo picking, ballad, jazz, harmonica—and treating it as a serious concert piece. My aim is to bring the experience of ridge-running into the concert hall.

## ***Ludus for Three Tubas (1975)***

Vaclav Nelhybel (1919–96)

Czech-born Vaclav Nelhybel trained in Prague and worked across Europe before emigrating to the United States. He spent the last half of his life teaching and composing in Scranton, Pennsylvania. After being exposed to the American wind band tradition, he is known for expanding the repertoire for instruments traditionally neglected by composers.

"The first band I heard played a piece by Persichetti, and it was so good I just caught fire. I was fascinated with the possibilities of what you can do with half an acre of clarinets, half an acre of flutes, and half an acre of percussion. So I said, why not try it? I did, and it seemed to open new creative channels in my mind." In this quote of Nelhybel's lay the seeds of *Ludus* and his exploration of what might be done with an acre of tubas.

*Ludus*, translated from Latin, can mean either a board game or gladiator training school. In the three-movement work, it seems that he explored both interpretative possibilities. This piece, like so much of Nelhybel's writing, is just sheer sonic drive: perpetual motion and rhythm accumulating and colliding.

### **Trio-Miniaturen, Opp. 18a, 24a**

Paul Juon (1872–1940)

Paul Juon was born in Moscow to Swiss parents. He studied violin and composition at the Moscow Conservatory beginning in 1889. Juon won the Mendelssohn Prize for composition in 1896 and became a professor at the Baku Conservatory in modern-day Azerbaijan. He made his way back to Berlin and was appointed chair of the composition department at the Musikhochschule by violinist, composer, and conductor Joseph Joachim in 1906. He held this position until 1934 and retired to Vevey, Switzerland.

Juon's music can be described as a bridge between the late Romantic and early modern periods in the Western art music tradition. While studying in the Moscow, his fellow student Sergei Rachmaninov called him "the Russian Brahms," a nod to Juon's use of thick musical texture and adventurous harmony and counterpoint one would find in the late German Romantic repertoire. Other commentators note similarities to late romantic Russian music, as well as references to folk music of the era. Rather than attempt to characterize Juon and his music, it may be best to recognize that his lifetime encompassed a very exciting and evolving time in the history of music. Many composers composed many different kinds of music in this time period and Juon was able to synthesize stylistic elements from a wide array of this music into his own work.

The Trio-Miniaturen was transcribed for piano trio in 1901. The four movements contrast in character greatly and were extracted from a set of solo piano works he previously composed. The first movement, *Rêverie*, is somber and haunting. The harmonies are gorgeous in their complexity and Juon employs the entire low range of the piano for dramatic effect. The second movement, *Humoreske*, is a quick folk-like dance. This is followed by an elegy which is mournful and reminiscent of the first movement's darker mood. The last movement, *Danse phantastique*, starts as a slow waltz, but contains a quick and virtuosic middle section. The piece returns to the slow waltz, ending with a flourish.

### **Suite from *La Revue de Cuisine***

Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959)

Bohuslav Martinů was born in Policka, Bohemia. As a child, he developed quickly as a violinist and gave his first public concert leading the Policka string quartet in 1905. The next year the local community raised the funds to send him to the Prague Conservatory. Martinů studied there only briefly before being dismissed for "incorrigible negligence." He spent World War I in his hometown as a teacher where he pursued composition. He left for Paris and became a pupil of Albert Roussel in 1923. As the German army approached Paris during World War II, Martinů fled first to the south of France and then to the United States in 1941.

*La revue de Cuisine* (The Kitchen Review) is a ten-movement ballet Martinů composed in 1927. It received its première that November in Prague. He completed the four-movement suite in 1930, which premièred in Paris. In the ballet, the dancers portray a variety of kitchen utensils that stumble their way through an episode of kitchen life. Pot and Lid are married, but their marriage is in danger of being broken up by the suave Twirling Stick. Twirling Stick succeeds and woos Pot away from Lid. Now Dishcloth makes advances toward Lid but is challenged by Broom. By this point, however, Pot tires of Twirling Stick and longs for Lid, but

where is Lid? A large foot kicks Lid back onstage. Pot and Lid make up while the conniving Twirling Stick, flirting once again, goes off with Dishcloth.

Martinů considered *La revue de Cuisine* one of his most perfect scores. Influenced by jazz of the era, he used complex meters to generate the desired rhythmical off beats. This influence can also be seen in the instrumentation: the rich harmony and dissonance of the piano, the muted trumpet, and the use of *pizzicato* by the cello echoing the use of the double bass in jazz. Martinů brings the suite to a close with the work's opening fanfare, but it quickly turns into a melee of the previous movements. It ends with an amen-like cadence, making one wonder if Pot and Lid will remain happily married.