



Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES
Sunday, March 6, 2022 at 2:00 P.M.
John Philip Sousa Band Hall
Marine Barracks Annex
Washington, DC

Libby Larsen (b. 1950)

Corker (1977)

SSgt Harrison Burks, clarinet
SSgt Michael Hopkins, percussion

Michael Gilbertson (b. 1987)

Low Hanging Fruit (2015)

SSgt Lucia Disano, clarinet
SSgt Ryo Usami, violin
SSgt Caroline Bean Stute, cello
MSgt AnnaMaria Mottola, piano

Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

“Peace” (2020)

SSgt Lucia Disano
MSgt AnnaMaria Mottola, piano

SSgt Michael Hopkins*

20/20 (2021)

Before
Isolation
After

MSgt Steven Owen, percussion
SSgt Michael Hopkins, percussion

INTERMISSION

Will Healy (b. 1990)

Threats | Threads (2020)

SSgt Rachel Perry, soprano saxophone
SSgt Connor Mikula, alto saxophone
MSgt Gregory Ridlington, tenor saxophone
GySgt David Jenkins, baritone saxophone

Marc Mellits (b. 1966)

Smoke (2009)

SSgt Connor Mikula, saxophone
MSgt Brian Turnmire, guitar
GySgt Gerald Novak, marimba
SSgt Michael Hopkins, drum set

*Member, U.S. Marine Band

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PROGRAM NOTES

Corker (1977)

Libby Larson (b. 1950)

Libby Larsen is a Grammy award-winning composer with over 500 pieces in her catalog and has had over 50 albums recorded. She is one of the most prominent living American composers and remains in consistent demand for commissions and premières by major artists and ensembles all over the world.

Corker, composed in 1977, is a duet for clarinet and percussion (including marimba, toms, snare drum, hi-hat, and suspended cymbal). The term “corker” refers to someone or something of astonishing or excellent quality. The work is inspired by 1940’s popular music language which Larsen loves because “it speaks the rhythms and harmonic language of contemporary American English.”

Low Hanging Fruit (2015)

Michael Gilbertson (b. 1987)

The works of Michael Gilbertson have been described as “elegant” and “particularly beautiful” by the *New York Times*, “vivid, tightly woven” and “delectably subtle” by the *Baltimore Sun*, and “genuinely moving” by the *Washington Post*. Gilbertson is the composer-in-residence with the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra and is a professor at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. His music has earned five Morton Gould Awards from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers; a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters; and a Broadcast Music Incorporated Student Composer Award. He was one of three finalists for the 2018 Pulitzer Prize in music, for his composition *Quartet*. Gilbertson’s works have been programmed by several major orchestras, including the Minnesota Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Washington National Opera, San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, and the Grand Rapids Symphony; wind ensembles such as “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band; and professional choirs, including Musica Sacra, The Crossing, and The Esoterics. He has enjoyed an ongoing relationship with his hometown orchestra, the Dubuque Symphony in Iowa, which has performed many of his works over the years. In 2009, Gilbertson founded an annual music festival, ChamberFest Dubuque, which brings young classical artists to the area for concerts and educational outreach.

Low Hanging Fruit was commissioned by the Copland House during Gilbertson’s residency there in 2015. Gilbertson was inspired by Copland’s work, *In the Beginning*, which is a choral representation of the creation story. Gilbertson writes, “Inspired by Genesis, *Low Hanging Fruit* attempts to capture the essence of Temptation.”

“Peace” (2020)

Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

A native of New York City, Jessie Montgomery grew up in the 1980s surrounded by art and activism during a transitional time in the city’s history. She began her early violin studies at the Third Street Music School Settlement. She went on to study at the Julliard School and New York University and is currently a graduate fellow at Princeton University in New Jersey. Notable among her accomplishments is her selection by the New York Philharmonic as a featured composer for their Project 19 initiative, which celebrates the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment that finally enacted equal voting rights for women. Since 1999, Montgomery has worked on various initiatives with the Sphinx Organization, whose goal is to promote the careers of young Black and Latinx string players. She is currently the composer-in-residence for the Sphinx Virtuosi, the organization’s professional touring ensemble.

“Peace” was originally written for violin and piano, commissioned by Victoria Robey OBE for Elena Urioste and Tom Poster. This piece was premièred by Urioste and Poster as part of #UriPosteJukeBox, a series of recording projects created by the duo beginning in March 2020 as “a way to keep their minds sharp, fingers busy, and community smiling during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.” Montgomery drew her inspiration for this piece from her own experience during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, writing:

Written just a month after the Great Sadness of the first quarantine orders due to COVID-19, facing the shock felt by the whole globe as well as personal crisis, I find myself struggling to define what actually brings me joy. And 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.

20/20 (2021)

SSgt Michael Hopkins*

Staff Sergeant Michael Hopkins joined “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band as a percussionist in 2018. He composed *20/20* in the early months of 2021 to grapple with the unprecedented events of the previous year. *20/20* is scored for two percussionists, each with four drums: the first percussionist plays a snare drum, two bongos, and a low tom, and the second percussionist plays a field drum, two congas, and a bass drum. Staff Sgt. Hopkins writes the following about his work:

20/20 depicts views of the past, present, and future during the year 2020. The first movement, “Before,” recalls grander and more carefree times, when life was full of color and possibility. The second movement, “Isolation,” portrays the emotional experience of suddenly entering and indefinitely enduring isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The final movement, “After,” illustrates the tension between the hope for a joyful future and the fear that life might continue to spin out of control. Throughout, the piece explores the human tendency to interpret perception as reality.

Threats | Threads (2020)

Will Healy (b. 1990)

Life is full of difficult decisions. What school should I go to? Should I live in this apartment or that one? Should I become an artist or an accountant? Each one of these decisions can seem monumental along the way, and as I reach the end of my twenties I'm struck by the ways in which each decision has affected my life. Writing a piece is a bit like that too. Is this idea better than that one? Should this part come back later or have we heard enough of it already? It can feel as though a single misstep could be disastrous, leaving a puzzled, unmoved audience and a regretful composer at the premiere. *Threats | Threads* is a reflection on these decisions in life and in art. Certain ideas develop naturally, pulling the listener forward, while others threaten to drag the piece wildly off course.

I want to thank [Staff Sergeant] Connor James Mikula, with whom I've collaborated on four works for saxophone and performed with on many occasions, for organizing the premiere of this piece. His dedication to expanding the classical saxophone repertoire through commissions, premières, and repeat performances of new works is helping to secure an exciting and vital future for the art form. I also want to thank the Elysian Quartet and Spiro Nicolas for commissioning the piece, way back in 2018, and for their inspirational demonstrations of saxophone quartet playing and arrangements; their sound was my guide throughout the writing process.

–Will Healy

Smoke (2009)

Marc Mellits (b. 1966)

Marc Mellits' career began at age six, composing piano works for fun as a child. Today, as an associate professor of music at the University of Illinois at Chicago, his compositions have been performed by the Boston, Atlanta, and Chicago Symphonies as well as Eighth Blackbird and the Kronos Quartet. His works often feature rock-inspired rhythms, lyrical melodies, and creative orchestrations collected in miniature and contrasting movements. *Smoke*, his work for saxophones, marimba, percussion, and guitar, is certainly no exception.

Smoke was written for New Music Detroit and each part was composed for a specific performer in mind, filled with personality representative of them as a person rather than just the instrument. The piece opens with a heavy metal-sounding first movement, but is quickly juxtaposed with a lyrical and beautiful second movement. The contrast between movements continues through all eight short installments and is connected by copious popular music influences throughout.