

FORBES CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY®

School of Music

presents the

**43rd Contemporary Music Festival
Concert I**

Jessie Montgomery, *guest composer*

featuring

Synergy Virtuosi

Sunday, October 13, 2024

7 pm

Concert Hall



There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Program

The Beehive (2024)

Sam Suggs

Sam Suggs, *bass*
Ingrid Keller, *piano*

Passacaglia (2021)

Jessie Montgomery

Flutessence

Joshua Brancaleone, Beth Chandler Cahill, Daniel Esperante,
Rebecca Needham, *piccolos, flutes, alto flutes*

Sonata da chiesa (1992)

Adolphus Hailstork

- I. Exultate
- II. O Magnum Mysterium
- III. Adoro
- IV. Jubilate
- V. Agnus Dei
- VI. Dona Nobis Pacem
- VII. Exultate

Violin I: Anyango Yarbo-Davenport*, *leader*,
Caitlin Edwards*, Sylvia de la Cerna*
Violin II: Chenoa Murphy*, Maria Lorcas
Viola: Diane Phoenix-Neal*, Danielle Wiebe
Cello: Lindsey Sharpe*, Amanda Gookin
Bass: Patricia Weitzel*

15-Minute Intermission

Lyric for Strings (1990)

George Walker

Violin I: Anyango Yarbo-Davenport*, *leader*,
Caitlin Edwards*, Sylvia de la Cerna*
Violin II: Chenoa Murphy*, Maria Lorcas
Viola: Diane Phoenix-Neal*, Danielle Wiebe
Cello: Lindsey Sharpe*, Amanda Gookin
Bass: Patricia Weitzel*

Program - continued

Zoom! (2020)

Shawn Okpebholo

Violin I: Anyango Yarbo-Davenport*, *leader*,
Caitlin Edwards*, Sylvia de la Cerna*

Violin II: Chenoa Murphy*, Maria Lorcas

Viola: Diane Phoenix-Neal*, Danielle Wiebe

Cello: Lindsey Sharpe*, Amanda Gookin | *Bass:* Patricia Weitzel*
Casey Cangelosi, *percussion*
Kira Omelchenko, *conductor*

Starburst (2012)

Jessie Montgomery

Violin I: Anyango Yarbo-Davenport*, *leader*, Caitlin Edwards*,
Sylvia de la Cerna*, Khalil Turner

Violin II: Chenoa Murphy*, Maria Lorcas, Zike Qi

Viola: Diane Phoenix-Neal*, Danielle Wiebe, Micah Lee, Ana Mooney

Cello: Lindsey Sharpe*, Amanda Gookin, John Meshreky

Bass: Patricia Weitzel*
Kira Omelchenko, *conductor*

Strum (2006, rev. 2012)

Jessie Montgomery

Violin I: Anyango Yarbo-Davenport*, *leader*, Caitlin Edwards*,
Sylvia de la Cerna*, Khalil Turner

Violin II: Chenoa Murphy*, Maria Lorcas, Zike Qi

Viola: Diane Phoenix-Neal*, Danielle Wiebe,
Sunny Robertello, Elliot Drew

Cello: Lindsey Sharpe*, Amanda Gookin, John Meshreky

Bass: Patricia Weitzel*
Kira Omelchenko, *conductor*

*denotes members of Synergy Virtuosi

*This festival is made possible with the support of the JMU African, African American and
Diaspora Center, College of Arts and Letters, and the College of Visual and Performing Arts
Cultural Connections Residency Program*

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personal computers, and any other electronic devices.

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Program Notes

To read the program notes, scan the QR code below:



Biographies

Jessie Montgomery

Jessie Montgomery, Musical America's 2023 Composer of the Year, is a GRAMMY-winning, acclaimed composer, violinist, and educator whose music interweaves classical music with elements of vernacular music, improvisation, poetry, and social consciousness, making her an acute interpreter of twenty-first century American sound and experience. Her profoundly felt works have been described as "turbulent, wildly colorful and exploding with life" (The Washington Post) and are performed regularly by leading orchestras and ensembles around the world. In July 2021, she began a three-year appointment as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Mead Composer-in-Residence.

Her growing body of work includes solo, chamber, vocal, and orchestral works, as well as collaborations with distinguished choreographers and dance companies. Recent highlights include Hymn for Everyone (2021), her first commission as Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, co-commissioned by the National Symphony Orchestra and Music Academy of the West; Five Freedom Songs, a song cycle conceived with and written for Soprano Julia Bullock, for Sun Valley and Grand Teton Music Festivals, San Francisco, Kansas City, Boston and New Haven Symphony Orchestras, and the Virginia Arts Festival (2021); I was waiting for the echo of a better day, a site-specific collaboration with Bard SummerScape and Pam Tanowitz Dance (2021); Shift, Change, Turn (2019) commissioned by Orpheus and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra; and Banner (2014), written to mark the 200th anniversary of "The Star-Spangled Banner" for The Sphinx Organization and the Joyce Foundation, and presented in its UK premiere at the 2021 BBC Proms.

Montgomery's impressive range of recent premieres also includes multiple concerti – DIVIDED (2022) for cellist Thomas Mesa and Sphinx Virtuosi, Rounds for pianist Awadagin Pratt (2021), and L.E.S. Characters for violist Masumi Per Rostad (2020); BECAUSE (2021), a theatrical work for the National Symphony Orchestra adapted from the book by Mo Willems and arranged by Jannina Norpoth; I Have Something To Say (2019), for chorus, children's chorus and orchestra with text by activist playwright Robbie McCauley for Cathedral Choral Society and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; and Passacaglia (2021), a flute quartet for The National Flute Association's 49th annual convention.

Highlights of her 2022-2023 season include the world premieres of orchestral works for violinist Joshua Bell; the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; a consortium led by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra for New Music USA's Amplifying Voices program; a violin duo co-commissioned by CSO MusicNOW and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center;

Biographies - *continued*

and new settings of orchestral works by distinguished choreographer Donald Byrd for Nashville Ballet.

Future projects include a contribution to Alisa Weilerstein's *FRAGMENTS* project, a percussion quartet, an orchestral work for the New York Philharmonic, and her final commissions as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Mead Composer-in-Residence.

Montgomery has been recognized with many prestigious awards and fellowships, including the Civitella Ranieri Fellowship, the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, and the Leonard Bernstein Award from the ASCAP Foundation. She is currently Artist in Residence at the Vanderbilt University Blair School of Music, Composer in Residence at Bard College, and Professor of Violin and Composition at The New School, and, since 1999, has been affiliated with the Sphinx Organization in a variety of roles including composer-in-residence for Sphinx Virtuosi, its professional touring ensemble. A founding member of PUBLIQuartet and a former member of the Catalyst Quartet, Montgomery holds degrees from the Juilliard School and New York University and is currently a doctoral candidate in music composition at Princeton University.

Synergy Virtuosi

Anyango Yarbo-Davenport

Born and raised in Munich, Germany, violinist Anyango Yarbo-Davenport was born into the musical family of American soprano Africa Yarbo-Davenport and the late Austrian conductor Hans Peter Jillich. She performs regularly in notable venues such as Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Royal Festival Hall London, Teatro Mayor Julio Mario Santo Domingo, Mozarteum Saal Salzburg and can be heard on international TV and Radio stations like Red+, BBC, FOX26, WXXI, PBS and NPR. 2019 and 2023 Anyango was the Schwartz Artist in Residence at Emory University, the only artist in history to hold this honor twice. She also holds residencies at University of Richmond, James Madison University and Rutgers University. 2024 season highlights include guest soloist and concertmaster at THE MET in the Live Arts production of Handel: Made in America, soloist in residence with the Colour of Music Festival Orchestra Sacramento 2022–24 and Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Petersburg Symphony Orchestra. 2024/25 she will be performing the iconic violin concertos by Beethoven, Brahms, Marsalis and Price throughout USA, Latin America and Europe. Anyango's debut recording AMERICANA! (Sheva Collection UK, 2022) was released to great critical acclaim and features a collection of contemporary American music by composers Robert Aldridge (world premiere recording), Pulitzer Prize laureate Jennifer Higdon and John Corigliano with pianist Vanessa Fadiel (The Colburn School Los Angeles).

Caitlin Edwards

Caitlin Edwards is a Chicago-based multi-genre violinist, arranger, and educator from Birmingham, AL. Trained classically with a love for gospel, jazz, hip-hop, and neo-soul, she released "Exhale" (2021) and "Mere Mortals" (2023). Dedicated to amplifying Black composers, Caitlin champions their works for BIPOC musicians globally. Honors include the 2023 Grant Park Music Festival Advocate for the Arts award, 2023 Sphinx MPower Artist Grant, and the 2022 Esteemed Artist Award from the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events in Chicago. Grammy-certified for contributions to Disney's "The Lion King" and albums by John Legend and PJ Morton, she's a member of D-Composed, Ensemble Dal Niente, and Sphinx Virtuosi. Caitlin serves on the Board of Directors for the Chicago Federation of Musicians Local 10-208, uplifting the musical community within Chicago.

Biographies - *continued*

Sylvia de la Cerna

Sylvia de la Cerna is a freelance violinist in Chicago. She has been a substitute with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Grant Park Symphony. She is a founding member of the Chicago Sinfonietta. Sylvia has been a soloist with the Chicago Philharmonic Orchestra, the Chicago Chamber Orchestra and the Chicago Jazz Ensemble. Sylvia also has a passion for teaching where she has the pleasure of working with students from the south side of Chicago. Sylvia received her BM and BA degrees from Oberlin College/Conservatory and her MM from the Yale School of Music.

Chenoa Murphy

Violinist Chenoa Murphy earned her Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Violin Performance from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and pursued doctoral studies at the University of Iowa under renowned instructors such as Kurt Sassmannshaus, Paul Kantor, and Dorothy Delay. Beyond performing, she is an educator and DEI facilitator, promoting the contributions of Black classical composers. Her courses *Introduction to Black Classical Composers & Musicians*, *Black Classical Composers: The Journey Onward*, *Diversity from the Inside Out*, and her contributions to *American Suzuki Journal* highlight her advocacy work and have been well-received nationally and internationally. Currently living in Springfield, IL, she teaches gifted elementary students and holds principal positions in multiple orchestras while balancing her role as a devoted mother of two, gaining recognition for her efforts in music and education.

Maria Lorcas

Maria Lorcas began her musical studies in violin within the famous youth orchestra program "El Sistema" in her native country, Venezuela. She later received a Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Music (Violin Performance) from Duquesne and Carnegie Mellon Universities, respectively. Ms. Lorcas has significant orchestral experience, including concertmaster of the Gran Mariscal de Ayacucho Symphony and first violinist of the Simon Bolivar Symphony in Venezuela. In the U.S., she has performed with the Wheeling, Westmoreland, and Altoona Symphonies in Pennsylvania, and locally with the Shenandoah Valley Bach Festival Orchestra and various ensembles in the Charlottesville area. She has also been teaching privately and coaching string orchestras since 1993. Ms. Lorcas serves on the faculties of Eastern Mennonite University Department of Music and Eastern Mennonite Middle and High School, where she is director of orchestras.

Diane Phoenix-Neal

Violist Diane Phoenix-Neal performs nationally and internationally as a soloist and chamber artist. She is Associate Professor of Music at James Madison University and enjoys her roles as a clinician and educator. For more than twenty years, she is the principal violist, soloist and music advocate with Shenandoah Valley Bach Festival and a performing faculty member/educational associate with Eastern Music Festival. In France, she served as both the principal solo violist of l'Orchestre de Picardie and as violist of the acclaimed Joachim String Quartet. As a champion of new music composed for the viola, her performances and contemporary music projects have been featured globally, in four continents. Dr. Phoenix-Neal received her training from the Juilliard School and from University of North Carolina School of the Arts, earning her doctorate from UNC Greensboro after ten years as a performer in Europe.

Biographies - *continued*

Danielle Wiebe

Mexican-Canadian violist Danielle Wiebe Burke made her solo debut with the Calgary Civic Symphony at sixteen. The next year she enrolled at the New England Conservatory where she studied with Kim Kashkashian. She was a prizewinning finalist in the 15th annual Sphinx Competition and a quarter-finalist in the 2021 Primrose International Viola Competition. A graduate of the Yale School of Music's doctoral program, She holds the John C. Jamison Principal Viola Chair at Williamsburg Symphony and is a lecturer at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Lindsey Sharpe

Cellist Lindsey Sharpe is an active performer, teacher, and administrator based in Chicago, IL. After graduating from the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's Talent Development Program, Lindsey went on to earn degrees at the University of Michigan and Rice University. An active orchestral musician, Lindsey recently completed a three-year term with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and currently holds positions in the Sphinx Virtuosi and Chicago Sinfonietta. Lindsey has also performed alongside popular artists such as Lauryn Hill, Chance the Rapper, and Smokey Robinson. Lindsey plays a cello made in the workshop of William Harris Lee in 1994 by Gary Garavaglia.

Amanda Gookin

Praised for her "expert technical work" (The Strad), cellist Amanda Gookin "pushes Classical forward" (LA Times) and champions the future of music through the creation and bold performance of new works, and a dedication to education, culture, and community engagement. Her initiative Forward Music Project commissions new multimedia works for solo cello that elevate stories of feminine empowerment through raw performances and educational initiatives. Since its inception in 2015, FMP has commissioned 18 new works by such composers as Jessie Montgomery, Angélica Negrón, Jessica Meyer, Allison Loggins-Hull, Kamala Sankaram, and Nathalie Joachim. She has been presented by The Kennedy Center (Washington, DC), The Wallis (Los Angeles), National Sawdust (New York City), OK Electric (Tulsa, OK), Forbes Center (Harrisonburg, VA) Park Avenue Armory (New York City), and deDoelen (Rotterdam, NL). Amanda was the founder and decade-long cellist of the contemporary improvising string quartet, PUBLIQuartet. PQ was the 2017/18 Quartet-In-Residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and recipient of the 2019 Chamber Music America Visionary Award. Amanda is a sought-after public speaker on the intersections of activism and music and has made appearances on TEDxMidAtlantic, Houston Public Media, Second Inversion, and I Care If You Listen. When not behind the cello, Amanda can be found riding horses, taking ridiculous photos of her pets in costumes, learning to make pottery, and hiking any trail she can find. She is the proud player of a cello made by David Wiebe in Woodstock, NY.

Patricia Weitzel

Dr. Patricia Weitzel is the Assistant Professor of Double Bass and Chamber Music at Penn State University. She enjoys an active career as a teacher, performer, and arts administrator. Additionally, Weitzel serves as the Dean of Faculty and Artistic Affairs of the Sphinx Performance Academy, and as the Marketing Chair of the International Society of Bassists, an organization whose mission is to inspire, educate, and connect bass enthusiasts worldwide through bass performance, pedagogy, research, composition, and lutherie.

JMU School of Music Statement of Community and Belonging

Difference in identity enriches our community, fosters artistic and intellectual growth, and is vital to creating thriving venues for expression in a global world. In addition to welcoming all individuals and perspectives regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, socio-economic status, or citizenship status, we wish to make the following acknowledgements and affirmations, adapted from Americans for the Arts:

- In the United States, there are systems of power that grant privilege and access unequally such that inequity and injustice result. We resolve to educate ourselves, keep vigilant watch, and act to bring an end to systemic oppression.
- Cultural equity—which embodies values, practices, and policies that ensure all people have access to, and are represented in, the arts—is critical to the sustained engagement of music in society.
- Acknowledging and challenging our inequities and working in partnership is how we will make change happen.
- Everyone deserves equal access to a full, vibrant creative life, which is essential to a healthy and democratic society.
- The prominent presence of musicians in society can challenge inequities and encourage alternatives.



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Thank you for attending today's performance. The JMU School of Music educates the most talented students from around the world to shape the fabric of society. We are ecstatic to return to our stages to showcase the talent and hard work of our students and faculty.

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