

FORBES CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY®

School of Music

presents

Voices

Sue Barber, *bassoon*

Lori Piitz, *piano*

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

7 pm

Recital Hall



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Program

Lieder

Clara Schumann
(1819–1896)

Warum willst du and're feagen? (Rüchert) Op. 12, No. 11

Ich stand in dunklen Träumen (Heine), Op. 13, No. 1

Sie liebten sich Beide (Heine), Op. 13, No. 2

Liebeszauber (von Geibel), Op. 13, No. 3

Zinfandel (2010)

Reena Esmail
(b. 1983)

from Circadia (2002/2021)

Adrienne Albert
(b. 1941)

2. Nightfall

Intermission

Regina Caeli

Prelude and Reflections on *Regina Caeli* (1998)

Latin, anon
Nansi Carroll
(b. 1946)

Sonata for Bassoon and Piano (2025)

Margaret Brouwer
(b. 1940)

I. Andante

II. Allegro

*Commissioned by Sue Barber, Professor of Bassoon; with support from
The College of Visual and Performing Arts, James Madison University*

Program Notes

I didn't initially set out to create a thematic program but as I gathered music to compliment the Brouwer Sonata and began studying and practicing the pieces as a collection I was struck by the threads of "Voices" that run throughout the program on so many levels. Voices are reflected in the literal sense in the Schumann Lieder and plainsong Regina Caeli and the influence on the works of Carroll and Esmail. On a grander scale the uniqueness of the musical language of each composer and its connection to their personal backgrounds is another voice with influence. These composers are recognized for their work as trailblazers of their respective times in field of composition in their own special ways. I am grateful to use my playing in this way and thank my teachers who helped me find my own expressive voice. I also think about how we as artists can use our musical voices to bring joy and comfort to all who listen and use the beauty of our voices to inspire hope and strength in our world.

This collection of Lieder by virtuoso concert pianist and composer, Clara Schumann (1819-1896) is a transcription and a small representation of her overall body of composition. She was one of the most highly regarded and influential pianists in the Romantic Era. As a composer, her music has only recently enjoyed a revival in concert programming. The songs presented here were written in the years just before and after her marriage to noted pianist and composer, Robert Schumann. The marriage was not condoned by Clara's father, who was Robert's teacher. Robert and Clara were engaged in 1837 and because the union was unsupported, the couple was forced to go to the courts to be allowed to wed. Their petition was granted and they were married in September 1840. The songs embody a wide range of sentiments reflecting love, joy, things unspoken, and some sadness. They are beautifully lyrical and musical diverse.

American composer, Reena Esmail weaves together the traditions of Hindustani and Western classical music in her mature work. *Zinfandel* for solo bassoon was written on commission in 2010 with the title being stipulated as part of the commission. She says that her first piece of music, titled *Chardonnay* for solo flute (2000) was the inspiration for this commission. She notes that she hopes to write a solo woodwind piece each decade, named for a wine! Esmail writes "This piece was written at an inflection point in my life: I had just begun my journey into studying Indian classical music, and this piece was one of the first ones in which I tried to get a sense of this incredible music that ultimately became a major influence on my style. The beginning section just starts to bend towards the idea of a raag [Sanskrit for raga or something that colors your mind], both in its unique, characteristic pitch collection and in its development of melody, just barely hinting at a Hindustani aalap [An improvised, unaccompanied prelude to an Indian raga which usually lacks a steady rhythmic pulse and meter and can either be played or sung]. While writing the fast section, I held an image in my mind: a glimmer of light reflecting and refracting off the surface of the dark, rich wine. It reflects in one

place, pauses momentarily, then flits asymmetrically to appear in another place. The liquid is silent and still, but the surface is moving very delicately.”

Nightfall is the second movement of a larger three movement work for bassoon and piano written in 2002 by award winning American composer, Adrienne Albert (b.1941) and subsequently revised by the composer in 2017 and again in 2021. The title of the larger work, *Circadia*, refers to the daily pulse and cycle of activities observed by many living organisms.

Written in the wake of the horrible events of 9/11 the composer notes that “*Nightfall*, is a reflective, melancholy and brooding piece that mirrors the descent from day to night.” She indicates that *Circadia* may be performed as separate pieces or together as a three-movement work.

The plainchant *Regina Caeli* (authorship unknown) is included on this program as a companion to the following piece by Nansi Carroll and to provide a point of reference for the listener. There are simple and ornate versions of this chant that span many time periods but the oldest example in print is found in a liturgical book, dated c. 1200, at Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome but plainsong’s roots are likely much older. It was adopted by the Franciscan order, a group of friars who follow the teachings of Saint Francis of Assisi characterized by austerity (a group of impoverished travelling preachers who owned no property) and is used during the Easter season and is addressed to the blessed virgin Mary (“O queen of heaven”).

Composer Nansi (b. 1946) studied voice at the Royal Academy of Music in London, England, the Tanglewood Music Center, and Yale School of Music, where she received her Doctorate in 1982. Her principal teachers were Marjorie Thomas and Phyllis Curtin. For 25 years, she served as the Music Director of the St. Augustine catholic Student Center at the University of Florida and is currently Co-Artistic Director of A Musical Offering, which presents the Jubilus Festival Concert Series in Gainesville, FL. Carroll is active as a composer with a current catalog of over three hundred pieces for voice, chorus, and piano. Much of Carroll’s music focuses on settings of African-American Spirituals. In recent years, she has shifted her focus to creating instrumental works. *Prelude and Reflections on Regina Caeli* was composed for bassoonist Javier Rodriguez and premiered in 1999.

Distinguished American composer and educator Margaret Brouwer’s compositions are characterized by their lyricism and emotional depth. Her work has earned her widespread acclaim and numerous prestigious awards. She served as the Head of the Composition Department at the Cleveland Institute of Music from 1996 to 2008. Brouwer’s compositions have been performed by major orchestras worldwide. In recognition of her many contributions as a composer to contemporary classical music, Dr. Brouwer has received numerous awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the American Academy of Arts and letters in Music award, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, New Music USA, and the Ford Foundation. She is the founder of the Blue Streak Ensemble which was a chamber ensemble dedicated to performing the

works of living composers. Her music has been archived as the Margaret Brouwer Collections at the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts, which houses her scores, manuscripts, and many recordings. The genesis of the Sonata for Bassoon and Piano came about through my position as principal bassoon with the City Music Cleveland Chamber Orchestra through which I met and developed a friendship with the composer. The sonata was made possible through a generous commission grant from The College of Visual and Performing Arts at James Madison University. It was premiered at The International Double Reed Society Conference in June 2025 by Sue Barber and Lori Piitz.

Brouwer notes that “The Sonata for Bassoon and Piano is a study in contrasts, featuring the clear, pristine, sometimes cripes, sometimes liquid, sometimes haunting sound of the bassoon. In the Andante, the piano creates blurred, murmuring clouds of sound while the bassoon floats and sings sometimes peacefully, sometimes hauntingly above and through them. In the Allegro, the bassoon’s mastery of short, crisp notes, leaping around the spectrum of high and low registers is on display. The bassoon and piano speedily chase each other through the music, often in a lively repartee. In a middle section, the bassoon wends its way above, below, and through the mass of somewhat menacing clouds of sound created by the piano.”

Biographies

Sue Barber serves as professor of bassoon at James Madison University and as artist-faculty at the Brevard Music Festival. An active freelance bassoonist, she performs with The City Music Cleveland Chamber Orchestra, and North Charleston Pops! Orchestra. She has also performed regionally with Opera on The James, the Richmond Symphony Orchestra, the Roanoke Symphony, and Opera Roanoke. She has also performed and presented master classes throughout the United States, Europe, Brazil, and China. She has also served as a visiting professor at The Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, teaching applied bassoon and presenting master classes.

An active solo and chamber musician, past performances and presentations include events at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, International Double Reed Society Conventions, Virginia Music Educator's Annual Conferences, The Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, The Meg Quigley Vivaldi Competition and Bassoon Symposium, the International Alliance for Women in Music's Annual Concert of Chamber Music by Women at the national Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC, and The National Flute Association Conventions in Washington, DC and New York, New York. She has also appeared numerous times as a soloist and chamber musician at The Brevard Music Festival. She is a founding member of The Friendly City Chamber Players, establish in 2025, a classical chamber music ensemble working to create a new classical experience for both the performer and listener.

An orchestral musician, Sue has performed with many of the leading artists of our time in noted venues such as The John F. Kennedy center for the Performing Arts, Carnegie Hall, and Lincoln Center. She is currently principal bassoon of the City Music Cleveland Chamber Orchestra and associate principal bassoon of the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, principal bassoon of the Natchez opera and Acadiana Symphony Orchestra, principal bassoon of The Hartford Symphony Orchestra and the Connecticut Opera, and The Sarasota Opera. Internationally, she served as assistant principal bassoon of Orquesta Sinfonica de Galicia (Spain). She has also appeared with the New Haven Symphony, Rhode Island Philharmonic, New World Symphony, Florida West Coast Symphony Orchestra (Sarasota), Santa Fe Chamber Orchestra, and participated in the National Repertory Orchestra Festival, and the Banff and Sarasota Chamber Music Festivals.

Sue earned a Bachelor of Music degree in Bassoon Performance from the Crane School of Music in Potsdam in New York, a Master of Music degree from The Julliard School in New York, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Louisiana State University.

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