



HANCHER AUDITORIUM

PUBLIQUARTET
AND
JESSIE
MONTGOMERY

Presented in collaboration with the
University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program

Thursday, November 21, 2024

7:30 p.m.

Hancher Auditorium

IOWA

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HANCHER EVENT PARTNERS

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PUBLIQUARTET AND JESSIE MONTGOMERY

Thursday, November 21, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.

Hancher Auditorium, the University of Iowa

The Auditorium / Hadley Stage / Onstage Seating

Jessie

MONTGOMERY

Musings for two violins

Introduction

Initiation Song

Hymn

Courrante

The Swallow

Vivo

Jessie Montgomery and Curtis Stewart, violins

Rhapsody No. 1 for solo violin

Jessie Montgomery, violin

Voodoo Dolls

PUBLIQuartet

Break Away

Lilting

Songbird

Smoke

Quick Pass

Break Away

PUBLIQuartet

Strum for string quartet

PUBLIQuartet

PROGRAM NOTES

"Music is my connection to the world. It guides me to understand my place in relation to others and challenges me to make clear the things I do not understand. I imagine that music is a meeting place at which all people can converse about their unique differences and common stories."

– Jessie Montgomery

JESSIE MONTGOMERY

BORN December 8, 1981, New York City

Musings for Two Violins

WORK COMPOSED: 2023. Commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center for violinists Paul Huang and Danbi Um.

WORLD PREMIERE: Montgomery and Rachel Barton Pine gave the first performance on April 24, 2023, at Symphony Center in Chicago.

"Musings for Two Violins is designed as a series of short movements inspired by the *44 Duos for Two Violins* by Béla Bartók—a piece we violinists tend to revisit throughout life because of its nimble nature and programmatic effect," writes Montgomery. "I also wanted to pay homage to some of my favorite composers of string music, so that each movement is inspired by a different composer: J.S. Bach, Paul Hindemith, Antonio Vivaldi, Darius Milhaud, and references to my own *Duo for Violin and Cello* throughout. Each movement is like a passing whim, although distinct in character."

The warm texture of the Introduction, thanks to Montgomery's writing multiple stops for each instrument, features a layered, rich sound unexpected from just two violins. Montgomery's Bach-flavored counterpoint "initiates" both players and listeners into the elegant sparseness of two instruments in dialogue. The Hymn's introverted, solitary sound is like a mini elegy, while the Courante's bluesy lines bring a contemporary feel to a Baroque dance. Energy and suggestions of flight lift the last two movements off the page and out into the world.

Rhapsody No. 1 for solo violin

WORK COMPOSED: 2014

WORLD PREMIERE: In June 2014, Montgomery gave the first performance at the Cornelia Street Café in New York City.

“Rhapsody No. 1 is the first solo violin piece I wrote for myself,” Montgomery writes. “It draws on inspiration from the Eugène Ysaÿe solo violin works and is intended to serve as both an etude and a stand-alone work. This piece is intended to be part of a set of 6 solo violin works, each of which will be dedicated to a different contemporary violinist, and inspired by an historical composer.”

This episodic work requires a variety of non-traditional, or extended, techniques from the performer, including *sul ponticello* (playing near the bridge of the violin, which creates a buzzy, nasal sound). Montgomery also contrasts single notes with passages of double-stops, and melodies feature the sharp spikiness of close dissonant intervals alongside the luxuriant sweep of conventional consonant harmonies.

Voodoo Dolls for string quartet

WORK COMPOSED: 2008. Commissioned by JUMP! Dance Company of Rhode Island

WORLD PREMIERE: June 2008, by the Providence String Quartet at The Carriage House in Providence, RI.

Montgomery writes, “*Voodoo Dolls* was commissioned in 2008 and choreographed by the JUMP! Dance Company of Rhode Island, a collaborative work among their faculty and students. The choreography was a suite of dances, each one representing a different traditional children’s doll: Russian dolls, marionettes, rag dolls, Barbie, voodoo dolls ... The piece is influenced by west African drumming patterns and lyrical chant motives, all of which feature highlights of improvisation within the ensemble.”

In a review for ICareIfYouListen.com, Donna Lee Davidson observed, “Exceptional in this piece was the movement between and meshing of quick, staccato articulations and sliding pitch bends, which gave the music a visceral quality that sat naturally in the body, trapping the listener in its dissonance.”

PROGRAM NOTES

Break Away

WORK COMPOSED: 2013. *Break Away* was written for PUBLIQuartet for a premiere at the Music of Now festival at Symphony Space.

WORLD PREMIERE: PUBLIQuartet gave the first performance in February 2013, at Symphony Space in New York City.

"Interpretative freedom is a hallmark of Montgomery's 2013 string quartet *Break Away*," writes Frank J. Oteri for NewmusicUSA.org, "a work she created expressly for the PUBLIQuartet, which she had previously been a member of when the quartet first formed, since the group is equally adept at performing standard repertoire, newly commissioned works, and open-form improv. Ironically, it was inspired by the group's performances of the Five Movements for String Quartet by Anton Webern, a composer revered as the spiritual forefather of total serialism, a compositional approach that tends to eschew a great degree of performance variance."

In her own program note, Montgomery writes, "*Break Away* ... was born out of a series of improvisations that PUBLIQuartet was working on while in residency at the Banff Centre, where we formed a suite of short pieces riffing on several different styles of music from hip-hop to electronica to twentieth-century modern. Woven among some of my own chosen specific imagery, I adapted some of the techniques from that suite into this five-movement work.

"The score calls on the quartet to both play with and 'break away' from the score at various points, thereby attempting a seamless dialogue between the written score and the whims of the quartet, in which the piece takes on further transformation at each performance.

"The first movement, *Lilting*, is an homage to Anton Webern with a focus on gestural dialogue. The second movement, *Songbird*, is an image of an individual's voice trying to emerge against a harsh facade and includes the first improvised passages in the work. The third movement, *Smoke*, is loosely based on the form of a jazz tune of my own design. The fourth movement, *Quick Pass*, serves as a transition to the final movement *Break Away*, in which the quartet incorporates its most open improvised sections."

Strum

WORK COMPOSED: 2006 for string quartet; rev. 2008. Commissioned by Community MusicWorks for the Providence String Quartet in Providence, RI.

WORLD PREMIERE: April 2006

Strum is an early work, written when Montgomery was 25; it is one of her most frequently performed compositions. A New York native, Montgomery began composing at age 11, but didn't begin to explore composition seriously as a career path until her mid-20s; prior to *Strum*, Montgomery thought of herself primarily as a violinist. "*Strum* was the first piece I wrote on commission for Community MusicWorks and the Providence String Quartet," Montgomery recalled in an interview. "They asked me to write this piece for a concert that included the Schubert Cello Quintet. *Strum* emerged naturally; I didn't have a purpose in mind, but I started with that pizzicato riff that goes all the way through, which I came up with during a rehearsal of Dvořák's American Quartet ... when you are in rehearsal, you're not supposed to be fiddling around with your instrument, but I happened to be fiddling around and I thought, 'That's kind of cool!' *Strum* was meant to be something fun; I think it's important to approach writing from a place of whimsy and not really knowing what's going to come, and to find an expression of release. *Strum* was like that because I really didn't know what I was doing and it took me a long time to write—six months."

The wide-open sound of *Strum* evokes both joy and possibility. In her own program notes, Montgomery wrote, "*Strum* is the culminating result of several versions of a string quintet I wrote in 2006. It was originally written for the Providence String Quartet and guests of Community MusicWorks Players, then arranged for string quartet in 2008 with several small revisions. In 2012 the piece underwent its final revisions with a rewrite of both the introduction and the ending for the Catalyst Quartet in a performance celebrating the 15th annual Sphinx Competition.

"Originally conceived for the formation of a cello quintet, the voicing is often spread wide over the ensemble, giving the music an expansive quality of sound. Within *Strum* I utilized *texture motives*, layers of rhythmic or harmonic ostinati that string together to form a bed of sound for melodies to weave in and out. The strumming pizzicato serves as a texture motive and the primary driving rhythmic underpinning of the piece. Drawing on American folk idioms and the spirit of dance and movement, the piece has a kind of narrative that begins with fleeting nostalgia and transforms into ecstatic celebration."

PROGRAM NOTES

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classicalmusicprogramnotes.com

Elizabeth Schwartz is a musician, writer, and music historian based in Portland, OR. She has been a program annotator for more than 25 years, and writes for ensembles and festivals across the United States, as well as internationally. Ms. Schwartz has also contributed to NPR's *Performance Today*, (now heard on American Public Media).

JESSIE MONTGOMERY

Jessie Montgomery 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 June 2024, she concluded a three-year appointment as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s Mead Composer-in-Residence.

Montgomery’s music contains a breadth of musical depictions of the human experience—from statements on social justice themes, to the Black diasporic experience and its foundation in American music, to wistful adorations and playful spontaneity—reflective of her deeply rooted experience as a classical violinist and child of the radical NYC arts community of the 1980s and ‘90s. From choral-symphonic works such as *I Have Something To Say* (2019), to her more intimate solo instrumental works, she presents a fresh perspective on the contemporary concert music experience.



As stated by San Francisco’s NPR station KQED in response to her Grammy-winning work *Rounds* (2021), “this is what classical music needs in 2024.” Montgomery is a highly engaged collaborator with performing musicians, composers, choreographers, playwrights, poets, and visual artists alike. Recent collaborations include a recording and touring project with Third Coast Percussion including commissioned and adapted works and her performance of the Lou Harrison violin concerto; an ongoing collaboration with choreographer Pam Tanowitz has led to several of her concert works being choreographed with major dance companies across the U.S. including the Nashville Ballet and the Miami Ballet. Her interest in improvisation and collective music-making has led to the development of her band The Everything Band which comprises eight composer-performers of varied stylistic backgrounds, including her long-time collaborator, bassist Eleonore Oppenheim, with whom she created the genre-bending improv duo big

dog little dog. She is also a founding member of the Blacknificent 7, a composers collective focused on presenting and supporting the works of Black composers through concert curation, scholarship, and mentorship.

At the heart of Montgomery's work is a deep sense of community enrichment and a desire to create opportunities for young artists. During her tenure at the Chicago Symphony, she began the Young Composers Initiative which supports high school-aged youth in creating and presenting their works, including regular tutorials, reading sessions, and public performances. Her curatorial work engages a diverse community of concertgoers and aims to highlight the works of underrepresented composers in an effort to broaden audience experiences in classical music spaces.

Her growing body of work includes solo, chamber, vocal, and orchestral works, as well as an opera in development with Lincoln Center Live and The Metropolitan Opera which explores family histories and the impact of her mother, playwright and actress Robbie McCauley, on the telling of American historical narratives. Her music has been heard on global stages across the U.S., Canada, Central America, Europe, and Asia, from the Hong Kong Cultural Center, to the BBC Proms, Elbphilharmonie, Hollywood Bowl and Carnegie Hall. Recent highlights include *The Song of Nzingha* (2024) as part of the multi-movement *African Queens* work composed by the Blacknificent 7; *Procession* (2024), a percussion

concerto written for the principal percussionist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cynthia Yeh; "Space" (2023) as part of the *Elements* project, commissioned and performed by violinist Joshua Bell; *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); and *I was waiting for the echo of a better day*, a site-specific collaboration with Bard SummerScape and Pam Tanowitz Dance (2021).

Montgomery has been recognized with many prestigious awards and fellowships, including the Civitella Ranieri Fellowship, the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, the Leonard Bernstein Award from the ASCAP Foundation, and being named Musical America's 2023 Composer of the Year. Since 1999, she 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.

For more information visit jessiemontgomery.com.

PUBLIQUARTET

Applauded by *The Washington Post* as “a perfect encapsulation of today’s trends in chamber music,” and by *The New Yorker* as “independent-minded,” multi-Grammy-nominated PUBLIQuartet is an improvising string quartet whose repertoire blends genres and highlights American multiculturalism. PUBLIQuartet rose on the music scene as winner of the 2013 Concert Artists Guild New Music/New Places award, and in 2019 garnered *Chamber Music America’s* prestigious Visionary Award for outstanding and innovative approaches to contemporary classical, jazz, and world chamber music. PQ’s genre-bending programs range from newly commissioned pieces to re-imaginings of classical works featuring open-form improvisations that expand the techniques and aesthetic of the traditional string quartet.

PUBLIQuartet has held artist residencies at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and National Sawdust, and has performed everywhere from Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center to the Montréal, Newport and Detroit Jazz festivals. Their 2016 appearance on *The Colbert Report*, “Requiem for a Debate”—in which they improvised a live soundtrack to the third presidential debate—not only received over a million views, but saw *The Washington Post* declaring them “the winner ... indubitably.” Their 2023–2024 season includes



performances at USC and the Library of Congress, with the New York City Ballet, as well as tour dates with jazz artists including Hiromi, Diane Monroe, and Magos Herrera.

The quartet’s latest album, the Grammy-nominated *What Is American*, released in June 2022 on the Bright Shiny Things label, explores resonances between contemporary, blues, jazz, freely-improvised, and rock-inflected languages, all of which trace their roots back to the Black and Indigenous musical traditions that inspired Dvořák’s “American” String Quartet (op. 96). The album also includes CARDS 11-11-2020, written by Roscoe Mitchell for PUBLIQuartet, as well as works by Ornette Coleman, Rhiannon Giddens, and Vijay Iyer.

Committed to creating an inclusive performance space, supporting living composers of varying genres, and expanding the classical canon, PUBLIQuartet was the inaugural ensemble-in-residence for Carnegie Hall’s PlayUSA program in 2021–

2022, working with high school music classes across the country on a large-scale creative project called Reflections on Resilience. Their innovative PUBLIQ Access program has promoted emerging composers by presenting a wide variety of under-represented music for string quartet—from classical, jazz and electronic, to non-notated, world and improvised music. Other unique projects include MIND | THE | GAP, a series of creative projects developed by PQ that weave together different styles of music

via group composition, arranging, and improvisation. These unique works range from *Bird in Paris* (Claude Debussy meets Charlie Parker) to more recent extended works including *Reflections on Beauty*, a multimedia celebration of the life and legacy of Madam C.J. Walker featuring visual projections and narration by Walker's great-great-granddaughter, A'Lelia Bundles.

Founded in 2010, PUBLIQuartet is based in New York City.

CURTIS STEWART

VIOLIN

A New York City native and graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Stewart has performed as a soloist with the National Repertory Orchestra, in Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall. He has made chamber music appearances at Zankel Hall, and the Rochester International Jazz Festival, holding his audiences “spellbound” with his “warm, clear sound ... sparkling rhythmic energy” and “prodigious technique,” (*New Amsterdam Times, SoundWordSight*). An avid teacher, he currently teaches at the LaGuardia High School for Music & Art and Performing Arts. Curtis's eclectic background has led him to concerts in many different realms of music from MTV specials with Wyclef Jean, to stints at the Kennedy Center with the Jimmy Heath Big Band. His ensembles



PUBLIQuartet and The Mighty Third Rail perform frequently at many of New York's illustrious venues including Carnegie Hall, Symphony Space, Merkin Hall, the Cornelia Street Cafe, BAM Cafe, Lincoln Center, Nuyorican Poet's Cafe, and the Stone. Curtis has worked with today's prominent musicians including Henry Threadgill, Dick Oatts, Jason Lindner, Edmar Castañeda, Linda Oh, Chris Dingman, Dave Liebman, Matt Wilson, among many others. A

supporter and practitioner of many styles of music, Curtis is excited to continue expanding and blending all the elements of his stylistic and expressive range, developing a unique and relevant voice in New York's boundless music scene.

JANNINA NORPOTH

VIOLIN

Jannina NorpOTH made her debut as a soloist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at age 14. Since then, she has built a career as an innovative collaborative artist, performer, arranger, and educator. She has performed internationally, including appearances on the Lincoln Center "Great Performers" Series, Mostly Mozart Festival, Women of the World Festival at The Apollo Theater, The Ecstatic Music Festival, VH1's *Save the Music*, and *SNL*. She has been featured alongside acclaimed musicians James Carter, Nadia Sirota, Regina Carter, Marcus Belgrave, Jay-Z, Beyoncé, Pharrell, Stevie Wonder, Anita Baker, My Brightest Diamond, and many others. Ms. NorpOTH is a sought-after arranger in the classical and non-classical worlds. Praised by *Strad Magazine* for her ability to write a transcription "so natural sounding that it could have been the



composer's original version recent commissions include an adaptation of Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha* for the Volcano Theatre Company in Toronto and Dvořák's *American Suite* for Trinity Wall Street's Twelfth Night Festival. Ms. NorpOTH has arranged/recorded strings for Grammy-winning producers Jerry "Wonda" Duplessis and Bryce Goggin and for artists Keyshia Cole, Keri Hilson, Black Dahlia Murder, Akron Family, John Legend, and her own ensembles PUBLIQuartet and HOLLANDS.

NICK REVEL

VIOLA

When Nick Revel is not touring as founding violist of the multi-Grammy–nominated PUBLIQuartet, he is composing, producing, and performing original solo pieces, audio engineering ensembles of various shapes and sizes, and teaching students of all ages. His recent compositions have won the Red Jasper Award Shortlist, the Catalyst Quartet’s CQ Minute competition, fivebyfive’s 2020 call for original scores, and placement on top podcasts like Doug Fearn’s *My Take on Music Recording*. These works appear on his newest album, *Dream Collider* (Sapphire Records),



available on all major platforms. He has served as artistic and executive director of the Norwalk Youth Chamber Ensembles, co-creator of the New York String Studio, and on the board of the Seabury Academy of Music and the Arts in Norwalk, CT.

HAMILTON BERRY

CELLO

Cellist Hamilton Berry's eclectic taste has led him to pursue a variety of performing, arranging, and composing projects in the New York area and beyond. A member of PUBLIQuartet, Orchestra of St. Luke's, Toomai String Quintet, Founders, and The Con Brio Ensemble, Hamilton has also performed with Ensemble Connect, Decoda, NOVUS NY, and A Far Cry, and has collaborated with artists including Vampire Weekend, Rostam, Björk, Debbie Harry, FUN., Léa Freire, Hiromi, Magos Herrera, Diane Monroe, and Becca Stevens. He is assistant program director of the Musicambia program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility, where he teaches string students. A Nashville native, Hamilton has played at the Montréal Jazz, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Olympic, and Yellow Barn music festivals. In 2009, he



received a Master of Music from the Juilliard School, where he studied with Timothy Eddy; his previous teachers include Felix Wang, Grace Bahng, and Anne Williams. During his fellowship with Ensemble Connect—a program of Carnegie Hall, Juilliard, and the Weill Music Institute in partnership with the New York City Department of Education—Hamilton was a visiting teaching artist at IS61 on Staten Island.

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COMING SOON

November

OLD CROW MEDICINE SHOW

Saturday, November 23 / 7:30 p.m.

December

JACK QUARTET

Wednesday, December 4 / 7:30 p.m.

DEAR EVAN HANSEN

Friday, December 6 / 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 7 / 2:00 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 8 / 2:00 p.m.

CLUB HANCHER:

CÉCILE McLORIN SALVANT

AND SULLIVAN FORTNER

Sunday, December 15 / 6:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.

January

HADESTOWN

Friday, January 24 / 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 25 / 2:00 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 26 / 2:00 p.m.

TWYLA THARP DANCE

FEATURING THIRD COAST PERCUSSION

Wednesday, January 29 / 7:30 p.m.

CLUB HANCHER:

LEYLA McCALLA

Friday, January 31 / 7:00 p.m. & 9:00 p.m.

February

CLUB HANCHER:

CHIEF XIAN ATUNDE ADJUAH (FORMERLY CHRISTIAN SCOTT)

Saturday, February 1 / 7:00 p.m. & 9:00 p.m.

EMANUEL AX AND ANTHONY McGILL

Saturday, February 8 / 7:30 p.m.

THE CROSSING FEATURING KANTOREI

DAVID LANG'S POOR HYMNAL

Thursday, February 13 / 7:30 p.m.

CLUB HANCHER:

CYRILLE AIMÉE

Saturday, February 15 / 7:00 p.m. & 9:00 p.m.

SHUMANN QUARTET

Sunday, February 16 / 7:30 p.m.

CLUB HANCHER:

ZAINAB JOHNSON

Thursday, February 20 / 7:30 p.m.

BEN LAMAR GAY ENSEMBLE

AND ISAIAH COLLIER & THE CHOSEN FEW

FEATURING JIMETTA ROSE

Saturday, February 22 / 6:00 p.m.

SHAMEL PITTS I TRIBE

TOUCH OF RED

Friday & Saturday, February 28 & March 1 / 7:30 p.m.

March

MEAN GIRLS

Friday, March 7 / 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 8 / 2:00 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 9 / 2:00 p.m.

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Tuesday, March 11 / 7:30 p.m.

JERUSALEM QUARTET

Thursday, March 27 / 6:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.

