

Composers Forum

Sunday, May 18, 2025 at 7:30pm
Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Center

Pacific Lutheran University
The College of Professional Studies and School of Music, Theatre & Dance present

Composers Forum

featuring students of
Korine Fujiwara, Justin J. Murphy-Mancini, and Dawn Sonntag

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Welcome to Lagerquist Concert Hall.
Please disable the audible signal on all watches and cellular phones for the duration of the concert.
Use of cameras, recording equipment, and all digital devices is not permitted in the concert hall.

PROGRAM

The Frozen Cave (2024) **Benjamin Noble Coats**
Benjamin Noble Coats, *piano*

The Frozen Cave was written for solo piano as an assignment in Music Theory IV. The goal of the assignment was to compose a piece using the compositional techniques of the Impressionist movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The pioneers of this style of music were Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. Funny enough, both Ravel and Debussy did not enjoy this label of Impressionism on their music. This piece was heavily influenced by Debussy's *The Sunken Cathedral*. The piece has no tonal center, focusing more on the timbre and weird harmonies using the pentatonic scale for the main motif.

Thalassa (2024) **Courtney Stark**
Courtney Stark, *piano*

Thalassa was written for a collection of solo piano pieces. The collection focuses on using scales that are not major or minor. This piece starts in the whole tone scale, but gradually shifts through harmonic minor to almost Phrygian. The introduction was inspired by Debussy's *Nuages* and *Clair de Lune*, and the main melody was inspired by Shostakovich's *Prelude in E Minor*. The wide chord voicings and subtle syncopations were greatly inspired by Copland's *Four Piano Blues*. The name of this piece comes from one of Neptune's moons, which was named after the Greek goddess of the sea. The large chords used throughout the piece represent the mysteries and emptiness of the ocean and outer space.

Tango for a Noir Detective (2024) **Courtney Stark**
Courtney Stark, *piano*

Tango for a Noir Detective is another piece from a solo piano collection. The piece is in harmonic minor with a raised 4th scale degree, which is intended to add extra dissonance to the piece. Astor Piazzolla's *Ortono Porteno* and *Libertango* were a big inspiration for this piece. There are references to a few other composers throughout the piece such as Ignacio Cervantes and Enrique Granados. The sneaky and curious feeling of the tango is reminiscent of 1940's noir films about a private investigator solving a mystery. This piece was originally written as an accordion and harpsichord duet, but changed to solo piano due to the dynamic limitations of the accordion and harpsichord.

A Minor Adventure (2025) **Nathaniel Bratcher**
Janelle Barlow, *violin* • Alyson Rake, *viola* • Marisa Robbins, *cello*

A Minor Adventure was written for my final in Class Composition II. In this piece, I explore a plethora of ideas in A minor, hence the name *A Minor Adventure*. I move from idea to idea in quick succession, with small transition periods between the new ideas, though many are also quick and abrupt. My hope with this was to create a fun experience for not only the listeners but the performers as well.

Triple M Waltz (2025)..... **Elliot Capron**
Nathaniel Bratcher, Ellen Coburn, and Marisa Robbins, *cellos*

Triple M Waltz is a piece dedicated to the composer's three favorite cellists: her best friend, Marisa Robbins; her private instructor, Mara Finkelstein; and of course, the famous cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. The piece features interaction between the three cellos, switching between main roles and accompaniment figures.

Jack's Magical Mishap (2024)..... **Robert Cope-Powell**
Caitlyn Carnahan, *soprano* • Dane Schmidt, *tenor* • Marchella Fogg, *piano*

Jack's Magical Mishap was written as part of my senior capstone. This song is a full scene, which starts my interpretation of the classic story of Jack and the Beanstalk. This scene was my first foray into the process of storytelling through multiple pieces, and it works well. It is a joyful, jaunty song that starts the whole fiasco off. Simply put, Jack is bad at handling money, because who would trade a whole cow for five beans, no matter how magical they may be.

The Giant's Song (2025)..... **Robert Cope-Powell**
Robert Cope-Powell, *baritone* • Marchella Fogg, *piano*

The Giant's Song is a song from the Giant in Jack and the Beanstalk. This song is about loneliness, and how a person will cling to the one life raft they have in their life. The song switches from happiness, to sadness, to mania, and depression; but throughout it all, his goose is always there for him.

The Jester's Final Dance (2025) **Ashton Allen**
Kera Buckmaster, Kaitlynn Koehn, Kade Levien, Eli Lockhart, and Isis Romero-Chavez, *flutes*

The Jester's Final Dance tells the tale of the jester who has finally had enough. While the piece mainly has a happy theme, it slowly turns sinister.

Pizz. In the Pit (2025) **Marisa Robbins**
Nathaniel Bratcher, Elliot Capron, and Ellen Coburn, *cellos*

Pizz. in the Pit is a minimalist cello trio born from casual pizzicato experimentation in the opera pit. The first cello maintains a steady, unchanging groove throughout, while the second phases through shifting rhythmic patterns, inspired by Steve Reich's *Clapping Music*. In contrast, the third cello explores timbre and space through structured improvisation, drawing from a set of extended techniques – harmonics, bowing on the wolf eliminator, and more. The result is a conversation between pulse and texture, precision and spontaneity.

Monolith (2025)..... **Devin Bianchi-Rivera**
Lola Chargualaf, Sabien Kinchlow-McConnaughey, Max Minjares, and Sarah Zundel, *trombones*

Monolith is a piece inspired by the strong and varied musical sounds of the trombone. The powerful open fifths and octaves that punctuate changing but constant phrases show off the power of both the instrument's high and low registers, with each player getting their chance to shine. Much as the name suggests, the piece has a very clear and "monolithic" identity, which is emphasized by its stately and never-changing tempo.

when you are listening late at night, you may think the band are not quite right,Makayla Lu but they are, they just play it like that (2025)

Courtney Lazzarini, *alto saxophone* • Joshua Green, *euphonium* • Natalia Parmly, *piano*

when you are listening late at night, you may think the band are not quite right, but they are, they just play it like that is inspired by the Beatles' animated feature film *Yellow Submarine*.

Grove of the Patriarchs (2025) Benjamin Noble Coats

Ellen Coburn, *flute* • Sara Atwood, *oboe* • Grace Karns, *bassoon* • Ben Hegge, *marimba*

Grove of the Patriarchs was written for a quartet consisting of flute, oboe, bassoon, and marimba. This piece was composed as the final assignment in Class Composition II. This piece was inspired and named after the hike "Grove of the Patriarchs," which is located in Mt. Rainier National Park. This short hike is one of my favorites and shows off a beautiful old growth forest, which consists of extremely old, wide, and undisturbed Douglas fir, silver fir, hemlock, and Western red cedar trees. These trees are massive, with some getting as large as 40 feet wide and 300 feet tall. This piece tries to capture this breathtaking hike and childlike wonder felt throughout this hike with scenes of trees, brush, birds, and the iconic suspension bridge.

About the Composers and Performers

Sara Atwood is a junior criminal justice major at PLU. She is from Elk Grove, California. She plays oboe and English horn for the PLU Wind Ensemble and Symphony Orchestra.

Ashton Allen is a fourth-year music major and theatre minor from Bonney Lake, Washington. He has participated in Concert Band, Steel Band, and Sølrvinden Flute Ensemble during his time here in the PLU School of Music, Theatre & Dance. After graduation Ashton plans to explore more about composition and arrangements, and plans to publish some of his own works such as *Social Path*, a marching band arrangement.

Janelle Barlow is a second-year transfer student from Seattle, Washington. She has played the violin since the fourth grade, and is currently studying with Professor Korine Fujiwara. Outside of the PLU Symphony Orchestra, you can find her playing mariachi music across the Seattle-Tacoma area. She is majoring in music education, with the goal of becoming a mariachi teacher.

Devin Bianchi-Rivera is a third-year music performance major with an emphasis in trumpet and is currently a member of the PLU Wind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, and brass quintet. He is relatively new to composing, and has enjoyed the process so far.

Nathaniel Bratcher is a senior at PLU from Tacoma, Washington who is pursuing a bachelor's in music and arts as well as a minor in statistics. He has played the cello for eleven years and studies with Professor Mara Finklestein.

Kera Buckmaster is a sophomore psychology major at PLU with a scholarship in music. She has been in Concert Band, Sølrvinden Flute Ensemble, and Classmen Cabaret. She is very passionate about music and yoyoing. She loves being on stage, and is very excited to play the alto flute. She has been playing the flute for nine years, and is looking forward to playing for the rest of eternity.

Elliot Capron is a senior majoring in music education. She has played the cello for ten years and currently studies with Professor Mara Finkelstein. Elliot enjoys score study, painting, and Lindy hop.

Caitlyn Carnahan is a graduating senior, who studies vocal performance with Professor Janeanne Houston.

Lola Chargualaf is a first-year environmental studies major at PLU, and currently plays the trombone as a member of the PLU Wind Ensemble and trombone choir.

Benjamin Noble Coats is a junior composition major. He currently studies composition with Professor Korine Fujiwara and has also studied composition with Dr. Gina Gillie and Professor Lauren Kott. His main instrument is the French horn, but he also plays many other instruments in many ensembles. He enjoys writing music for chamber ensembles, wind ensembles, and electronic music.

Ellen Coburn is a senior from Boise, Idaho, completing her Bachelor of Musical Arts with minors in printing and publishing arts and history. She has been playing flute for thirteen years and cello for ten years and studies with Dr. Jennifer Rhyne and Professor Mara Finkelstein. At PLU, she plays flute in the Wind Ensemble, Sølrvinden Flute Ensemble, and cello in the University Symphony Orchestra, and chamber groups. This fall, Ellen is starting her certification in band instrument repair at Renton Technical College.

Robert Cope-Powell is a senior music major. He currently studies with Dr. Dawn Sonntag and Dr. Glenn Guhr. He has sung in choirs and ensembles for close to ten years, but recently started composing. Since starting to compose, he has fallen in love with creating music and is working towards making a full opera and getting into graduate school for composition.

Marcella Fogg is a piano and trombone teacher with the Tacoma Music Academy. She graduated with a double degree in piano and trombone performance from California State University Sacramento and has performed with many musical groups over the years, including, at present, the Brazil Life group in Seattle.

Joshua Green is a second-year music education student at PLU. He plays the euphonium in the Wind Ensemble, the trombone in the Symphony Orchestra, and the trumpet in PLU's Mariachi Del Pacifico. He comes from the White River School District and intends on teaching music in public schools for years to come.

Ben Hegge is a freshman percussion performance major at PLU. He is from Steilacoom, Washington. He plays with the PLU Wind Ensemble, Percussion Ensemble, and Steel Band.

Grace Karns is a criminal justice major at PLU and graduated at the end of the Fall 2025 semester. She is from Edgewood, Washington. She plays with the PLU Wind Ensemble and bassoon ensemble.

Sabien Kinchlow-McConnaughey is a third-year music performance major at PLU with an emphasis in trombone and is currently a member of the PLU Wind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, trombone choir, and brass quintet.

Kaitlynn Koehn is a music education major with a secondary band focus. She has been in Concert Band on flute and piccolo, PLU Symphony Orchestra on the violin, University Singers as an alto, and Sølrvinden Flute Ensemble. She enjoys making music with her friends, and her job on campus so her friends get good drinks.

Courtney Lazzarini is a first-year music education student. She plays alto saxophone in the University Concert Band as well as in jazz combos. She graduated from Graham-Kapowsin High School in Graham, Washington and plans on becoming a high school band teacher.

Kade Levien is originally from Monroe, Washington, and is currently a third-year student at PLU. He is pursuing a Bachelor of Music in flute performance along with a Bachelor of Science in computer science. Kade has been playing the flute since the sixth grade and is an active member of the PLU Symphony Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, wind chamber ensemble, jazz combo, and the Sølrvinden Flute Ensemble. In addition to his dedication to music, he studies piano recreationally and enjoys reading, video games, and anime. After college, he plans to pursue a career in software development.

Eli Lockhart is a senior music education major from Bonney Lake, Washington. Though he is primarily a guitar and saxophone player, he has also had opportunities to play flute in the PLU Wind Ensemble and Sølrvinden Flute Ensemble, studying privately with Dr. Cassie Lear and Dr. Jennifer Rhyne over the course of his degree. He is currently a student of Tracy Knoop and Brian Monroney, a teacher/board member at Jump into Music, and someone that really likes French toast.

Makayla Lu is a first-year composition major at PLU. She really likes *Yellow Submarine*.

Max Minjares is a second-year music performance major at PLU with an emphasis in trombone, and is currently a member of the PLU Wind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, trombone choir, and Symphony Orchestra.

Natalia Parmly is a plus-year student from Tacoma, Washington. She is majoring in piano performance, with a minor in business marketing, and plans to attend graduate school in the Fall. When she is not practicing, you can find her outside gardening.

Alyson Rake is a plus-year student from Helena, Montana, pursuing a major in viola performance with a minor in English writing. She has been playing viola for fourteen years and studies with Professor Korine Fujiwara. Next Fall, she'll begin her Master of Music in orchestral conducting at Oklahoma State University. When she's not practicing, she probably should be.

Marisa Robbins is a third-year student from Spanaway, Washington, double majoring in cello performance and music education with a concentration in secondary orchestra. She has been playing cello for ten years and is currently studying with Professor Mara Finkelstein. Outside of music, she enjoys drawing portraits.

Isis Romero-Chavez is a sophomore majoring in psychology with minors in music and Hispanic studies. She has been an active member of PLU's Concert Band and Sølvvinden Flute Ensemble. She loves learning about the wonders of the universe through her astronomy class, and also enjoys performing which allows her to step out of her comfort zone.

Dane Schmidt is a graduating voice student of Dr. Glenn Guhr, majoring in music education with a choral focus.

Courtney Stark is a junior composition major. She studies composition with Professor Korine Fujiwara and piano with Dr. Oksana Ejokina. She enjoys writing solo piano music and music for chamber ensembles. She is part of the Piano Ensemble, Steel Band, and Guitar Ensemble. She is also the 2025-26 music director and arranger for Gold Rush acapella.

Sarah Zundel is a fourth-year music education major at PLU with a focus on elementary music, and currently plays the bass trombone as a member of the PLU Wind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, Symphony Orchestra, trombone choir, and brass quintet.