

Guest Artist Recital

Emely Phelps, Piano
American Counterpoint

Thursday, October 29, 2026 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

Guest Artist Recital

Emely Phelps, Piano
American Counterpoint

Thursday, October 29, 2026 at 7:30pm
Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Center

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

Nine Preludes for Piano.....Ruth Crawford Seeger (1901-1953)

- I. Andante tranquillo*
- II. Allegro giocoso*
- III. Semplice*
- IV. Grave, mesto*
- V. Lento*
- VI. Andante mystic*
- VII. Intensivo*
- VIII. Leggiero*
- IX. Tranquillo*

Celestial Miniatures (2023) Robert McClure

- I. Io*
- II. Ganymede*
- III. Bennu*
- IV. Haumea*
- V. Eris*
- VI. Enceladus*
- VII. Voyager I*

INTERMISSION

Sky-Ocean (2025) Tyson Gholston Davis

- I. Elegantly, yet playful; improv-like (with rubato)*
- II. Contemplative, nocturnal*
- III. Shards*
- IV. Plea*

Piano Sonata Elliott Carter (1908-2012)

- I. Maestros—Legato scorrevole*
- II. Andante—Allegro giusto—Andante*

Program Notes

American Counterpoint is part of a specific artistic vision that coalesced over the past few years as I pondered my own musical and geographical identity. Celebrating the diversity and democracy of American music while drawing distinct connections between seemingly disparate styles, this program aims to weave together an Ivesian tapestry reflecting the bold individual creativity and collective resonance of the past 100 years.

For me, perhaps no one embodies the spirit of American music more than **Ruth Crawford Seeger**. Hugely impactful both as an “ultramodernist” in the 1930s and later as a transcriber of American folk songs, she is the only person I can think of whose influence is still being felt and discussed both amongst explorers and writers of intensely dissonant, complex music, and appreciators of the more direct, characterful folk idiom. Crawford’s pioneering 1931 string quartet, with its use of dissonant counterpoint, polytonality, and serialization of rhythmic and dynamics in addition to pitch, paved the way for generations of modernist composers, most notably Elliott Carter, whose work will close this program. Nonetheless, Ruth Crawford is perhaps today best-known for her work with the Lomax brothers through the Library of Congress transcribing, arranging, and preserving hundreds of American folk songs and for passing a love of that tradition to her family. Her children Mike and Peggy Seeger, and stepson Pete Seeger, were – and in Peggy’s case continue to be – prominent figures in the American folk revival, though had little knowledge of Ruth’s earlier compositional life and modernist tendencies until after her death.

Thus, the first music you will hear tonight are *Nine Preludes for Piano* by Ruth Crawford, written nearly 100 years ago but more modern in attitude and sound than anything else you will hear this evening. These are fiercely individual, forward-thinking works filled with scintillating and often mystical harmonies alongside a wildly unique virtuosity.

Robert McClure was one of the first people I met when I began teaching at Ohio University in 2019. I distinctly remember having coffee together and proposing a premieres project, in which the students in my piano lit class would partner with his composition students in the preparation of new works, an idea he enthusiastically embraced. That collaboration was a delight from the beginning, and what was a fortuitous partnership has since flourished into a collaboration of our own, as Rob wrote *Celestial Miniatures* for me in 2023. Rob’s music encapsulates so much of what I admire in him: boundless energy, purposeful turns of phrase, and a fantastic and immediately engaging mix of clarity and creativity.

Rob and I workshopped the *Celestial Miniatures* together in its initial stages, figuring out how to get his ideas into my hands, and some of the pianism in this work was partially inspired by Rob hearing me perform the Crawford *Preludes*. At times explosive, such as in its opening movement embodying a volcanic moon, the work more frequently uses pitch sets that beautifully evoke the wonder, majesty, and illumination of our universe, echoing both the mysticism of the Crawford *Preludes* and the deliberately organized aesthetic of Carter, though the language and style are notably different from both.

Excerpts from Rob’s program notes to the *Miniatures*:

The work is a set of seven miniatures with each focusing on a particular celestial body within our solar system...dwarf planets, moons, asteroids, and our own spacecraft.

1. Io, the closest of the four Galilean moons of Jupiter, is a hellish world of volcanoes, magma pools, and intense radiation...Io generates electric current that manifests itself as lightning in Jupiter’s upper atmosphere.
2. Ganymede...is the only moon with its own magnetic field. Like Earth’s magnetic field, solar particles interact with gas in the upper polar regions of the moon, producing bright and colorful aurorae.
3. Bennu is a near-Earth asteroid that is 4.5 billion years old. On October 20, 2020, the OSIRIS-REx spacecraft descended onto the asteroid to collect material, returning to Earth in September of 2023. This sample contains organic molecules similar to those that could have been involved with the start of life on Earth.
4. Haumea is a dwarf planet located in the Kuiper Belt beyond the orbit of Neptune. It has one of the fastest rotations in the solar system, with a “day” being only four hours long. This blazing speed gives the dwarf planet a warped shape similar to that of a football.
5. Eris, discovered on January 5, 2005 and named for the Greek goddess of discord, is about the same size as Pluto but three times further away from the sun...Its discovery prompted Pluto’s demotion to dwarf planet status by the International Astronomical Union in 2006, causing controversy and strife for fans of Pluto and making Eris a particularly fitting name.

6. Enceladus, one of Saturn's 146 moons...is a world that hosts an ice-covered ocean. Saturn's tidal force deforms Enceladus and is likely the culprit for one of Enceladus' unique features: geysers. ... NASA's Cassini mission to Saturn flew through one of these geyser plumes collecting information...and determined the ocean contained most of the elements necessary to support life as we know it.
7. Voyager 1 is currently the farthest object we have sent from Earth. Launched in 1977, the spacecraft and its twin, Voyager 2, were responsible for our first images and data of the Jupiter and Saturn systems (Voyager 1) and the Uranus and Neptune systems (Voyager 2). This included the moons Io, Ganymede, and Enceladus.

In 2012, Voyager 1 left the Sun's heliosphere and entered interstellar space. Since its initial objectives, Voyager 1 has been shutting down instruments to conserve power and extend the mission. Within the next ten years, Voyager 1 will lose all power to communicate with Earth. It will wander interstellar space for eternity with the hope that at some point, it is found. Carl Sagan and his team, projecting into the future, included a golden record on the spacecraft that contains sounds, languages, and music from many different cultures on Earth. This music included Bach's *WTC Book 2 Prelude and Fugue No. 1 in C*, Beethoven's first movement of the *Fifth Symphony*, and Stravinsky's "Sacrificial Dance" from the *Rite of Spring* among many others. Voyager was Earth's way of reaching out into the galaxy and searching. But, it was also our way of knowing where we are, as the now-famous picture of Earth as the "Pale Blue Dot" was taken by Voyager 1. We find ourselves in our solar system, in our galaxy as one of many celestial miniatures.

Tyson Davis (b. 2000) is a brilliant young composer who reached out to me several years ago after stumbling across my performance of Martino's *Fantasies and Impromptus*, and with whom I began a multi-year conversation over our shared love of complex modernist music. I found his writing – by turns atmospheric, jagged, and lyrical – to be compelling and colorful, and knowing that Carter is one of his favorite composers, commissioning a work from him seemed like the obvious link for this program. *Sky-Ocean*, which was premiered by me in February 2026 at Bucknell University, is a set of four piano miniatures inspired by Helen Frankenthaler's painting *Scarlati*, a work filled with a permeating cerulean blue. The pieces are brief and mostly reflective, with one spikier and almost jazzy rhythmic movement, and Tyson notes that the work includes shades of Oliver Knussen and John Coltrane.

Elliott Carter, a giant of American music across the 20th and 21st centuries who composed all the way through his 103rd year of life, is most commonly associated with works of great complexity and deliberate thorniness. Nevertheless, beneath that density of information is an underlying human expression and in putting together this program, I wanted to counteract the tendency for his music to be placed in a compartmentalized, academic realm, or to be stereotyped as emotionally distant simply because of its difficulty. Thus, Carter is here represented by his early *Piano Sonata* (1945-1946), a work which has always struck me as very "American" in sound, with open, expansive intervals and bristling energy. Often described as pantonal, this bold, acoustically-driven work uses the natural resonance of the piano and embraces both polarity (starkly contrasting tempi, characters and tonal centers), and a sense of coming together (strictly notated tempo relationships, the embracing of multiple keys as one, even – if we think of the work as opening in B - simultaneously resolving on both the dominant and tonic at the close). Thus, the form of the sonata is shaped by the ability of its languages to at times disagree and at times to reconcile, a keen observation into the challenge of the human condition and a remarkable vision for a path forward.

– Emely Phelps, August 2026

About the Performer

Pianist **Emely Phelps** embraces authenticity and creativity through her versatile career as a soloist, chamber musician, and teacher. Praised by the *Boston Globe* for her “fleet, energetic, and bright-toned” playing, Emely has given nearly 50 performances over the past two years, with recent highlights including solo recitals at Bucknell University and the University of Georgia, chamber music performances with A Far Cry and the Cassatt Quartet, Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* with the Ohio University Wind Symphony, and duo recitals with violinist Christine Harada Li, flutist Jeiran Hasan, and trombonist Lucas Borges.

Emely made her solo orchestral debut at the age of sixteen with the National Symphony Orchestra and has since been a featured concerto soloist with orchestras such as the Bismarck-Mandan Symphony Orchestra, Las Colinas Symphony Orchestra, and Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic. She has presented solo recitals throughout North America and Europe with a diverse repertoire ranging from Bach to Carter, and is a particularly passionate advocate for new music, having premiered more than a dozen compositions and worked closely with Jörg Widmann, Shulamit Ran, Lei Liang, and Richard Wernick in performances of their works. She received the Doug Davis Discretionary Award for her performance of Robert McClure’s *Celestial Miniatures* and was awarded second place in the 2023 Ernst Bacon Prize for American Music. Her first solo album, *American Counterpoint*, will be released on Navona records in November.

An in-demand collaborator, Emely has been on the faculty of the T-Town Chamber Music Festival, Icicle Creek Chamber Music Festival, Anchorage Chamber Music Festival, and Yellow Barn Young Artists Program, performs regularly with Electric Earth Concerts, and has attended numerous other chamber music festivals, including five summers at Yellow Barn and three summers at Kneisel Hall. She has appeared as a guest artist with the Borromeo String Quartet, and maintains active duo partnerships with violist Jonathan Bagg and flutist Hannah Porter Occeña. Emely recently recorded her third CD with Hannah, with previous releases including *Discovering Her Voice* and *Confluence*, and also appears on the Delos label with violinist Dawn Wohn (*Unbounded*, 2023) and on New Focus Recordings with Jonathan Bagg (*Viola Revival*, 2026), all highlighting duos by underrepresented composers.

As a founding member of Trio Cleonice, Emely spent eight years with the ensemble, performing across the United States, touring Europe - including a recital at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam - and winning second prize at the Schoenfeld International String Competition in Harbin, China. The group also served as the Graduate Piano Trio-in-Residence at New England Conservatory for three years, and from 2014-2016 curated a monthly chamber music series, Trio Cleonice and Friends, in Brookline, Massachusetts, with the aim of making chamber music an accessible and integral part of the community.

Emely is delighted to join the University of Georgia as Assistant Professor of Piano this fall, having served there for the past year in a limited-term capacity. Prior to her appointment at UGA, she was an Associate Professor of Instruction at Ohio University, where she co-chaired the keyboard division, taught applied piano, chamber music, and keyboard repertoire, and directed the graduate collaborative piano degree program. Emely has given masterclasses at numerous universities, is a frequent adjudicator for regional competitions, and been a featured presenter at the Ohio Music Teachers Association State Conference, Washington Music Teachers Association District III Conference, and Ohio University’s Piano Pedagogy Seminar.

Born in Frederick, Maryland, Emely began her piano studies with Carole Kriewaldt and Marjorie Lee before receiving her B.M. and M.M. from the Juilliard School as a student of Julian Martin. She holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts from Stony Brook University, where she studied with Christina Dahl, and a Graduate Diploma in chamber music from NEC, where she was mentored by Vivian Weilerstein during Trio Cleonice’s residency at the institution.

SEPTEMBER

- 13 Sunday, 3pm**
Faculty Recital: Erik Steighner, Saxophone & Oksana Ejokina,
Piano, free admission
- 20 Sunday, 12pm**
Faculty Recital: Vianna & Trindade, Brazilian Jazz Duo. Jennie Lee
Hansen Recital Hall, free admission
- 20 Sunday, 3pm**
Richard D. Moe Organ Recital Series: Christa Rakich, Organist

OCTOBER

- 4 Sunday, 5pm**
Evelina Bozhko, Piano – Forestine Wise Monsen Memorial
Scholarship Recital, free admission
- 7 Wednesday, 7:30pm**
Guest Artist Lecture Recital: Alejandro Cremaschi, Piano, free
admission
- 11 Sunday, 3pm**
University Wind Ensemble
- 15 Thursday, 1:45pm**
Jessica Dodge-Overstreet Saxophone Masterclass. Mary Baker
Russell Music Center Room 334, free admission
- 15 Thursday, 7:30pm**
Guest Artist Recital: Jessica Dodge-Overstreet, Saxophone, free
admission
- 18 Sunday, 3pm**
South Sound Saxophone Ensemble, free admission
- 19 Monday, 7:30pm**
University Jazz Ensemble: Miles Davis Centennial. Eastvold
Auditorium, Karen Hille Phillips Center
- 20 Tuesday, 7:30pm**
Fall Festival of Choirs
- 25 Sunday, 2pm**
Choir of the West Centennial Celebration
- 27 Tuesday, 7:30pm**
University Symphony Orchestra
- 29 Thursday, 1:30pm**
Emely Phelps Piano Masterclass, free admission
- 29 Thursday, 7:30pm**
Guest Artist Recital: Emely Phelps, Piano, free admission
- 30 Friday, 12pm**
Orchestra Festival concert, free admission
- 31 Saturday**
Athena Music & Leadership Summit, Mary Baker Russell Music
Center

NOVEMBER

- 1 Sunday, 3pm**
Angela Meade Vocal Competition, free admission
- 3 Tuesday, 7:30pm**
Keyboard Students Recital, free admission
- 8 Sunday, 3pm**
Richard D. Moe Organ Recital Series: Justin J. Murphy-Mancini and
Friends
- 11 Wednesday, 7:30pm**
Early Music Concert, free admission
- 14 Saturday, 3pm**
Woodwind Students Recital, free admission
- 14 Saturday, 4:30pm**
Brass Students Recital, free admission
- 14 Saturday, 6:30pm**
Tracy Doyle Flute Masterclass. Jennie Lee Hansen Recital Hall, free
admission
- 15 Sunday, 3pm**
University Wind Ensemble
- 17 Tuesday, 7:30pm**
University Concert Band

NOVEMBER, Cont.

- 18 Wednesday, 7:30pm**
Percussion Ensemble, free admission
- 20-21 Friday-Saturday, 7:30pm**
Opera Scenes. Eastvold Auditorium, Karen Hille Phillips Center
- 21 Saturday, 3pm**
Steel Band, free admission
- 22 Sunday, 3pm**
Choral Union
- 22 Sunday, 7:30pm**
Guitar Orchestra & Guitar Ensemble, free admission
- 23 Monday, 7:30pm**
University Jazz Ensemble. Eastvold Auditorium, Karen Hille
Phillips Center
- 24 Tuesday, 7:30pm**
Mariachi del Pacifico. Eastvold Auditorium, Karen Hille Phillips
Center, free admission

DECEMBER

Light Beyond Shadow, A PLU Christmas Concert

Tickets go on sale Wednesday, November 4

Friday, December 4, at 7:30pm - Lagerquist Concert Hall

Saturday, December 5, at 2pm - Lagerquist Concert Hall

Saturday, December 5, at 7:30pm - Lagerquist Concert Hall

Sunday, December 6, at 2pm - Lagerquist Concert Hall

Monday, December 7, at 7:30pm - Benaroya Hall, Seattle

- 1 Tuesday, 6pm**
Saxophone Quartets & Jazz Combos. The Cave, Anderson
University Center, free admission
- 2 Wednesday, 7:30pm**
Piano Ensemble, free admission
- 8 Tuesday, 6pm**
Chamber Music Kaleidoscope, free admission
- 8 Tuesday, 7:30pm**
String Kaleidoscope, free admission
- 9 Wednesday, 7:30pm**
Let Your Heart Be Light, featuring University Singers, Knights
Chorus, and PLU Ringers
- 10 Thursday, 7:30pm**
Sølvvinden Flute Ensemble, free admission
- 13 Sunday, 3pm**
Composers Forum, free admission

JANUARY

- 9 Saturday, 4:30 and 6:30pm**
Northwest High School Honor Band, free admission
- 12 Tuesday, 12:30pm**
TBDetermined!, free admission
- 17 Sunday, 6pm**
PLU Honor Orchestra for Strings, free admission
- 28-30 Thursday-Saturday, 7:30pm and 31 Sunday, 2pm**
The Magic Flute by W. A. Mozart. Eastvold Auditorium, Karen Hille
Phillips Center

To view more detailed event information, please visit:

www.plu.edu/music/calendar (Updated October 5, 2026)