

University Symphony Orchestra
Becoming

Tuesday, November 9, 2021 at 8pm
Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Center

Pacific Lutheran University
School of Arts and Communication / Department of Music presents

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Jeffrey Bell-Hanson, *conductor*

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Welcome to Lagerquist Concert Hall.

Masks must be worn at all times while indoors and for the duration of the performance.

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

Welcome, in person and virtually, to Lagerquist Concert Hall for our second concert performance of the 2021-2022 season. We enjoyed last season exploring a different type of literature, and many composers who were new to us. One of the composers we discovered during that exploration was Jessie Montgomery. Tonight we are pleased to bring you her exciting work, *Strum*, alongside one of the most important symphonic pieces of the last century, Jean Sibelius's seventh symphony.

Strum.....Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

Symphony No. 7 in C Major op. 105 Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)
Allegro vivace e con brio—Vivacissimo—Adagio—Allegro molto moderato—Vivace—Presto—Adagio
(in one movement)

Program Notes

Jessie Montgomery, *Strum*



Photo by Jiyang Chen

Jessie Montgomery is an acclaimed composer, violinist, and educator. She is the recipient of the Leonard Bernstein Award from the ASCAP Foundation, and her works are performed frequently around the world by leading musicians and ensembles. Her music interweaves classical music with elements of vernacular music, improvisation, language, and social justice, placing her squarely as one of the most relevant interpreters of 21st-century American sound and experience. Her profoundly felt works have been described as “turbulent, wildly colorful and exploding with life” (*The Washington Post*).

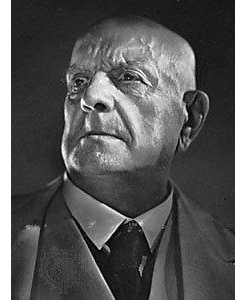
In her words, “Music is my connection to the world. It guides me to understand my place in relation to others and challenges me to make clear the things I do not understand. I imagine that music is a meeting place at which all people can converse about their unique differences and common stories.”

Regarding this work, she writes, “*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.”

Jean Sibelius, *Symphony No. 7 in C Major, op. 105*

Sibelius’s seventh symphony is not his last completed work, but it is arguably his most significant musical accomplishment. Written in 1924, nearly at the same time as the sixth symphony, it is the culmination of a career-long project, shared by many of his contemporaries, to reconcile two divergent approaches to composition for the orchestra that had set generations of composers at odds with each other, and sometimes with themselves. In one camp were the traditionalists who favored a closer adherence to formal structures inherited from Haydn and his contemporaries. It was in this model that the symphony, as a genre, became recognized as the repository of the composer’s most profound musical thought. One of the foremost exemplars of this approach was Johannes Brahms. In the other camp were composers like Liszt, Wagner, and Berlioz who thought in more narrative terms. It is from these sources—especially Liszt—that a new genre, the tone or symphonic poem was born. We often recognize an exact contemporary of Sibelius, Richard Strauss, as a foremost example of this group.



Photograph by Yousuf Karsh, 1949

Sibelius was one of a number of his generation whose works fall on both sides of this line. Yet in his case, there is clearly a conscious effort, traceable through his orchestra music, to reconcile these two forms in a symphonic expression that was both, and yet something new. In the *Seventh Symphony*, he seems to have achieved this melding of purpose and form.

The length and single movement form of the work resemble the symphonic poems of Liszt and Strauss. However, the composer leaves no hints about a literary or philosophical program that would be characteristic of such a piece. As with all of Sibelius music, it is tempting to hear a resonance with the stark, cold vistas of the Finnish landscape. Echoes of folk music suffuse parts of this work, as they do in most of his symphonies. The pitch material seems to reflect the more familiar diatonic scales of a folk idiom rather than the highly chromatic language of the late Romantic period. Even so, there is no explicit reference to any of these sources, either landscape or village life.

On the other hand, evidence of the *Seventh*’s symphonic DNA can be seen in a rough division of the piece into four discernable sections. In the Haydnesque symphonic template, the third movement was always a minuet. In fact, what appears to be the third large section of this piece is the most characteristically dance-oriented portion. However, any sense that this music might actually be made of four different sections stitched together is obliterated by the occurrence three times of what seems to be its musical core. It is a descending, then ascending motto intoned by the trombone at key points. Hints of its diatonic material are heard in the opening bars, and in the powerful closing resolution that ends the symphony. Between those boundaries the music is a tightly woven fabric of just a few motives, all of them derived from, or leading to the occurrences of the trombone motto.

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Flute

AJ Moore*
Blake Leahy

Oboe

Kyler Garcia*
Skye Gibbs

Clarinet

Caitlin Collins*
Sophia Ramos

Bassoon

Tyler Woo*
Rorie Millward

Horn

Ben Birmingham*
Kaitlin Stabell
Kaila Harris

Trumpet

Jess Mason*
Brandon Liukkonen
Chris Hildenbrand

Trombone

Alana Henerlau*
Jakob Johnson

Bass Trombone

Jerdil Castillo

Timpani

Cole Strichertz

Keyboard

Henry Hossner

Violin I

Naomi Southard*
Kayden Samanmit
Cora Beeson
Joy Han
Marley Cochran
Kirsten Iverson
Lydia Downs
Gari Garcia

Violin II

Mya Sullivan*
Justin Singh
Joan Fort
Leah Foster-Koth
Jessica Yan
Elizabeth Bankowski
Kyla Rivera
Abigail Hall
Juliana Renteria

Viola

Abbie Foulon*
Noatak Post
Alyson Rake
Marilyn Willis
Alex Johnson

Cello

Madelynn Jones*
Nathaniel Bratcher
Ellen Coburn
Rowena Hammill**

Double Bass

Campian Roberts*
Lexi Castillo*
Madeline Cline
Taya Lovejoy

*Section Principal/Co-principal

**PLU faculty member

Lexi Castillo, *librarian*

www.plu.edu/symphony

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Simply select the event you'd like to attend and click the "Tickets" button.



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