

University Symphony Orchestra
Lament

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 8pm
Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Center

Pacific Lutheran University
School of Arts and Communication and The Department of Music present

University Symphony Orchestra
Lament

Jeffrey Bell-Hanson, *conductor*
Ariel Johnston, *student conductor*

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 8pm
Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Center
(via livestream only)
<http://www.plu.edu/soac/webcast>

Welcome, virtually, to Lagerquist Concert Hall for our first and only concert performance of the 2020-2021 season. This program marks the first concert appearance of the PLU Orchestra since December 2019. It features members of the string sections only due to the pandemic conditions under which we have operated this year. While we look forward to returning to performances of the full PLU Symphony Orchestra in the fall, conditions permitting, we have enjoyed exploring a different type of literature, and many new composers this season, some of whom are presented on the program tonight.

Videos featuring some of our students and others will introduce the pieces on the program.

PROGRAM

Mother and Child..... William Grant Still (1895-1978)

Sinfonia for Strings (after String Quartet No. 8, op. 110) Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

I. Largo arr. Lucas Drew
I. Largo
II. Allegro molto
III. Allegretto
IV. Largo
V. Largo

Movements played without pause

Lyric for Strings George Walker (1922-2018)

Ariel Johnston, *student conductor*

Andante quasi recitativoElfrida Andrée (1841-1929)

ed. Dr. Jonathan Spatola-Knoll

G. F. 8'46" Jerry Kracht (b. 1941)

Program Notes

With the exception of the note for Jerry Kracht's *G. F. 8'46"*, the program notes for this concert were written collaboratively by members of the orchestra.

William Grant Still, *Mother and Child*

During his life, William Grant Still was often called the "Dean of Afro American composers." Born in Mississippi, and raised in Arkansas, he eventually found his way to Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio to study his love of composition. But before his studies at Oberlin, he actually studied medicine at Wilberforce University, Ohio. But throughout his medical studies he decided that it was not right for him so he decided to switch to Oberlin. That was where he first started looking into composition. In a lot of Still's compositions, you can hear that jazz had a major influence on his eclectic musical style. He uses easily comprehensible chord progressions and rhythms to write his beautifully complex music.

Mother and Child was written originally for only violin and piano. Still then later expanded his work for string orchestra. As you listen to this piece of music, try to note the two contrasting emotions Still is trying to express. When speaking of his mother in interviews, he would often describe her love as equal parts encouragement and vigilant discipline. You can hear the complexity of this maternal love in his writing. As the piece progresses you can hear the gradual escalating tension and relief. Still creates this contrast by alternating between major and minor, and pushing and pulling the tempo. He also uses a variety of dynamics to show the extreme highs and lows of his memories with his mother. But at the end of the music, everything becomes calm again and the dynamics dwindle down to almost nothing. This often has been interpreted as a mother singing her child to sleep. As it resolves to the tonic, Still conveys a peaceful pause in the ongoing relationship between a mother and child.

Dmitri Shostakovich, *String Quartet No. 8*

Dmitri Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 8 in C Minor, op. 110* was composed over the course of three days in July of 1960, soon after Shostakovich was coerced to join the Communist Party. The score dedicates the work "to the victims of fascism and the war," but some believe this dedication was imposed by Soviet authorities and that Shostakovich had intended the work to be his epitaph, planning to commit suicide around the time of its composition. Either way, the piece highlights the intense emotions Shostakovich was experiencing at the time.

There are several components of the music that could support the theory of the piece being an epitaph. First and foremost, the four-note phrase of D Eb C B, or D Es (pronounced as 's') C H in German musical notation, spells out Shostakovich's initials: D. Sch. The piece opens with the motif in its original form in the cello, who then passes it up the orchestra to the viola and violins. Shostakovich's "signature" motif can be heard in every movement, though it is featured most prominently in the first and fifth, as well as being transformed into the 'waltz' theme of the third movement. Additionally, you can hear many quotations from his other works, such as his *Symphony No. 1* and *Symphony No. 5* in the first movement, his *Piano Trio No. 2* in the second movement (known as the "Jewish Theme"), and his *Cello Concerto No. 1* in the third movement. The orchestral version of the quartet was arranged by Lucas Drew, and is the arrangement being performed by the PLU Orchestra.

George Walker, *Lyric for Strings*

George Walker was an accomplished composer of the 20th century; in fact, he was the first African-American to win the Pulitzer Prize for composition in 1996. Walker's father was a Jamaican immigrant and physician, while his mother was the daughter of an escaped slave. As a pianist since the age of five, organist, educator, and composer, Walker contributed to musical life in many ways. During his career, he completed over 90 works of music and received seven honorary doctorates.

Lyric for Strings was written in memory of his grandmother, the same grandmother who escaped from slavery. The piece was written in 1946, while Walker was 24 years old and a graduate student at the Curtis Institute of Music. Originally a part of a string quartet, the movement titled "Lament" was later developed into the piece we now know today as *Lyric for Strings*. Within *Lyric for Strings*, a vivid picture is painted through the rising and falling of melodic lines. Like taking a walk down memory lane, Walker paints what could be a memory of his grandmother. Deep agony in contrast to joyful muses; victories and losses; rising and falling. All finishing with a soft, fading chord.

Elfrida Andrée, *Andante quasi recitativo*

Elfrida Andrée became famous in Sweden as the first female organist to graduate from conservatory. She later became a cathedral organist while composing chamber and symphonic music. As of right now there are 135 documented works composed by Andrée including operas, masses, and piano soloist music. According to the Swedish Musical Heritage Website, Andrée

began to play organ at age fourteen and had the opportunity to learn at an academy of music that frowned upon allowing women to play the organ. When she began composing in 1865, she gained respect from the male part of the music community. She fought for her right to play at church services until she was finally appointed as organist of the Gothenburg Cathedral located in Stockholm. Throughout the rest of her life Andrée continued to break the boundaries with her compositions and desire to perform.

Andante quasi recitativo was conducted by Andrée in 1877 in Gothenburg according to the Swedish Musical Heritage website. While it is difficult to find Andrée's specific opinions about it, it was apparently among one of her favorite works. Quasi recitativo in music terms actually means the performers should treat the music in a "semi-spoken manner," which can be seen in the trading of the melody between sections.

While watching and listening to this piece, keep an ear out for some very interesting and beautiful parts of the composition. Throughout, you will hear swells in dynamics as each section trades the melody; listen for the call and response between the higher and lower voices. The piece starts out with the bass section under a solo violin with the melody line. Throughout this melody, you will hear the lower instruments respond to the melody set up by the violins.

Jerry Kracht, *G. F. 8'46" for String Orchestra*

Anyone who read or watched the news from Minneapolis on or after May 25, 2020 will know immediately the meaning of this title: *G. F. 8'46"*. Thousands took to the streets across the nation in protest of the tragic events of that day and of the countless other acts of violence it recalled and came to represent. The cries for justice still echo today, at this writing. Some, like myself, shocked at the images we saw, were left at a loss for words and turned instead to the language we know better: music. I remember needing music that night and seeking out the Barber *Adagio* for consolation – a piece often played in past times of national grieving and no doubt played again this time. It was then I felt the need to write this little piece for string orchestra. No Barber *Adagio*.

Far from it. Rather it is simply my expression of sadness for the moment, for the need, yet again, of such expressions, and for the loss of life and for the national tragedy it exposed once more. A short but dramatic introduction leads to a series of passages that play out over simple harmonies and an almost constant repetition of the main motive – not unlike the obvious and tragic repetition of events like the one remembered here. There is an oppressive sameness to the music as the tempo ticks slowly and steadily to the end. The sadness is unrelenting, with no help for it despite frequent outcries. If the notes G and F play a prominent role here, you will understand. If it lasts 8'46" and then expires, you will understand. But, alas, for the rest of the story that unfolded that day, understanding still eludes.

– Jerry Kracht
Lummi Island, Washington
September 9, 2020

Composer's addendum: The trial of the former police officer accused of killing George Floyd got underway in Minneapolis on March 29, 2021. The world watched and waited for the outcome, which was finally announced on April 20: Guilty on all three counts. Trial evidence showed the actual time in question was 9 minutes and 29 seconds – not the 8'46" that was originally reported and became widely accepted, even symbolic of police injustices. Rather than change the music or its title, perhaps an additional 43 seconds of silence at the end will serve to further illustrate the depth of this tragedy.

Jerry Kracht, PLU music professor emeritus, was conductor of the University Symphony Orchestra and professor of clarinet at PLU for thirty-three years. He was a founding member of the Camas Quintet there, as well as principal clarinetist and artistic director for twenty-five years at Tacoma's Second City Chamber Series. Since his retirement from those positions he has devoted his musical life to composition, now with some twenty-six works to his credit, including music for band, choir, orchestra, and various chamber ensembles. The premiere performance of his *G.F. 8'46"* for string orchestra on May 11 marks the fifth such premiere of his music at PLU.

University Symphony Orchestra

Jeffrey Bell-Hanson, *conductor*

(The orchestra has been comprised this year of strings only due to the global pandemic.)

Keyboard

Henry Hossner

Violin I

Samuel Bies (B)

Joy Edwards (v) (B)

Alexander Johnson* (G)

Arthur Keast (B)

Naomi Southard* (B)

Kirsten Iverson (G)

Mya Sullivan (G)

Violin II

Joy Han* (B)

Cora Beeson* (G)

Marley Cochran (G)

Ashley Fletcher (v) (G)

Elizabeth Bankowski (v) (B)

Hudson Link (B)

Leah Foster-Koth (G)

Viola

Abbie Foulon* (G)

Noatak Post* (B)

Ariel Johnston (B)

Alyson Rake (G)

Marilyn Willis (B)

Cello

Madelynne Jones* (B)

Gabriela Vera-Kavanaugh* (G)

Bass

James Waltz* (B)

Lexi Castillo* (G)

Molly Bliss (B)

Taya Lovejoy (G)

* Principal or Co-principal

(v) Virtual Member

(G) Gold Orchestra, (B) Black Orchestra

<https://www.plu.edu/symphony/>



Orchestra Members Graduating or Student Teaching in Fall 2021:

Samuel Bies, *violin*

Joy Edwards, *violin*

Jeeny Chung, *violin*

Alex Johnson, *violin*

Ariel Johnston, *viola*

Hudson Link, *violin*

Paige Balut, *flute*

Jordan Bluhm, *percussion*

Ben Woodbury, *trombone*



School of Arts +
Communication

