

Music of America III

The Cleveland Chamber Collective

Sunday, June 5, 2022

3 pm

[Disciple's Christian Church](#)

3663 Mayfield Rd, Cleveland Heights, OH

PROGRAM

Strum

Kim Gomez, Emma Shook, violins
Lisa Boyko, viola, Linda Atherton, cello

Jessie Montgomery

Pan Songs

I Discoveries; gently; conjuring; with trepidation
II Dance; splashy and groovy
III Aria; with freedom

Dylan Moffitt, steelpan

Ty Alan Emerson

Danzas de Panama

I Tamborito
II Mejorana
III Punto
IV Cumbia y Congo

Kim Gomez, Emma Shook, violins
Lisa Boyko, viola, Linda Atherton, cello

William Grant Still

Bleu

Kim Gomez, violin

George Walker

Sonata No. 6

I Lamentoso
III Lento Cantabile

Nicholas Underhill, piano

Ryan Charles Ramer

PROGRAM NOTES

STRUM

Strum, declares composer [Jessie Montgomery](#), salutes "American folk idioms and the spirit of dance and movement." The work's title refers to the guitar-like plucking of the strings that plays many roles: floating hum, earthy groove, rapturous thrum. "*Strum* is the culminating result of several versions of a string quintet I wrote in 2006," she said in a program note. Originally composed for the Providence String Quartet and guests of Community Music Works Players, *Strum* was 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.

"The voicing is often spread wide over the ensemble, giving the music an expansive quality of sound," she said. "Within *Strum*, I used 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." The piece begins with what Montgomery calls "fleeting nostalgia." Melodies weave in, over and between layers of strumming. Several minutes in, the music shifts, "transforming into ecstatic celebration."

With its emphasis on American folk idioms and dance/movement, "the piece has a kind of narrative that begins with a sense of nostalgia and transforms into ecstatic celebration," she said. "I've always been interested in trying to find the intersection between different types of music. I imagine that music is a meeting place at which all people can converse about their unique differences and common stories."

PAN SONGS

Pan Songs was composed for my friend and colleague, Dylan Moffitt, who had acquired an interesting Steelpan. It was quirky, and somewhat out of tune. It had an outer ring of 10 pitch locations, a middle ring of another 10 pitch locations, and an inner ring of 5 pitch locations. The pitches in each of the rings was not laid out like a typical drum (a series of fifths, with the tonic in the center). Rather it relished in tritones!

Due to the unique nature of the instrument, I decided to approach the work as if it were of indeterminate pitch. I approached the notation according to the location on the pan, using various note heads to indicate which ring it was on, and location on the staff to indicate which pitch location on either the left or right side of the pan the note was on. For example, notes on the c, e, g spaces (treble clef) are on the left side of the drum and notes in the a, f, and d spaces are on the right side of the drum. Traditional note heads indicate the outermost ring, triangle note heads are the middle ring, and x note heads are the inner most ring.

In the end, I strove to create a piece utilizing physical patterns while searching for something lyrical. Performances will be radically different depending on the nature of the drum. In fact, this

piece could be “transcribed” for other indeterminate pitched instruments. For example, a collection of almglocken, or roto toms, or wood blocks. Good taste and musicality should be your guide. TAE 2022

Danzas de Panama

[William Grant Still's](#) Danzas de Panama date from 1948 and are based on a collection of Panamanian folk tunes which were collected by Elizabeth Waldo in the 1920's. Although there are putatively only four dances presented, each movement has at least two and sometimes three separate dances within it. The opening movement *Tamborito* immediately captures the listener's attention with the instrumentalists percussively striking the sides of their instruments, creating the rhythm for this highly chromatic introduction which immediately leads to a sadder and slower dance that is also quite chromatic. For the rest of the movement, Still ingeniously juxtaposes these two dances, one after the other seamlessly. When the faster dance returns, it is in two sections, the first fast and up-beat the second more melancholy and sounding like a close relative of the tango. The movement ends surprisingly on a soft glissando. Next comes *Mejorana* which sounds like a carefree Panamanian waltz. The forceful middle section is a somewhat ominous dance in two. The slowish third movement, *Punto*, has a gentle and very familiar Mexican sound to it. It is the kind of thing one hears in the movies when Mexican cowboys return to their hacienda at the end of a day's work. The middle section in 6/8 is in the minor and more robust. The last movement, *Cumbia y Congo* begins again with a percussive hand-pounding to a high-spirited and fast dance. At first it sounds purely African but very quickly a heavy dose of Latin melody is added to the mix. The coda is brilliant and exciting. Any one of these movements could serve as a very effective encore. Together, they form an impressive *tour de force*.

BLEU

Bleu, for unaccompanied violin was composed for the composers' son, Gregory Walker after his success in performing the premiere of the Violin Concerto of George Walker with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Neeme Järvi in 2009. The work is comprised of a single movement that is characterized by the alternation of short lyrical phrases with rapid, difficult figurations. A quote in double stops of a popular jazz tune is incorporated in the concluding measures of *Bleu*.
—[George Walker](#), 2013

June 17th is George Walker Day in Washington, DC! Proclaimed in 1997 by Marion Barry, then Mayor of Washington, DC, this annual celebration honors Walker's accomplishments as a leading composer, pianist and native-Washingtonian. This piece was featured on the celebratory concert.

SONATA No. 6

I composed Sonata #6 to sound like the love child of [Sergei Rachmaninoff](#) (1873 - 1943) and [Henry Cowell](#) (1897 - 1965). These two pianist/performer/composers' use of chords influenced my keyboard writing; primarily, the size of their chords strikes me. Rachmaninoff possessed freakishly large hands, enabling him to straddle a length of 24 keys with both hands. (Most

pianists can stretch around 18 keys with both hands.) While Rachmaninoff packed an unheard-of number of notes into each chord using his fingers, Cowell began calling upon fists, palms, and entire arms to play his unwieldy chords. Considered an "ultra-modernist" composer, he invented a new notation method in 1913 to indicate playing chords larger than the hand could reach. In fact, the London Times declared "...that this was the world's loudest piano music and [Cowell] was the world's loudest pianist." Sonata #6 aims to capture the Romantic Era's breadth of emotion championed by Rachmaninoff and combine it with the unbridled exuberance of Cowell's ground-breaking keyboard literature. I wanted to make a music that sounds larger-than-life by seamlessly alternating between arms and fingers, giving the impression of a literal giant behind the piano.

For more information please visit:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYPF1L-kWkOKO_F1m8-3imQZRvW6-P90f

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHIES

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).

Jessie was born and raised in Manhattan’s Lower East Side in the 1980s during a time when the neighborhood was at a major turning point in its history. Artists gravitated to the hotbed of artistic experimentation and community development. Her parents – her father a musician, her mother a theater artist and storyteller – were engaged in the activities of the neighborhood and regularly brought Jessie to rallies, performances, and parties where neighbors, activists, and artists gathered to celebrate and support the movements of the time. It is from this unique experience that Jessie has created a life that merges composing, performance, education, and advocacy.

Since 1999, Jessie has been affiliated with [The Sphinx Organization](#), which supports young African-American and Latinx string players. She currently serves as composer-in-residence for the Sphinx Virtuosi, the Organization’s flagship professional touring ensemble. She was a two-time laureate of the annual Sphinx Competition and was awarded a generous MPower grant to assist in the development of her debut album, *Strum: Music for Strings* (Azica Records). She has received additional grants and awards from the ASCAP Foundation, Chamber Music America, American Composers Orchestra, the Joyce Foundation, and the Sorel Organization.

Composer [Ty Alan Emerson](#) has been presenting music in Cleveland since 2000. Following two terms as president of the Cleveland Composers’ Guild, he is currently Director and Conductor of the Cleveland Chamber Collective. Notable commissions include. the Collective, No Exit, and ASSEM3LY. In 2021 the Chamber Collective, in partnership with Inlet Dance

Theatre, Bill Wade, Director, premiered Emerson's dance work *Caliban Ascendant*. In 2020 his works *Love and Other Missed-Spellings* and *Cast Thy Nighted Colour Off*, featuring saxophonist Gabriel Pique, were premiered at The Bop Stop in Cleveland as part of the Chamber Collective's "Music of American" program. Other notable performances have included ensembles such as The Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, No Exit New Music Ensemble, Zeitgeist, ASSEM3LY, VERB Ballets, The Cleveland Duo with James Umble, and Quorum New Music Ensemble.

His work has been featured at music festivals from Bowling Green, OH to Huddersfield, England. Awards include: the ASCAP Morton Gould Award, the Searle McCullum Award from the Academy of Arts and Letters, a fellowship to the MacDowell Colony, two Individual Excellence Awards from the Ohio Arts Council (2009 and 2014) and the MTNA/OMTA Composer of the Year. Emerson can be heard on the radio in Cleveland on WCLV radio's Fresh Innovations, hosted by Mark Satola.

In addition to his work for the concert hall, Emerson has composed and arranged works for the stage with The Musical Theater Project in Cleveland, including *Deconstructing Kurt Weill* and *Bernstein on Broadway*. Emerson can also be found conducting concert and theatrical works around Cleveland, including the premiere of *Remember the Pines*, by composer Nicholas Underhill. He has done commercial work for the State of Ohio, and in 2019 arranged the music for the welcome trailer for the Cleveland International Film Festival.

Long known as the "Dean of African-American Classical Composers," as well as one of America's foremost composers, **William Grant Still** has had the distinction of becoming a legend in his own lifetime. On May 11, 1895, he was born in Woodville (Wilkinson County) Mississippi, to parents who were teachers and musicians. They were of Negro, Indian, Spanish, Irish and Scotch bloods. When William was only a few months old, his father died and his mother took him to Little Rock, Arkansas, where she taught English in the high school. There his musical education began--with violin lessons from a private teacher, and with later inspiration from the Red Seal operatic recordings bought for him by his stepfather.

In Wilberforce University, he took courses leading to a B.S. degree, but spent most of his time conducting the band, learning to play the various instruments involved and making his initial attempts to compose and to orchestrate. His subsequent studies at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music were financed at first by a legacy from his father, and later by a scholarship established just for him by the faculty.

At the end of his college years, he entered the world of commercial (popular) music, playing in orchestras and orchestrating, working in particular with the violin, cello and oboe. His employers included W. C. Handy, Don Voorhees, Sophie Tucker, Paul Whiteman, Willard Robison and Artie Shaw, and for several years he arranged and conducted the Deep River Hour over CBS and WOR. While in Boston playing oboe in the Shuffle Along orchestra, Still applied to study at the New England Conservatory with George Chadwick, and was again rewarded with a scholarship due to Mr. Chadwick's own vision and generosity. He also studied, again on an individual scholarship, with the noted ultra-modern composer, Edgard Varese.

In the Twenties, Still made his first appearances as a serious composer in New York, and began a valued friendship with Dr. Howard Hanson of Rochester. Extended Guggenheim and Rosenwald Fellowships were given to him, as well as important commissions from the Columbia Broadcasting System, the New York World's Fair 1939-40, Paul Whiteman, the League of Composers, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Southern Conference Educational Fund and the American Accordionists Association. In 1944, he won the Jubilee prize of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra for the best Overture to celebrate its Jubilee season, with a work called Festive Overture. In 1953, a Freedoms Foundation Award came to him for his To You, America! which honored West Point's Sesquicentennial Celebration. In 1961, he received the prize offered by the U. S. Committee for the U. N., the N.F.M.C. and the Aeolian Music Foundation for his orchestral work, The Peaceful Land, cited as the best musical composition honoring the United Nations.

After moving to Los Angeles in the early 1930's, citations from numerous organizations, local and elsewhere in the United States, came to the composer. Along with them came honorary degrees like the following: Master of Music from Wilberforce in 1936; Doctor of Music from Howard University in 1941; Doctor of Music from Oberlin College in 1947; Doctor of Letters from Bates College in 1954; Doctor of Laws from the University of Arkansas in 1971; Doctor of Fine Arts from Pepperdine University in 1973; Doctor of Music from the New England Conservatory of Music, the Peabody Conservatory and the University of Southern California.

Some of the awards that Still received were: the second Harmon Award in 1927; a trophy of honor from Local 767 of the Musicians Union A.F. of M., of which he was a member; trophies from the League of Allied Arts in Los Angeles (1965) and the National Association of Negro Musicians; citations from the Los Angeles City Council and Los Angeles Board of Supervisors (1963); a trophy from the A.P.P.A. in Washington D.C. (1968); the Phi Beta Sigma George Washington Carver Award (1953); the Richard Henry Lee Patriotism Award from Knotts Berry Farm, California; a citation from the Governor of Arkansas in 1972; the third annual prize of the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters in 1982. He also lectured in various universities from time to time.

In 1939, Still married journalist and concert pianist, Verna Arvey, who became his principal collaborator. They remained together until Still died of heart failure on December 3, 1978. ASCAP took care of all of Dr. Still's hospitalization until his death.

Dr. Still's service to the cause of brotherhood is evidenced by his many firsts in the musical realm: Still was the first Afro-American in the United States to have a symphony performed by a major symphony orchestra. He was the first to conduct a major symphony orchestra in the United States, when in 1936, he directed the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra in his compositions at the Hollywood Bowl. He was the first Afro-American to conduct a major symphony orchestra in the Deep South in 1955, when he directed the New Orleans Philharmonic at Southern University. He was the first of his race to conduct a White radio orchestra in New York City. He was the first to have an opera produced by a major company in the United States, when in 1949, his *Troubled Island* was done at the City Center of Music and Drama in New York City. He was the first to have an opera televised over a national network. With these firsts, Still was a pioneer, but, in a larger sense, he pioneered because he was able to create music

capable of interesting the greatest conductors of the day: truly serious music, but with a definite American flavor.

Still wrote over 150 compositions (well over 200 if his lost early works could be counted), including operas, ballets, symphonies, chamber works, and arrangements of folk themes, especially Negro spirituals, plus instrumental, choral and solo vocal works.

Composer **George Walker** was born in Washington, DC of West Indian-American parentage. He began studying piano when he was five years old. He was admitted to Oberlin College at age 14 and graduated with the highest honors in his class four years later. He was accepted into the Curtis Institute of Music where he was a pupil of Rudolf Serkin in piano and Rosario Scalero in composition. After graduating from Curtis, in 1945, he made his "notable" debut in Town Hall, New York in a piano recital sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Efrem Zimbalist. Two weeks later he performed the 3rd Piano Concerto of Rachmaninoff with the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy, as the winner of the Philadelphia Youth Auditions.

In 1953 he made a tour of seven European countries with great acclaim as a pianist under the aegis of his management, the National Concert Artists. In 1956 he obtained a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Eastman School of Music and received Fulbright and John Hay Whitney Fellowships to Paris to study composition with Nadia Boulanger.

Upon his return to the United States he held teaching positions at Dillard University, the New School for Social Research, Smith College, the University of Colorado, Rutgers University (Chairman of the Music Department), the University of Delaware (Distinguished Chair) and the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. His numerous awards include two Rockefeller Fellowships, two Koussevitsky Fellowships, five National Endowment for the Arts grants, an American Academy of Arts and Letters award, fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, Smith College, Rutgers University and the Council for the Arts of New Jersey.

George Walker has received commissions from the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the New Jersey Symphony, the Eastman School of Music, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Washington Performing Arts Society, the Kindler Foundation, the Las Vegas Philharmonic, the orchestras of Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, the National Symphony and many other ensembles. He has published over 90 works in virtually every medium except opera. In 1996 he received the Pulitzer Prize in Music for *Lilacs* for voice and orchestra. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 2000 he was inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame.

George Walker's music has been performed by every major American orchestra and has been recorded on many labels: Columbia Records, Sony, BIS, Albany, Klavier, Naxos, Centaur, Desto, Mastersound, Serenus and many others. Albany Records has produced a dozen CDs of his music and his performances of works from the standard piano repertoire, including as part of the *Great American Orchestral Works* and *Great American Chamber Works* series. George Walker is the recipient of honorary doctorate degrees from Lafayette College, Oberlin College, Montclair State University, Bloomfield College, the Curtis Institute of Music, Spelman College and the Eastman School of Music. In May of 2012 he received the Aaron Copland Award from

ASCAP. His autobiography, *George Walker: American Composer and Pianist*, is published by the Scarecrow Press.

Ryan Charles Ramer is a Cleveland-based classical composer, playwright, performer, and producer. He is an active member of the Cleveland Composer's Guild, and co-founder of Gordon Square Classical Concerts, which produces free concerts throughout Cleveland's west-side theater district.

Over 50 videos of his music can be found on [Youtube](#), including several pieces written for 88-bit video game music, and sound tracks for King's Quest I-III. He has also worked with curator Christopher Richards to produce three gallery exhibitions with artwork created in direct response to Ramer's Sonata #5, Sonata #6, and the song cycle *Quarantine Poems* for bassoon trio and tenor.

PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES

Kim Gomez has been a member of The Cleveland Orchestra since 1990. A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Ms. Gomez grew up in a musical family; she studied at the Peabody Conservatory, then earned a Bachelor of Music degree and an Artist Diploma from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she was a concerto competition winner. Her teachers have included David Cerone, Josef Gingold, Daniel Heifetz, Virginia Schneider, David Updegraff, Donald Weilerstein, and Mimi Zweig. Ms. Gomez has appeared on three occasions as a soloist with the Louisville Symphony Orchestra and has made solo appearances with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra and the Cleveland Institute of Music Orchestra. Kim and her husband James have six children.

Emma Shook, violin, holds the Dr. Jeanette Grasselli Brown and Dr. Glenn R. Brown Chair in The Cleveland Orchestra second violin section, which she joined in 2001. Previously, she was a member of the Chicago Lyric Opera and Santa Fe Opera orchestras for six years. Ms. Shook received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Juilliard School, where she was a scholarship student of Dorothy DeLay and Hyo Kang. At Juilliard she co-founded a conductorless chamber orchestra, and in the 1992 won the Peter Mennin prize for leadership and achievement in music. Ms. Shook has given many chamber music concerts in the United States and abroad. She continues to perform chamber music and solo concerts regularly, and has branched out into contemporary classical music, Hungarian folk music, and blues. She lives in University Heights and enjoys gardening, food, nature, and animals of all kinds.

Lisa Boyko joined The Cleveland Orchestra in 1991, after serving as a member of the New Orleans Symphony, Toronto Symphony, and the Minnesota Orchestra. Born in Cleveland and raised in Tucson, Arizona, Ms. Boyko studied for two years in Vienna at the Musikgymnasium and the Hochschule für Musik. In 1985, she received a bachelor of music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM), where she was a student of Robert Vernon.

Ms. Boyko has appeared as alumni soloist with the Cleveland Institute of Music Chamber Orchestra in the Cleveland premiere of Darius Milhaud's *Concertino d'été* and continues to perform regularly in solo recitals and chamber music concerts. She is a founding member of the Cleveland Chamber Collective, which since 1992 has had the mission of bringing both new music and neglected works of the past to the public.

Ms. Boyko is a faculty member at CIM and Case Western Reserve University and has taught at the Encore School for Strings and the Masterworks Festival. She is active in local organizations that support and promote music and arts education, including the CIM Alumni Association, the Ohio Viola Society, and Inlet Dance Theatre. In her spare time, she is an avid traveler who also enjoys gardening, reading, and languages.

Linda Atherton, cellist, is a graduate of Boston University, where she studied with Leslie Parnas. After graduating, Linda moved to Indianapolis where she became a founding member of the Lockerbie String Quartet and was also a substitute with the Indianapolis Symphony. Upon moving to Cleveland, she played with the Canton Symphony for several years, as well as with the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, the Cleveland Ballet Orchestra, and the Cleveland Opera Orchestra.

Linda has been soloist with the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Ohio Ballet, Trinity Chamber Orchestra, Euclid Symphony, and Blue Water Chamber Orchestra. She was a participant in the Blue Hill Kneisel Hall and Taos chamber music festivals, and is currently very active in the Cleveland chamber music scene as a member of ART Trio and the Cleveland Chamber Collective. Linda is a member of the Cleveland Pops Orchestra, Blue Water Chamber Orchestra, Trinity Chamber Orchestra and plays for many musicals including the Broadway Series at Playhouse Square.

Pianist/Composer **Nicholas Underhill** holds a Master of Music Degree in Piano from the New England Conservatory of Music. His teachers include Monica Jakuc, Konrad Wolff, Katja Andy, Edmund Battersby and Russell Sherman. He has performed solo recitals in Carnegie Recital Hall, Merkin Concert Hall and in Chicago on the Dame Myra Hess concert series. He is currently the pianist for the Cleveland Chamber Collective, of which he is a founding member, and the No Exit New Music Ensemble. He has performed concertos with the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, the Lakeside Symphony and the San Jose Symphony Orchestra. Underhill has received critical acclaim from Donald Rosenberg for his solo piano album, "Light and Sirius", as well as from Bernard Holland, for his Piano Trio #1.

He has taught piano at Hiram College, Mt. Union College and Willoughby school of Fine arts, as well as numerous schools in Boston and New York City. From 2006 to 2016 he taught composition and other music courses at Cleveland State University. Underhill studied composition at Hampshire College, Amherst College, and the New England Conservatory of Music. As a composer he has been commissioned by the Cleveland Orchestra, the Gramercy Trio, and various members of the Cleveland Orchestra. He currently teaches privately and lives in Cleveland with his wife, Mary Kay Fink of the Cleveland Orchestra.

Dylan Moffitt, is often recognized for his versatility as a percussionist in the classical and world music genres. In 2009, Moffitt appeared as a soloist with The Cleveland Orchestra alongside renowned artists Alisa Weilerstein and Jamey Haddad in performances of Golijov's, Azul for cello and orchestra. He currently serves as principal percussionist and frequent soloist with the Firelands Symphony where in 2013, founded his "Drumming with Dylan" educational outreach program. The program has since been recognized by the Cleveland Orchestra and was featured in

the orchestra's "At Home" residency this past summer season. Dylan performs regularly with the Wheeling Symphony, Pittsburgh Opera, Ohio Valley Symphony, Blossom Festival Band, Apollos Fire, the Cleveland Chamber Collective and has in past years appeared with the Cleveland Orchestra. Dylan specializes in various styles of world music, Brazilian percussion in particular. Following multiple trips to Brazil, Dylan began directing the Cleveland-based samba school, Samba Joia. In 2013, Moffitt joined the percussion faculty of the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music and has since joined the percussion faculty at Cuyahoga Community College. Dylan attended the Cleveland Institute of music for both his undergraduate and Master degrees. His principal teachers include Richard Weiner, Paul Yancich and Jamey Haddad.