

FORBES CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY®

School of Music

presents the

**42nd Contemporary Music Festival
Concert III**

Emily Albrink, *soprano*
Kathleen Kelly, *piano*
Gavin Higgins, *guest composer*
JMU Wind Symphony

Wednesday, October 11, 2023
8 pm
Concert Hall



There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Program

Drop Dead

Gavin Higgins

Šarūnas Jankauskas, *clarinet*

Weave Me a Name

Rene Orth

Text: Jeanne Minahan

- I. Beginnings
- II. One of Nine Children, Your (Wild) Grandmother
- III. The Return
- IV. The Plaits
- V. Your Turn
- VI. The Single Mother
- VII. Handiwork

Force of Nature

Jake Heggie

Text: Emily Albrink and Kathleen Kelly

- I. Force of Nature
- II. Space Mountain
- III. Now I See You

Emily Albrink, *soprano*

Kathleen Kelly, *piano*

Intermission

Tower Ascending (2009)

Wayne Oquin

Dope (2022)

Katahj Copley

JMU Wind Symphony

Stephen P. Bolstad, *director*

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Program Notes

Weave Me a Name - Rene Orth/Jeanne Minahan and Force of Nature - Jake Heggie/Emily Albrink Katz and Kathleen Kelly

Among Western classical art songs for women, Robert Schumann's *Frauenliebe und -leben* still occupies a place of honor almost two centuries after its composition, yet it's no surprise that a living composer would reference this work when speaking about women singers' desire for greater variety of subject and expression in song repertoire. *Frauenliebe* continues to loom large in our thoughts and programming in no small part because it stood alone in the genre for so many years. Women have been writing words and music for centuries, but it requires a system of commitment for those compositions to be heard, repeated, programmed, and remembered. The words and music of men, written for men to sing, found easier access to that group commitment.

And so men on the art song stage have had cycle after cycle to choose from, encompassing an enormous range of human experience. In works that are considered "mainstream," men have been able to sing of love, desire, jealousy, murder, war, fatherhood, anger, drunkenness, God, nature, writing, composition, fear, bravery, shame, suicide, physical labor, homesickness, and the act of singing itself. Women in those spaces found a smaller range of stories about their lives. And within the most intimate emotions, there tended to be a conservative sameness, mirroring the smaller acceptable range of public expression granted women. Men in tuxedos, in shining halls, could sing of lying in wait to murder their lover, or of hallucinating three suns in the sky, or of trying to apologize to their comrade killed in war. Women in those halls found life rather uniformly beautiful or sad. They were like flowers, or birds, and were never given to plotting about their husbands, or wishing themselves free of their children.

Like her daughter Emily, Nancy Albrink was a performer, a teacher, a wife, a mother, and a friend. When Emily began formulating this musical tribute to Nancy, she knew she wanted to contribute to our "system of commitment" by making new music possible and giving it the chance for a long life by performing and recording it. And most of all, she wanted to be part of creating work that would give women a chance to sing about all parts of our lives, not only the sentimental or culturally admirable ones. She wanted songs of impatience, poor judgment, shallowness, resilience, and risk; about gossiping or fleeing violence or navigating mood swings or turning up the radio. And that's what these songs do.

Throughout these four new works also runs the strong thread of legacy: of passing experience, wisdom, and care from one generation to the next. This is the story of Nancy and Emily, and of mothers and children everywhere, too close for any of us to understand clearly as we live it. We worry about our children as we look forward into a future we will not see, and we look back for our mothers through a lens of late understanding. How grateful I am for the chance to perform and teach these new works, and for more rich voices to tell these complex stories of fragility, power, and love.

Rene Orth's award winning cycle *Weave Me a Name* is inspired by the life of the poet Jeanne Minahan's great-grandmother. It's closest in spirit to a work like *Frauenliebe* in that it traces a woman's life through leaving home, marriage, and motherhood. But Orth's music opens up an expanse that leaves you breathless, juxtaposing explosive violence in a marriage with determination, calm, and ultimately transformation as a mother's survival changes her children's futures.

Finally, Jake Heggie's *Force of Nature* is a direct tribute to Nancy Albrink. Emily Albrink co-authored the poetry, resonating with love yet unafraid to name the sharper edges of this close bond. I never had the chance to know Nancy, but I feel I've met her in these three songs, a woman of mercurial emotions, fierce devotion, and faith in her musical practice - a mother "brave enough to guide."

Program Notes *continued*

Tower Ascending – Wayne Oquin

Tower Ascending for wind ensemble and clarinet solo is my own depiction of an ongoing aspect of urban city life: the construction of modern skyscrapers. The music's structure, development, and gradual assimilation of materials are best described as cumulative. Just as skyscrapers are built laying stone upon stone, floor upon floor, so, too, is this music constructed from the bottom up: measure upon measure, phrase upon phrase, rhythm upon rhythm. This ascension is gradual and permeates many dimensions of the music: register (low to high), dynamics (soft to loud), and tempo (slow to fast).

Living on New York's Upper West Side I witness first hand this construction process on a daily basis. Although any skyscraper represents this idea, perhaps the one that stood out for me during the composing of this piece is the Freedom Tower. It goes beyond architectural marvel to symbolize the resolve of the American spirit.

This eight-minute composition is divided into two equal parts: four minutes of slow music, four minutes of fast. Each of the two sections culminates in a dramatic offstage clarinet solo, the clarinet both summarizing and commenting on the music that has come immediately before, stating the material in its most concise form.

Composed between July 2008 and January 2009, *Tower Ascending* was commissioned by John P. Lynch for the University of Georgia Wind Ensemble's performance at the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) 2009 in Austin, Texas. My sincere thanks go to John Lynch for his encouragement, invaluable insights, and involvement during every stage of the composing process.

Tower Ascending is dedicated to my own college band director, John Stansberry, in honor of his retirement. I am deeply indebted to John Stansberry for his strong support of my music during the formative stages of my career. - Wayne Oquin

Dope - Katahj Copley

The first semester of my masters- I was in a different headspace. I had finished writing *Where the Sky Has No Stars* and at the moment I felt renewed. I didn't know what else to write, so I began to write music that felt disingenuous to my spirit (music that will never see the light of day)- I was going on autopilot and I had lost my voice. During one of my lessons at UT Austin, my professor Omar Thomas and I began listening to a piece I had mocked up a couple of days before. We both weren't feeling it, and finally I asked him to turn off the piece and I told him it didn't sound like me. I felt lost creatively. He then asked me what music I listen to. I began to name only band music composers. He asked me again, and I told him outside of wind band music I'm in love with Rap, R & B, Jazz and Soul.

Then he asked an important question- "Why do you make a barrier between those ideals?" I didn't have an answer. It was a wake-up call for me. Why was I compartmentalizing my musical inspirations? He continued, "If you create something that is a celebration of who you are, the music you grew up with, and the music that inspires you now... then that would be dope..."

And with that this piece was born. With that realization, I began to create a piece that celebrated all the music that had inspired me throughout my life. From Thundercat to Kendrick Lamar, Miles Davis to Hiatus Kaiyote, I wanted to bring all of these influences together into one cohesive work...one dope work. DOPE is a gumbo of all the music that inspires and influences me from Thundercat to Kendrick Lamar to Miles Davis to Hiatus Kaiyote and more, this piece is in essence a deep look into my musical world.

The piece can be broken up into three parts. Since this work is dedicated to the trail black music has created, inspired and the new horizons it's reaching, each part is named after a part

Program Notes *continued*

of the black identity. **UNDENIABLY** (which is the partial score) is the opening of the piece. It's gritty, intense with moments of color and undeniable energy. It is carried by a bass line heavily influenced by Thundercat's playing on Kendrick Lamar's *Untitled 05* along with Miles Davis's *Nardis*. **UNAPOLOGETICALLY** (the middle section) is a world building vibe and examines just how beautiful the music can be. I explore the colors and stretch them to their limits, but in doing so found new hues within myself and my writings. With this act, I gained heavy inspiration from John Coltrane, Robert Glasper, Kamasi Washington and Hiatus Kaiyote (to name a few). **UNDISPUTEDLY** (the finale) is an intense, groove filled statement. Every color explored is here and is in its full potential. It's bold and- like undeniably and unapologetically- is undisputedly black. Guided by my love for Tyler, the Creator's *Hot Wind Blows*, Marvin Gaye's *I Want You* (due to Kendrick's *The Heart series*), and Kamasi Washington's *Street Fighter Mas* along with *Askem*.

I hope that "DOPE" will serve as a tribute to the black musicians who have paved the way and inspired me to create music that is authentic to who I am. I also hope that this piece will inspire others to break down the barriers between their musical influences and create something truly unique and personal. - Kathaj Copley

Artist Biographies

Soprano **Emily Albrink's** career has been graced by collaborations with such conductors as Robert Spano and Marin Alsop and composers such as Jake Heggie, Ned Rorem, and John Musto. Lauded by the *New York Times* as "delightful and vocally strong and versatile," Ms. Albrink continues to be heard in a wide array of operatic roles and concert works. She has appeared in leading roles with Kentucky Opera, Charlottesville Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Opera Boston, Indianapolis Opera, and Chicago Opera Theater and has been a featured soloist with orchestras including Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Boston Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony, and the Louisville Orchestra.

Ms. Albrink holds a Master of Music degree and a Professional Diploma from the Manhattan School of Music and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre from the University of Michigan. She currently resides in Louisville, KY where she is an Associate Professor of voice at the University of Louisville School of Music. She and her husband, David, have two small boys.

Kathleen Kelly's projects and repertoire are wide-ranging and diverse. From Mozart to commissioned works by her peers, she is both deeply experienced in the classical vocal canon and engaged in new creation. Spring and summer of 2022 will find Kathleen conducting the premiere of Matt Boehler's *FAT PIG* for Victory Hall Opera, performing a recital with bass-baritone Ryan McKinny, recording four world premiere song cycles with soprano Emily Albrink Katz, playing chamber music at the Sewanee and Wintergreen Festivals, and relocating to Texas where she'll join the faculty of Baylor University.

The first woman and first American named as Director of Musical Studies at the Vienna State Opera, Kathleen's operatic experience is the backbone of her career. Trained at the San Francisco Opera, she joined the company's music staff and moved from there to a long association with the Metropolitan Opera. She was head of music at Houston Grand

Artist Biographies *continued*

Opera, and music director of the Berkshire Opera before moving to Vienna. Since returning to the USA in 2015, Kathleen has conducted at the Glimmerglass Festival, Wolf Trap Opera, Arizona Opera, El Paso Opera, Opera Columbus, the Merola Program, and the Alexandria Symphony, and has been a regular visiting coach for the prestigious young artist programs of Chicago Lyric Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Washington National Opera, and the Canadian Opera Company.

A published poet and essayist, Kathleen has created several new opera translations and libretti. Her English adaptation of *Hansel and Gretel*, commissioned by Tri-Cities Opera, is now in use alongside her chamber orchestra arrangement of the work. She created English adaptations of *The Bartered Bride* (for the Cincinnati Conservatory) and *La Boheme* (for Opera Columbus). For Arizona Opera, she created a multilingual version of Emmerich Kalman's *Arizona Lady*, and she wrote the libretto for David Hanlon's Wolf Trap premiere *Listen, Wilhelmina!*

Gavin Higgins

Described as '*boldly imaginative*' [the Times], '*a talent to watch*' [New York Times] and '*one of the most interesting voices of his generation*' [Limelight], Gavin Higgins is one of Britain's most exciting and gifted compositional talents. Higgins was born in Gloucestershire (1983) and studied french horn and composition at Chetham's School of Music, The Royal Northern College of Music, and the Royal College of Music.

Significant commissions include *Der Aufstand* for the 2012 BBC Proms, *Rough Voices* for the 2020 BBC Proms, and the '*fast, exciting and brilliantly scored*' [the Telegraph] *Velocity* for the Last Night of the 2014 BBC Proms; the Ivor Novello Award winning trombone concerto, *The Book of Miracles* (2019) – premiered by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and soloist Helen Vollam; and the premiere of his first opera *The Monstrous Child*, (2019) at the Royal Opera House which opened to critical acclaim, described as '*a triumph*' [the Guardian ★★★★★] and '*a spectacular new opera*' [Culture Whisper ★★★★★]. His biggest and most ambitious piece to date, the '*ingenuous work*' [the Observer ★★★★★] *Concerto Grosso for Brass Band and Orchestra* was recently premiered at the 2022 BBC Proms to great acclaim; whilst his '*bold and brilliant*' [the Times] cantata, *The Faerie Bride*, with librettist Francesca Simon, was premiered at the Aldeburgh Festival with Marta Fontanals-Simmons and Roddy Williams.

Higgins comes from a long lineage of working-class brass band musicians dating back to 1895 and his passion for this heritage has resulted in a number of vigorous, daring works for brass such as *Destroy, Trample as Swiftly as She* (2011), *Prophecies* (2017) and *So Spoke Albion* (2019) commissioned for the European Brass Band Championships.

His career thus far has seen Higgins commissioned by – and work with – orchestras, ensembles and soloists including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Manchester Camerata, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble 10:10, The Royal Opera House, Rambert, the Carducci Quartet, the Fidelio Trio, the Piatti Quartet, David Cohen and Mark Simpson.

Gavin is currently Composer in Association with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Texts

Weave Me a Name - Rene Orth/Jeanne Minahan

Beginnings

Weave me a name
on the loom of life
Weave me like yarn
someone else has spun
From the slender thread
of your names, my name.

One of Nine Children, Your (Wild) Grandmother

At seventeen she bolted to wed
that Canadian (handsome, dashing) –
scandalous - back in nineteen-twelve.
The Baltimore train collected stops:
Montreal, Port Arthur, Winnipeg,
each name threaded, pearls on a string.
Then the trek to boreal forest,
resin of pine, smell of birch, a greeting,
named “pretty meeting place” by the Cree,
Prince Albert - she’d learn to call P.A.
The telegram she wrote was spare.
How dear the unsaid. And new, the ache,
for news from home. Still, I wonder,
what plume, flair, what hat did she wear?

The Return

The ever-after plan unraveled.
Your grandmother wrapped
your mother and your sister
in wool against the cold,
the blanket’s stripes, Hudson’s Bay,
green, red, yellow, blue,
a cheer in spring’s gray wet snow.
An edge caught a latch, tore.
She darned loose ends.
The train home,
full of switches, long.

All love remains
a sundering.

The Plaits

The three of you would wait,
willing your mother home from work,
longing for spuds, roasted, the aroma
of stew, hoping for calm, smooth as velvet
she’d weave into your hair. That neat.

Texts continued

Your braids grew long. Auburn.
Later there would be shouts, tears
(your father had lost his tune),
shattered glass. Whiskey. Tobacco burns.
You hid your sisters below the stairs.
You hummed to them, each night old old songs.

Your Turn

Love's duvet warms
 despite piecemeal scraps
 despite errant cuts
 despite broken thread
Love's duvet warms.

The Single Mother

Threadbare, the hand-me-downs,
hours ironing could not repair
so you patched together a firmament.
The four of us, knotted
tight as kite string,
took to flying. Took flight.

Handiwork

What can I do ...
With this infinity/ in a finite world
"Poems for Blok" Marina Tsvetaeva

The water was made wine
John 2:9

Marvels as yet uncounted:

One
my brothers turn tackle,
bait, line, and net, to food -
plank and nail,
stone and mortar, to home.

Two
my sister tips yeast, kneads flour
with seawater - bread rises -
loops needles with bright yarn -
stocking feet beguile, sing.

Three
each night, my husband shields
gusts (Force Ten, on the Beaufort) -
each morning, rearranges dawn,
brings wonder on the tray with tea.

Texts continued

Four
my mother cradles
her grandchildren's children.

Five
ink, paper.
Ribbons of blue.

Six
each touch,
a trace of you.

Seven
love is a woven thing.

Force of Nature Jake Heggie/Albrink and Kelly

Force of Nature

"Force of nature." With knowing smiles,
Everybody keeps on telling me, "Emily,
Your mother was a force of nature!"

But they really have no idea.

She was a tornado!
Tearing trails through tangled brush,
Shaking the walls of my refuge.

She was Rain,
Warm, relentless, drenching doubts,
Flooding every crevice of my being.

She was Sun,
Bright, blazing, bearing down -
Too hot! It's hard to breathe.

Wind.
Soothing senses, soft caress
Cooling on my cheek.

Changing weather, force of nature,
My force.
My nature.

Texts continued

Space Mountain

DISNEYWORLD! SPACE MOUNTAIN!

I am five!

We've been standing in line for two hours.

"Yes! Yes! I'm sure I want to ride!"

Finally! Front of the line!

"Wait!

This is so big, so dark, so loud, so scary...no.

No!

I wanna go home right now!"

Mom looks at Dad -

"She's getting on that ride."

Kicking and screaming -

Not gonna work.

I'm in my seat and then -

Ah! "Let's do it again!"

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL! BEL CANTO CHOIR!

I am eleven!

Time to audition.

"Yes! Yes! I'm sure I want to sing!"

Finally! In the auditorium!

"Wait!

This is so big, so new, so loud, so scary...no.

No!

I wanna go home right now!"

Mom looks at Dad -

"She's getting on that stage."

Begging and bartering.

Not gonna work.

I take my place and then -

Ah.

Now I See You

Now I see you.

Mother. Woman. Musician.

Relentless in your work and in your love.

I understand you.

Desperate for connection.

Proud of your passions.

Steadfast in your values.

Unafraid to mold.

Brave enough to guide.

I see you.

I get you.

I thank you.

I love you.

Wind Symphony Personnel

Stephen P. Bolstad, *conductor*
Sarah Mason, *MM graduate assistant*

FLUTE/PICCOLO

Mihir Borah – Woodbridge
Megumi Kadarusman – Clifton
Ethan Linklater – Mechanicsville
#Joshua Lockhart – Lincoln Park, MI
*#Rebecca Needham – Palm Bay, FL

OBOE/ENGLISH HORN

Laura Huggins – Richmond
Cady Litteral – Sterling
*Will Slopnick – Norfolk

BASSOON

*David Kang – Chantilly
Michael Ross – Farmville

CLARINET

Jeanette Gilson – Chesapeake
Hunter LaFreniere – Williamsburg
#Sarah Mason – Grand Rapids, MN
*#Gregorio Paone – Bernalda, Italy
Grace Trembl – York, PA
Sophie Uy – Annandale
Leah White – Leesburg

BASS CLARINET

Ian Graff – Virginia Beach

ALTO SAXOPHONE

*Haven Kahn – Chesapeake
Tyrique Payne – Colonial Heights

TENOR SAXOPHONE

Thomas Allen – Stuarts Draft

BARITONE SAXOPHONE

Dylan Royal - Martinsville

PIANO

#Aleksandra Velgosha – Moscow, Russia
#Sarah Mason – Grand Rapids, MN

* denotes principal/co-principal
denotes graduate student

TRUMPET

*Owen Brown – Charlottesville
*Olivia Ellsworth – Richmond
Finn Marks – McLean
Jocelyn Moyer – Front Royal
#Peyton Phaller – Zephyr Hills, FL
Micah Wingfield – Harrisonburg

HORN

*Ainsley Hanson – Stuarts Draft
*Michael Parlier – Forest
Jacob Taylor – South Riding
Justin Ulmer – Mount Solon

TROMBONE

CJ Brown – Spotsylvania
*# William Commins – McLean
Quin Robinson – Warrenton

BASS TROMBONE

Teague Jenkins – Hanover

EUPHONIUM

Jake Cuppernull – Herndon
*Cory Shumaker – Staunton

TUBA

*John Kelley – Falls Church
Jake Munn – Newport News

STRING BASS

Jacob Minks – Centerville

PERCUSSION

*Blaze Benavides – Alice, TX
Adelaide Hofmann – Lorton
*Brian McDermott – Brookings, SD
Olivia Miller – Proctor, WV
Kobe Noel – Manassas
Jonathan Ramirez – Manassas
Grayson Creekmore – Conover, NC
#Josh Sheppard – Powhatan

The James Madison University Wind Symphony uses a rotational seating system to emphasize the importance of each performer. Therefore, each section is listed in alphabetical order.

JMU School of Music Statement of Community & Belonging

Difference in identity enriches our community, fosters artistic and intellectual growth, and is vital to creating thriving venues for expression in a global world. In addition to welcoming all individuals and perspectives regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, socio-economic status, or citizenship status, we wish to make the following acknowledgements and affirmations, adapted from Americans for the Arts:

- In the United States, there are systems of power that grant privilege and access unequally such that inequity and injustice result. We resolve to educate ourselves, keep vigilant watch, and act to bring an end to systemic oppression.
- Cultural equity—which embodies values, practices, and policies that ensure all people have access to, and are represented in, the arts—is critical to the sustained engagement of music in society.
- Acknowledging and challenging our inequities and working in partnership is how we will make change happen.
- Everyone deserves equal access to a full, vibrant creative life, which is essential to a healthy and democratic society.
- The prominent presence of musicians in society can challenge inequities and encourage alternatives.



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