



Chamber Music on Fifth II

Thursday December 4, 2025, 1:00pm

Piano Trio, Opus 15 (1855)
Moderato assai - Più animato
Allegro, ma non agitato
Finale. Presto

Bedřich Smetana
(1824-1884)

Jeremiah Blacklow, violin
Hannah Rubin, cello
Elżbieta Bilicka, piano

Rubispheres (2012)
DROM
Serenade
Revival

Valerie Coleman
(b. 1970)

Lucy Rubin, flute
Sakira Fujimoto, clarinet
Christian Whitacre, bassoon

Verklärte Nacht, Opus 4 (1899)

Arnold Schoenberg
(1874-1951)

Alexander Goldberg, violin
Emma Meinrenken, violin
Natalie Clarke, viola
Rosemary Nelis, viola
Jasmine Pai, cello
Hannah Rubin, cello

Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

Music in Midtown is a series of lunchtime concerts spotlighting the highly regarded musical performance program at the CUNY Graduate Center. Presented in the warm, intimate, acoustically rich Elebash Recital Hall, these performances feature the music program's renowned faculty, alumni, outstanding performers selected from students in the D.M.A. program and noted guest artists. Norman Carey is Director and John Musto is Assistant Director.

About the Program

Piano Trio in G minor by Bedřich Smetana is one of those unlucky gems that have not made it into the top tier of the chamber music canon and are far less frequently performed than they deserve. Audiences usually recognize Smetana's String Quartet in E minor, "From My Life" (1876), the composer's other autobiographical work, whose lighter and in many ways "easier" character secured it a firm place in the chamber repertoire. The Trio, admittedly darker and more demanding, nevertheless merits equal recognition. Its complexity, virtuosic flair, and unrestrained expressiveness exemplify prime Czech Romanticism, foreshadowing the music that would soon emerge from the likes of Brahms and Dvořák.

Bedřich Smetana's personal life was marked with uncommon intensity by loss and suffering. After burying his first wife and three infant daughters, developing tinnitus and eventually going deaf, he succumbed to madness most likely caused by syphilis. In this tapestry of misery, the Piano Trio reflects Smetana's attempt to grapple with grief after the death of his four-year-old daughter Bedřiška from scarlet fever. He was only thirty-one at the time.

The first movement opens with a powerful exclamation from the solo violin. This extroverted, grief-stricken theme is soon taken up by the cello and the piano, later drawing all three instruments into a dense, restless fugato. As expected in sonata form, the second theme provides contrast in the shape of a lyrical melody — according to Smetana, borrowed from his late daughter's favorite song.

The second movement sheds the Brahmsian heaviness and becomes more anxious than despairing. This intriguing scherzo, spun out across meandering unisons between the instruments, evokes Eastern European folk music both in the main section and in the first of the two *alternativos* (Smetana's term for the trio). Striking in its simplicity and innocence, this first interlude evokes the image of a child. The second *alternativo* enters with an entirely different gravitas: a march torn between dignity, despair, and hope.

The finale has been interpreted by some as an evocation of Schubert's *Erlkönig*, with the galloping horse carrying a father in his desperate attempt to outrun death as it reaches for his son. The restless *perpetuum mobile* is abruptly halted by the serene second theme. Its initial, innocent simplicity is often compared to the portrayal of a child, later transformed into a grown woman when the theme returns in a more flamboyant, rhapsodic guise. The two themes, death and the child, eventually become locked in an exchange between the piano and the strings, descending through the registers toward the focal point of the work: the funeral march. From this final face-to-face encounter with the grief the piece has tried either to elude or to outrun, the *Presto* bursts forth into a virtuosic coda and a triumphant G major.

Notes by Elżbieta Bilicka

A series of chamber suites for wind trio exploring the vibrant night club scene in New York City, Valerie Coleman's **Rubispheres** was composed in 2012 as an homage to jazz clubs in the Lower East Side, the neighborhood of Washington Heights, and the spirit of a Baptist Revival. The first movement is directly inspired by the night club DROM in the Lower East Side where the piece was premiered in December 2012. Known as an artistic haven with an experimental and

eclectic atmosphere, this fast-paced movement is incredibly rhythmic with virtuosic melodies and groovy bass lines.

The second movement “Serenade,” is a reflective ballad offering a break from the freneticism of the other two movements filled with rich chords and soulful melodies. Coleman’s inspiration for this movement surprisingly came from a horrible case of writers block along with a productive two-hour nap session:

I had a deadline to complete and found myself frozen, unable to generate ideas. Out of nowhere, my daughter (then two years of age) began to cry and motioned a demand to be lifted up into my arms. In the instant that she fell asleep, cradled in my arms, I freed a hand and reached out to the computer to correct a typo, but instead, the creative process turned on. While comforting her in one arm, the tenderness I felt for her in that moment suddenly created a headspace of unexpected serenity that allowed me to finish the movement — in one sitting with my free hand. Within a two-hour nap, the second movement of *Rubispheres* was Written.

The third movement “Revival,” is an exciting flurry of vibrant lines throughout the piece with the three instruments joining in powerful unisons then quickly contrasting with schmaltzy melodies. Inspired by the spirit of traditional southern baptisms, Coleman notes:

“Revival” brings the fervor of old southern baptisms held down by the river in juxtaposition to bebop. There is a spiritual renewal that occurs within a revival, full of shouts and dancing; the vigorous riffs and „punk-tuations“ drench the oldschool memory with a modern youthful sound. As doublings leap and shift within the orchestration of a simple composite melody, I felt motivated to transform woodwind instruments into a sound that is non-traditional, substantial, virtuosic and ALIVE!

Notes by Christian Whitacre

Writing about a piece as textually rich as Arnold Schönberg’s *Verklärte Nacht*, one cannot avoid stumbling upon its title. Why *verklärte*, “transfigured”? *Verklären*, the verb, literally means to transfigure; the title is usually translated as “Transfigured Night.” Yet *verklären* is often used figuratively to connote romanticization or idealization: to transfigure and beautify in one’s mind a harsher reality. Its most famous use, which established it in modern German, came in Martin Luther’s translation of the bible, Matthew 17:2: “*Und er ward verklärt vor ihnen, und sein Angesicht leuchtete wie die Sonne, und seine Kleider wurden weiß wie ein Licht.*” (And he was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.) Closer to Schönberg’s time, Friedrich Nietzsche played upon this meaning in *the Birth of Tragedy*, associating *verklären* with the Apollonian “*verklärenden Umrahmung*” (transfiguring frame) or “*apollinische Traumeszustand*” (Apollonian dreamstate) that “*löste...Realität gleichsam in eine geisterhafte Unwirklichkeit auf*” (dissolved reality, as it were, into a ghostly unreality).

The verb *verklären* has the power to raise its objects up to heaven and drag them down to Hades. Two spectra of transfiguratory possibility stand before us when confronted with this pregnant word. The same multivalence holds for our most fundamental musical material, the harmonic series. Contained within the harmonic series’ first four sonorities is the major triad. If we inverted the harmonic series, a conceptual maneuver that can occur only in thought, not in nature, we would find that a minor triad is created from the same root. In the simplest way, we can similarly understand the fundamental transfiguration that occurs in Schönberg’s piece: from D minor of doubt to D major of ecstasy.

In Dehmel’s poem (printed below), the female speaker begins consumed by worry that, seeing her purity in a patriarchal sexual ethic stained, her male companion will discard her. Despite

the materiality of their linked and trudging step, she dwells in a sphere of thought, consumed by hinterworldly worries of sexual morality. The male speaker's affirmation of love—of worldly, embodied love, a love that includes even her carnal experience of another man and pregnancy thereof—brings the poem's mental locus from fearful dream to shuddering, joyful reality. We move from hypothetical minor to actual major.

Yet from our philological excursion we can see the fundamental temporality of semantic, and musical, objects. As David Lewin famously remarked, we experience music with "the attitude of someone inside the music, as idealized dancer and/or singer"—we ask ourselves how we get from point A to point B. Each use of a word impalpably shapes its connotation, imbuing it with our utterance's unique life. A conversation, or dialogue, just like a chord, is made up of many voices. As we turn words over with our mind's tongues, we shape them, carving new grooves into the stone tablets of meaning. Like six hands on an invisible ouija board, each member of the sextet pulls us from one harmony to the next, every note changes a sinuous transformation within, but also making up, the grander transfiguration of the piece. Motives, too, become shaped by our many hands and ears: consider the heartbeat, or footsteps, of the beginning, which reach a fever pitch and then a glorious, trembling detumescence, or the initial melody of a descending scale, which similarly undergoes many phantasmagoric shifts. Every one is a transfiguration; no single one is.

Notes by Alexander Goldberg

Verklärte Nacht Richard Dehmel
Transfigured Night translation by Mary Whittall

Zwei Menschen gehn durch kahlen, kalten Hain;
der Mond läuft mit, sie schau'n hinein.
Der Mond läuft über hohe Eichen;
kein Wölkchen trübt das Himmelslicht,
in das die schwarzen Zacken reichen.
Die Stimme eines Weibes spricht:

Ich trag ein Kind, und nit von Dir,
ich geh in Sünde neben Dir.
Ich hab mich schwer an mir vergangen.
Ich glaubte nicht mehr an ein Glück

und hatte doch ein schwer Verlangen
nach Lebensinhalt, nach Mutterglück

und Pflicht; da hab ich mich erfrecht,
da ließ ich schauernd mein Geschlecht
von einem fremden Mann umfassen,
und hab mich noch dafür gesegnet.
Nun hat das Leben sich gerächt:
nun bin ich Dir, o Dir, begegnet.

Sie geht mit ungelenkem Schritt.
Sie schaut empor; der Mond läuft mit.
Ihr dunkler Blick ertrinkt in Licht.
Die Stimme eines Mannes spricht:

Das Kind, das Du empfangen hast,
sei Deiner Seele keine Last,
o sieh, wie klar das Weltall schimmert!
Es ist ein Glanz um alles her;
Du treibst mit mir auf kaltem Meer,
doch eine eigne Wärme flimmert
von Dir in mich, von mir in Dich.
Die wird das fremde Kind verklären,
Du wirst es mir, von mir gebären;
Du hast den Glanz in mich gebracht,
Du hast mich selbst zum Kind gemacht.

Er faßt sie um die starken Hüften.
Ihr Atem küßt sich in den Lüften.
Zwei Menschen gehn durch hohe, helle Nacht.

*Two people are walking through a bare, cold wood;
the moon keeps pace with them and draws their gaze.
The moon moves along above tall oak trees,
there is no wisp of cloud to obscure the radiance
to which the black, jagged tips reach up.
A woman's voice speaks:*

*"I am carrying a child, and not by you.
I am walking here with you in a state of sin.
I have offended grievously against myself.
I despaired of happiness,*

*and yet I still felt a grievous longing
for life's fullness, for a mother's joys*

*and duties; and so I sinned,
and so I yielded, shuddering, my sex
to the embrace of a stranger,
and even thought myself blessed.
Now life has taken its revenge,
and I have met you, met you."*

*She walks on, stumbling.
She looks up; the moon keeps pace.
Her dark gaze drowns in light.
A man's voice speaks:*

*"Do not let the child you have conceived
be a burden on your soul.
Look, how brightly the universe shines!
Splendour falls on everything around,
you are voyaging with me on a cold sea,
but there is the glow of an inner warmth
from you in me, from me in you.
That warmth will transfigure the stranger's child,
and you bear it me, begot by me.
You have transfused me with splendour,
you have made a child of me."*

*He puts an arm about her strong hips.
Their breath embraces in the air.
Two people walk on through the high, bright night.*

About the Performers

Pianist **Elżbieta Bilicka** is the first-prize winner of numerous international competitions, including G-clef (South Korea), Walled City (Ireland), and Putra (Malaysia) and is a laureate of the Olga Kern (New Mexico), Paderewski (Poland) and the NIFC Chopin (Poland) competitions. She was awarded the prestigious “Young Poland” Scholarship from the Polish Minister of Culture in 2018 and 2023.

Ms. Bilicka has performed as concerto soloist and recitalist across Poland, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, and the United States. Her performances have been broadcast on BBC Radio, Central New York’s Classic FM, Polish TV-Culture and Radio Koszalin. Her debut album, *Lights and Shadows* (Centaur) received critical plaudits from American Record Guide, Classical Sentinel, and Fanfare Magazine, which praised her “strong poetic streak.”

Elżbieta Bilicka holds degrees from the Feliks Nowowiejski Academy of Music in Bydgoszcz, Poland, the Haute École de Musique in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Manhattan School of Music in New York, NY, where she studied under the tutelage of Katarzyna Popowa-Zydroń, Nelson Goerner, and Olga Kern. She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the CUNY Graduate Center, where she studied with Norman Carey and is presently continuing under Nicolas Namoradze.

An avid chamber musician and scholar, violinist **Jeremiah Blacklow** is known for his sincere playing and uniquely personal style. He began studying violin when he was three and debuted in Carnegie’s Weill Hall at the age of eight. As a performer, Jeremiah has taken the stage at important cultural centers across the globe including Incheon’s Tri-Bowl, London’s Queen Elizabeth Hall, New York’s DiMenna Center, Marlboro Music, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Jeremiah received his undergraduate degree from Harvard College majoring in Slavic Languages and Literature and completed his Masters in violin performance at the Juilliard School with the support of Dorothy Starling and Fidelity Foundation Scholarships. Jeremiah owes much of his musical growth to devoted teachers Catherine Cho and Itzhak Perlman, who both guided him for over a decade. He is currently a Graduate Center Fellow pursuing a doctoral degree at City University of New York, where he studies with Mark Steinberg.

Jeremiah is a founding member of the Renaissance String Quartet, alongside violinist Randall Goosby, cellist Daniel Hass, and violist Jameel Martin. His work with the quartet has helped fulfill his passion for chamber music and his dedication to community engagement. As a part of every concert tour, the quartet connects with local schools and youth programs to give masterclasses and teach workshops. On his own, Jeremiah has taught over a dozen students through the music program at Zeta Charter Schools in the South Bronx. He is committed to sharing the artistic expression of classical music with people from all communities.

Jeremiah is the Principal Second Violin of the Glimmerglass Opera Festival and a featured artist of The Omega Ensemble. He plays an 1856 Giuseppe Rocca violin, formerly used by legendary violinist Maud Powell.

Natalie Clarke is a violist from the Chicago suburbs and is an active solo and chamber performer. She is currently pursuing her Doctor of Musical Arts at CUNY Graduate Center where she is studying with Mark Steinberg. She received her undergraduate and master's degrees from The Juilliard School where her previous mentors included Misha Amory, Heidi Castleman, and Hsin-Yun Huang.

Natalie has greatly enjoyed spending her summers performing at international music festivals, most recently the Taos School of Music, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Perlman Music Program, Bowdoin International Music Festival, and Aspen Music Festival and School. She has collaborated with members of the Brentano Quartet, Juilliard Quartet, Miró Quartet, and Ying Quartet and has participated in masterclasses led by Itzhak Perlman and Peter Oundjian. She has received gold medals at the Fischhoff National Chamber Competition, Rembrandt High School Music Competition and has been recognized at the Saint Paul String Quartet Competition and the Walgreens International Concerto Competition.

Natalie has a strong passion for new music and enjoys performing new works and getting the chance to collaborate with composers. One of her biggest sources of inspiration is her work in musical outreach performances, where she has curated programs for nursing homes, homeless shelters, after-school programs, hospital waiting rooms, and many others. In addition to playing the viola, she enjoys traveling and exploring new places, running, cooking, and playing soccer.

Japanese clarinetist **Sakira Fujimoto** is recognized for her versatility and deep passion for musical collaboration. She has appeared at distinguished venues in the United States and Japan, including Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, National Sawdust, the DiMenna Center, Dolce Osaka Artist Hall, ROHM Theater Kyoto, and Amashin Archaic Hall. She has garnered top prizes at competitions such as the New York Young Virtuoso Competition, the Camerata Artists International Competition, and the Purchase College Concerto Competition, as well as the Molnar/Harris Chamber Music Prize, and received honorable mention in the Arthur Balsam Competition. Fujimoto has participated in renowned festivals and programs including the Aspen Music Festival, the Euro-Japan Buffet Crampon Seminar, and the New York Youth Orchestra. She earned her bachelor's degree from SUNY Purchase College under Ayako Oshima, her master's degree from the Manhattan School of Music under Charles Neidich and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the CUNY Graduate Center, continuing her studies with Charles Neidich.

Praised for his “fierce and sensitive” performances, American-Italian violinist **Alexander Franco Goldberg** has performed as a soloist with orchestras across the U.S. and Europe, including recent concerts with the Geringas Chamber Orchestra in the Berliner Philharmonie and the Yale Philharmonia and Yale Symphony in Woolsey Hall, and was an invited guest at Estovest and Contemporart festivals. This fall he will perform Berio's Corale in Bing Auditorium with the Stanford Philharmonia Orchestra. He won the Reate Festival International Contemporary Music Competition. He was a founding member of the Accademia Chigiana Chamber Ensemble, participated in the Lucerne Festival's Contemporary Academy, and the Geneva International String Academy. His recent seasons have included concerts with members of the Brentano, Borromeo, Aviv, and Alban Berg String Quartets, Ensemble Intercontemporain, and collaborative performances with Peter Bruns, Patrick Gallois, Fabrice Pierre, Franco Petracchi, and Gilles Apap. In 2024, Alexander was selected for a Fulbright research fellowship for his work on the compositions of Luciano Berio. He is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Violin Performance at the CUNY Graduate Center with Mark Steinberg. His previous studies include studies with Donald Weilerstein at the New England Conservatory and Salvatore Accardo at the Stauffer Center for Strings in Cremona and the Accademia Chigiana in Siena. He received his Master's in Violin Performance from Ani Kavafian at the Yale School of Music as part of Yale's B.A./M.M. dual-degree program, from which he also graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree in philosophy.

Canadian-German violinist **Emma Meinrenken** is a musician praised for her virtuosity and unique interpretations of both contemporary and standard repertoire. She is the recipient of Yale's Presser Foundation Award and a Sylva Gelber Foundation Award, and other prizes include 1st place at the Stradivarius International Violin Competition and the Prix Ravel at the Ecole d'art américaines de Fontainebleau.

She has performed in many prestigious music festivals worldwide, including the Verbier Festival Academy, Norfolk Music Festival, NUME Festival, Festival of the Sound, and Four Seasons Workshop. She has recently co-founded a concert series, Music Around the Corner, which focuses on highlighting Canadian music and unique community spaces in Toronto. Meinrenken debuted with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 2011 and has since soloed with orchestras across North America and Europe.

Collaborations with composers are a major feature of her career, and she made her Carnegie Hall debut giving the New York premiere of a work by Fred Lerdahl. Recent projects include being the soloist and dedicatee for the premiere of Maya Miro Johnson's Violin Concerto, and an upcoming solo feature at Bang on a Can's 'Long Play' Festival in May 2026.

She has a Bachelor of Music from the Curtis Institute of Music, where she studied with Ida Kavafian and was awarded the Milka Violin Artist Prize upon graduating. She recently received her Master of Musical Arts from the Yale School of Music under the tutelage of Augustin Hadelich and started her Doctor of Musical Arts at CUNY in the fall of 2025 with Mark Steinberg.

Violist **Rosemary Nelis** has performed as a chamber musician and soloist throughout the United States and Europe. Major performances include American premieres of works by composers Brett Dean, Hilda Paredes, Jörg Widmann, in addition to the New York City premiere of György Kurtág's ...Concertante... for solo violin, solo viola and orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

Nelis has spent summers performing chamber music at Yellow Barn, Bard Music Festival, and Kneisel Hall. Nelis has served as faculty at Kinhaven Music School (2022) and Yellow Barn Young Artist Program (2024-25) and is currently faculty at Valley of the Moon Music Festival, Special Music School, the Eisman Center at Queens College, and Montclair State University. Nelis plays on a 1991 viola made by the Brooklyn-based maker Samuel Zygmuntowicz.

Nelis holds a B.M. and B.A. from Bard College Conservatory of Music, where she studied viola with Steven Tenenbom and majored in Chinese Language and Literature. Nelis was the proud recipient of a Kovner Fellowship during her master's studies at The Juilliard School, where she worked with Roger Tapping and Misha Amory. She is currently a Doctoral Fellow at the CUNY Graduate Center, where she studies with Mark Steinberg.

Taiwanese-American cellist **Jasmine Pai** is a prizewinner of competitions including the Queens Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition, Pearl & Julius Young Competition, Vivo International Music Competition, Lyra Competition, National YoungArts Competition, and was recently awarded the Aldo Parisot Prize for "gifted cellists who show promise for a concert career" at the Yale School of Music. A devoted chamber musician, Jasmine has shared performances at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Jordan Hall, Fischhoff Chamber Competition, and the Oneppo Chamber Music Series, and at festivals such as the Valley of the Moon Music Festival in Sonoma, Taos School of Music, Aspen Music Festival, Sarasota Music Festival, Great Mountains Music Festival, and the Pinchas Zukerman Young Artist Program. With her quartet at Yale, she was a winner of the Chamber competition and awarded the Broadus Erle

Prize for “outstanding quartet.” As an orchestral musician, Jasmine is a tenured member of the Opera Philadelphia and frequently performs with the Princeton Symphony Orchestra.

Originally from New Jersey, Jasmine Pai began her cello studies with Madeleine Golz. She received her B.M. from Northwestern University with Hans Jørgen Jensen, M.M. from the New England Conservatory of Music with Yeesun Kim, M.M.A. from the Yale School of Music with Paul Watkins, and is currently a doctoral candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center with Julia Lichten.

Hannah Rubin is a cellist from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania who enjoys collaborating and performing with colleagues throughout NYC while pursuing her Doctor of Musical Arts at CUNY under the tutelage of Mark Steinberg. Her previous mentors include Timothy Eddy at the Juilliard School and Steven Doane and Rosemary Elliott at the Eastman School of Music, where she also received a Bachelor of Arts in Biology. She has performed solo and in chamber groups on stages from the Kennedy Center in D.C. and Carnegie Hall in New York to Hallgrímskirkja in Reykjavik and Trolldhugen in Norway, and has participated in masterclasses with Claudio Bohórquez, Frans Helmerson, Gary Hoffman, and the Takács, Schumann, Jupiter, and St. Lawrence quartets. Some of her most recent appearances at international music festivals include the IMS Prussia Cove masterclasses, Ravinia Steans Music Institute, Kneisel Hall, and Colorado College. She spends her free time exploring her passion for music outreach in the greater NYC area, as well as reading, playing soccer, and cat-sitting in various apartments throughout the city.

Originally from Highland Park, Illinois, **Lucy Rubin** is an NYC-based flutist and educator recognized for weaving expressive performance with innovative musical exploration. Most recently, she won first prize in the Colorado Flute Association Young Artist Competition and second prize in the Rochester Flute Association Emerging Artist Competition. As an international performer, she has appeared in Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Canada, and the United States.

Lucy is the curator of *Silenced Scores*, a lecture-recital series dedicated to reviving the lost, forbidden, and forgotten works of composers censored by WWII and the Holocaust. Her first performance of this repertoire took place in 2025, and she continues to bring these suppressed voices to concert stages, academic institutions, and community spaces worldwide. Being a versatile performer and scholar, Lucy is a committed advocate for new music, frequently performing and collaborating with composers in New York City and beyond. She has held principal positions at several festivals, including the Berlin Opera Academy, PRISMA, and Mostly Modern Festival.

Alongside her performance and research, Lucy is deeply committed to music education and arts administration, dedicated to creating an inclusive, supportive, and inspirational environment for students of all ages and levels. She serves as a music theory tutor and substitute faculty at the Manhattan School of Music Precollege and maintains an active flute studio in New York City.

Lucy is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts at The Graduate Center, CUNY, continuing her work with Linda Chesis, with whom she previously completed her Master of Music in Classical Flute at the Manhattan School of Music. She was a First Honor Graduate and named a Presser Scholar at the University of Georgia, where she earned her Bachelor of Music in Performance and Music Theory under Angela Jones-Reus. She recently completed the OAcademy Music Conservatory’s 2025 Cohort, receiving an Artist Diploma with Distinction in Performance Leadership as well as a Contemporary Collaboration Certificate while studying with Leone Buyse. Other notable mentors include Lindsey Goodman and Hideko Amano.

Hailing from a rural Virginian farm, bassoonist **Christian Whitacre** is an NYC-based orchestral and chamber musician. As an orchestral performer, this season's highlights include performances with the American Pops Orchestra, Alexandria Symphony, Harrisburg Symphony, WA Sinfonietta and the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra. In past seasons, Christian has performed with the Washington National Opera, the New World Symphony, Washington Chamber Orchestra, Atlantic Symphony, and Philharmonia Boston on stages ranging from the Kennedy Center to the Santo Domingo Conservatory. He has served as Guest Principal Bassoon of the Great Falls Philharmonic since 2023.

As a chamber musician, Whitacre has been hailed as “dynamic and electrifying” as the bassoonist of IGNIS, a nationally award-winning wind quintet founded in 2021. IGNIS won the Grand Prize in the 2023 NOLA Chamberfest Emerging Artists Competition and medaled at the 50th Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. The group also served as the Ensemble-In-Residence at The University of New Orleans in 2023 along with the Maine Chamber Music Seminar in 2022.

Passionate about contemporary music and pushing the boundaries of the classical canon, Whitacre performed as principal bassoon with the inaugural American Modern Orchestra as well as the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra. His extensive new music repertoire includes the commissioning and world premiere of multiple pieces for bassoon and electronics, most recently *Outliers* (2024) by Peter Knoll in collaboration with Grammy-nominated ensemble Sandbox Percussion. In 2024, he was featured on a studio recording of Viet Cuong's *Trains of Thought* (2012) for piano trio alongside Jaqueline Leclair and Pamela Reiner.

Whitacre has completed fellowships at the Lucerne Festival Academy, Bowdoin International Music Festival, Miami Music Festival, and Kent Blossom Music Festival. Whitacre is a currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts at the CUNY Graduate Center studying with Gina Cuffari. Whitacre has received a Master of Music from the University of Maryland as a Wind Quintet Fellow, a bachelor's from the New England Conservatory, and a Professional Certificate from the Mannes School of Music. His primary mentors have included Rebekah Heller, Joseph Grimmer, Richard Svoboda, William Winstead, and Rachael Elliot.