

BALTIMORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

BSO SESSIONS

Marin Alsop, Music Director, Harvey M. and Lyn P. Meyerhoff Chair
Peter T. Kjome, President and CEO



BSO SESSIONS

SEASON 1, EPISODE 2: UNEXPECTED JOURNEYS

Nicholas Hersh, conductor
Audrey Wright, violin

JESSIE MONTGOMERY

Starburst for String Orchestra

Strum for String Orchestra

Source Code for String Orchestra

Rhapsody No. 1 for Solo Violin

Associate Concertmaster Audrey Wright

Banner for String Quartet and String Orchestra

Voodoo Dolls for String Quartet

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JESSIE MONTGOMERY

“I imagine that music is a meeting place at which all people can converse about their unique differences and common stories.”



ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Born 1981 in New York City, U.S.

- Jessie Montgomery was born and raised in Manhattan’s Lower East Side in the 1980s during a pivotal moment in the neighborhood’s history. Artists gravitated there, and it was a hotbed of cultural activity and community development.
- Montgomery’s father and mother, a musician and artist respectively, were engaged in the activities of the neighborhood and regularly brought Montgomery 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 Montgomery has created a life in which performance, creativity, and advocacy merge.
- Montgomery encapsulates the 21st century American sound and experience in her works, expertly blending classical music with vernacular music, improvisation, language, and social justice.
- A graduate of The Juilliard School and New York University, Montgomery’s music is sought after by some of the most prominent organizations throughout the U.S., including the New York Philharmonic; the Dance Theatre of Harlem; Orpheus Chamber Orchestra; and the Sphinx Organization, an organization “dedicated to transforming lives through the power of diversity in the arts.” She currently serves as composer-in-residence for the Sphinx Virtuosi, the organization’s flagship professional touring ensemble, and is a Graduate Fellow in Music Composition at Princeton University.
- In addition to her success as a composer, Montgomery also enjoys an active career as a violinist. She appears frequently with the Silkroad Ensemble and Sphinx Virtuosi and is a member of the Catalyst Quartet and PUBLIQuartet, which she co-founded.

Starburst

By Jessie Montgomery

- *Starburst*, written in 2012, is the first piece on Montgomery's first full album *Strum: Music for Strings*.
- The work opens Montgomery's album with driving force and displays a riveting interplay between the instrumentalists.
- The piece was composed for the Sphinx Virtuosi. According to Montgomery, "a common definition of starburst is the rapid formation of large numbers of new stars in a galaxy at a rate high enough to alter the structure of the galaxy significantly—this definition lends itself almost literally to the nature of the Sphinx Virtuosi."

Strum for String Orchestra

By Jessie Montgomery

- *Strum* was originally written in 2006 when Montgomery was just 25 years old. The piece has gone through several iterations over time with the final edition that appears on the album completed in 2012. The final version of the piece was written for the Catalyst Quartet, of which Montgomery is a member.
- Montgomery uses the plucking of strings to develop a reoccurring musical fragment that serves as the foundation of the piece. Within this foundation, a beautiful array of melodies weave in and out.
- The piece, which draws on American folk idioms and encapsulates the spirit of dance and movement, has been described by *The Washington Post* as sounding "like a handful of American folk melodies, tossed into a strong wind, cascading, and tumbling joyfully around one another."

THE WORLD AT A GLANCE

2012

⋮

MUSIC

Death of Whitney Houston

⋮

FILM

The Hunger Games

⋮

LITERATURE

Final print edition of the
Encyclopedia Britannica

⋮

ART

Amy Sherald's
"Grand Dame Queenie"

⋮

SPORTS

Usain Bolt sets
three world records

⋮

HISTORY

Vladimir Putin elected
President of Russia

Source Code for String Orchestra

By Jessie Montgomery

- *Source Code* was commissioned by the Isaiah Fund for New Initiatives in partnership with Symphony Space who requested a work that addressed what it meant to be American.
- According to Montgomery, the first sketches of this piece began as transcriptions of various sources from African American artists prominent during the peak of the U.S. Civil Rights era, including Alvin Ailey, Langston Hughes, Rita Dove, and Ella Fitzgerald.
- Montgomery has said the work “centers on a melody based on syntax derived from black spirituals...which are a significant part of the DNA of Black folk music, and subsequently most (arguably all) American pop music forms that have developed to the present day.”

Rhapsody No. 1 for Solo Violin

By Jessie Montgomery

- This solo work written in 2013 is the first in a series of six that Montgomery plans to write for different solo instruments. The final suite will bring together all of the instruments in the collection for a culminating chamber work.
- The series pays homage to the tradition of J.S. Bach’s works for solo instruments, and each piece in the series will be written collaboratively with the premier performer.
- The violinist for the collection, Montgomery premiered the piece in New York City in June 2014.

THE WORLD AT A GLANCE

2013

⋮

MUSIC

Caroline Shaw awarded Pulitzer Prize

⋮

SPORTS

Ravens win the Superbowl

⋮

LITERATURE

Donna Tartt’s *The Goldfinch*

⋮

TECHNOLOGY

3D printer used to print a lab-grown ear

⋮

HISTORY

Same sex marriage is federally recognized in the U.S.

***Banner* for String Quartet and String Orchestra**

By Jessie Montgomery

- *Banner*, a tribute to the bicentennial anniversary of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” is a rhapsody on the anthem’s theme written in 2014.
- Montgomery explores the question “what does an anthem for the 21st century sound like in today’s multi-cultural environment?”
- The work pulls from anthems, civil rights songs, and folk melodies from around the world.
- The piece takes a reflective look at the U.S. national anthem and the inconsistencies in the nation’s history, making the piece more timely than ever. Montgomery shares “The Star-Spangled Banner” is an “ideal subject for exploration in contradictions.” For most Americans the song represents a paradigm of liberty and solidarity against fierce odds, and for others it implies a contradiction between the ideals of freedom and the realities of injustice and oppression... In 2014, a tribute to the U.S. national anthem means acknowledging the contradictions, leaps and bounds, and milestones that allow us to celebrate and maintain the tradition of our ideals.”



THE WORLD AT A GLANCE

2014

⋮

MUSIC

Pharrell Williams’
“Happy”

⋮

FILM

Disney’s *Frozen*

⋮

LITERATURE

Anthony Doerr’s
*All The Light
We Cannot See*

⋮

SPORTS

Germany wins
World Cup

⋮

HISTORY

Flint Water Crisis begins

Voodoo Dolls for String Quartet

By Jessie Montgomery

- *Voodoo Dolls* was commissioned by JUMP Dance Company, a youth dance company, in 2008.
- The dance choreography was designed to have each suite represent a different traditional children's doll.
- The work is influenced by West African drumming patterns and includes places for improvisation from the performers throughout the work.



As part of the BSO's Symphony in the City series, the BSO performed Jessie Montgomery's *Starburst* at the New Psalmist Baptist Church on February 21, 2020.

THE WORLD AT A GLANCE

2008



MUSIC

Launch of Spotify



LITERATURE

Toni Morrison's
A Mercy



TECHNOLOGY

The Large Hadron Collider is inaugurated



FILM

No Country for Old Men
wins Best Picture



HISTORY

Barack Obama is elected
President of the U.S.

Women in Philanthropy



The law firm of Gordon Feinblatt is committed to supporting the community where its lawyers, administrators, and other legal professionals live and work. The Firm believes that diversity in leadership enhances the Firm's ability to respond to the needs of a dynamic and ever-changing business community and is pleased to be the program sponsor of Episode 2 of BSO Sessions featuring the works of Jessie Montgomery.

In 2017, the Firm reevaluated its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts by launching a comprehensive initiative aimed at addressing three core pillars related to inclusion: recruitment, retention, and community involvement.

That effort built and expands upon the Firm's existing Women's Alliance, a networking group where female attorneys seek mentorship and learn about business development opportunities. The Alliance has ensured that women's initiatives for all women at Gordon Feinblatt remain a key commitment and focus of the Firm.

In line with our commitment to representing the voices of those heard less often, including women, the BSO acknowledges that this work is being done in other fields, too. We would like to recognize several outstanding Gordon Feinblatt women:

Carol Ghingher Cooper, Chair of the Firm's Family Law practice and Board Member of the Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc.

Laura Johnson, Chair of the Women's Alliance and Former President of the Board of Harford Family House

Alexandria Montanio, Gordon Feinblatt's Corporate Social Responsibility Administrator and outgoing Board Member of Dundalk Renaissance Corporation

Lynn Sassin, Chair of the Firm's Trusts and Estates practice and Board Member of the Associated Jewish Charities of Baltimore

Michele Walsh, Chair of the Business, Emerging Businesses, and Securities teams and Immediate Past President of There Goes My Hero Foundation

Margaret Witherup, Chair of the Firm's Energy and Environmental practice and General Counsel of CREW, Commercial Real Estate Women

Danielle Zoller, Chair of the Firm's Real Estate team and the Firm's Community Engagement Committee

Mary-Jo Ford, Legal Administrative Assistant and Assistant to BSO Chair, Barry F. Rosen, who has volunteered for years at Loaves and Fishes

Lisa Jacobs-Brown, a Legal Administrative Assistant in the Firm's Personal Injury Practice Group

Gordon Feinblatt provides services and supports many causes and organizations throughout Maryland — with the BSO being one of them. Those previously mentioned are just a few.

Gordon Feinblatt celebrates the trailblazing efforts of all of the women professionals who make Gordon Feinblatt special, and who provide extraordinary service to Gordon Feinblatt's clients. Their impact is significant, and the BSO sends a very special thank you!