

*Seventy-third Season 2023–24*

# The Westchester Chamber Music Society



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The Westchester Chamber Music Society (WCMS)  
is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

Sunday, March 10, 2024  
Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester  
Rye, New York

## *The Westchester Chamber Music Society*

*presents*

### THE AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET

Kevin Cobb, *trumpet*  
Brandon Ridenour, *trumpet*  
Eric Reed, *horn*  
Hillary Simms, *trombone*  
John D. Rojak, *bass trombone*

### PORT CHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL BRASS QUARTET

Adam Van Der Wateren, *trumpet*  
Alan Grande, *trumpet*  
Angel Gonzalez, *horn*  
Aiden Escobar, *trombone*



Dmitriy Bortniansky (1751–1825)  
arr. Himie Voxman  
*Divine Praise*

Bedrich Smetana (1824–1884)  
arr. Himie Voxman  
*Chorus of the Peasants from  
“The Bartered Bride”*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)  
arr. Walter Beeler  
*Two Equale*

***Pause***  
***Please remain seated***

A Suite of 17th Century Dances  
(Raymond Mase, ed.)

Thomas Simpson (1582–1628)

*Intrada*

William Brade (1560–1630)

*Paduana*

Simpson—Brade

*Galliard—Galliard*

Anthony Barfield (1983– )

*Samsāra* (2022)

Jennifer Higdon (1962– )

*Book of Brass* (2022)

### **INTERMISSION**

Reena Esmail (1983– )

*Khirkiyaan: Three Transformations  
for Brass Quintet* (2015/2017)

*I. Jog*

*II. Joota*

*III. Tuttarana*

Three Madrigals

Carlo Gesualdo (1566–1613)

(Brandon Ridenour, ed.)

*I. Deh, come invan sospiro*

*II. Io pur respiro in così gran dolore*

*III. Itene, o miei sospiri*

David Biedenbender (1984– )

*Sacred Geometry* (2022)

*1. Ripples*

*2. Gaudí*

*3. Nautilus*

*4. Helix*

*Following the concert, there will be a Question & Answer session  
with the professional and student musicians.*

## About This Performance

This afternoon's concert, featuring the American Brass Quintet (ABQ), is a first in the history of the Westchester Chamber Music Society (WCMS). Unlike traditional chamber music groups like the string quartet, string trio, or the piano trio, the brass quintet, as a professional entity, dates from less than a century ago. In North America, it was the year 1954 that marked the founding of the first such ensemble, the New York Brass Quintet. It was soon followed by such groups as the American Brass Quintet, the Chicago Brass Quintet, the Eastman Brass Quintet, and Canadian Brass. As for repertoire, these groups have all tended to offer a mix of transcriptions of chansons, madrigals, and such from the Renaissance as well as from Elizabethan and Jacobean England—many of these, by a happy coincidence, involve five voice parts—and original, often commissioned, contemporary compositions. Today's program represents precisely this kind of mix. That said, the American Brass Quintet is to be commended for the rich diversity and inclusiveness of its programming.

WCMS is continuing its Youth Initiative to partner with chamber-music programs at schools and colleges across Westchester County. This Initiative is part of an intergenerational focus that has been shaping our programming and outreach. WCMS is committed to supporting young performers and engaging more listeners from every age group. We are inviting young performers and listeners to become youthful ambassadors who can advocate for chamber music in all its diversity. High-school students may also be able to use their participation to satisfy community-service requirements. At this concert, we are delighted to welcome a brass quartet from Port Chester Middle School, a group nurtured by their inspiring instrumental teacher, Ulysses Torres. They will be performing three brief selections to open this afternoon's program. They are all transcriptions or arrangements.

**The American Brass Quintet** is internationally recognized as one of the premier chamber music ensembles of our time, celebrated for peerless leadership in the brass world. "The most distinguished" of brass quintets (American Record Guide), ABQ has earned its stellar reputation through its celebrated performances, genre-defining commissioned works, and an ongoing commitment to the education of generations of musicians.

A recipient of Chamber Music America's highest honor, the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award for significant and lasting contributions to the field, the group's rich history includes performances on five continents, a discography of over sixty recordings, and the premieres of over one hundred fifty contemporary brass works. Since its founding in 1960, the commissioned works of esteemed composers have contributed

significantly to both contemporary chamber music and the foundation of the modern brass quintet repertoire. Such composers include Elliott Carter, Eric Ewazen, Jennifer Higdon, Anthony Plog, Huang Ruo, David Sampson, Gunther Schuller, William Schuman, Joan Tower, Charles Whittenberg, and John Zorn, among many others.

**Kevin Cobb**, *trumpet*, joined the American Brass Quintet in 1998. Currently he teaches at the Yale School of Music and at SUNY Stony Brook. Originally from Bowling Green, Ohio, he made his first solo appearance at age fifteen with the Toledo Symphony. Studies followed at the Interlochen Arts Academy, the Curtis Institute of Music, and the Juilliard School. Cobb has toured and performed in Asia, Central America and Europe, as well as in the United States. He can frequently be heard in radio and television commercials and has recorded over eight CDs with the ABQ alone.

**Brandon Ridenour**, *trumpet*, is a soloist, collaborative artist, composer, and arranger. He began studying piano under the tutelage of his father at age 5. This morphed into “tootelage” when he picked up the trumpet in 5th grade band class in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Upon graduating from the Juilliard School, he began touring with the Canadian Brass and embarked on a solo career.

Ridenour has won competitions ranging from the International Trumpet Guild Solo Competition to the American Composers Forum. He has worked with a diverse array of musicians including Sting, James Taylor, Marvin Hamlisch, Yo-Yo Ma, Esperanza Spalding, Bruce Cockburn, Caroline Shaw, Vienna Teng, and esteemed ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, International Contemporary Ensemble, the Knights, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Ymusic, Publiquartet, and many others. He’s been a featured soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and many more groups.

**Eric Reed**, *horn*, is also coprincipal horn of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. He serves on the faculty of the Juilliard School, New York University, and the Mannes School of Music. He has also performed with the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and is a former member of the Canadian Brass and Carnegie Hall’s Ensemble Connect. Reed is a member of Brassology, a genre-bending brass octet formed in 2023, and Ensemble Echappé, a sinfonietta dedicated to 21st century repertoire. Recent premieres have included chamber works by Jennifer Higdon, John Zorn, Nina C. Young, Eric Ewazen, William Bolcom, and David Biedenbender.

**Hillary Simms**, *trombone*, hails from Torbay, Newfoundland and Labrador. Hillary Simms is the newest trombonist and first female member of the acclaimed American Brass Quintet. With her appointment to the ABQ, Hillary also joined the faculty at The Juilliard School.

Simms is known as a solo, orchestral and chamber-music trombonist in both the United States and Canada. Named as one of Canada's top 30 classical musicians under 30, she gave her solo debut playing the Tomasi Concerto with the National Arts Center Orchestra under the baton of Alexander Shelley.

Simms has performed with several ensembles throughout North America, including The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, National Arts Center Orchestra of Canada, The Canadian Opera Company, The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, and the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra. Prior to her appointment with ABQ, she performed regularly with Seraph Brass and is a founding member of the Canadian Trombone Quartet and the Newfoundland-based brass quintet, Saltwater Brass. Simms was a member of the Jazz East Big Band for two years.

**John D. Rojak**, *bass trombone*, joined the American Brass Quintet in 1991. He has a B.M. from Juilliard, teaches at Juilliard and Aspen, and is artist-faculty at the Colorado College Summer Music Festival. Rojak is bass trombonist with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, IRIS, New York Pops, Little Orchestra Society, and Stamford Symphony. He played for the 16-year run of Broadway's *Les Misérables* and for other Broadway shows. He has performed and recorded with the New York Philharmonic, Orpheus, New York Chamber Symphony, and as solo trombone of Solisti New York. Rojak has performed with the Cleveland Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Boston Symphony. He has performed with many ballet companies, including the Bolshoi, Kirov, and Royal; the Netherlands Dance Theatre; and the San Francisco Ballet. He has also played with the big bands of Mel Lewis, Gerry Mulligan, and Bob Mintzer.



## Program Notes by Joshua Berrett, Ph.D.

Dmitriy Bortniansky (1751–1825)  
arr. Himie Voxman  
*Divine Praise*

*Divine Praise* is a choral work of Dmitriy Bortniansky, contemporary of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and the precocious son of a Ukrainian serf. He is recognized for having played a leading role in Westernizing the long-standing tradition of Russian Orthodox music.

Bedrich Smetana (1824–1884)

arr. Himie Voxman

*Chorus of the Peasants from "The Bartered Bride"*

*Chorus of the Peasants* is from Bedrich Smetana's "*The Bartered Bride*," a comic opera foundational to the history of Czech music. The original chorus, opening the opera, has the young village women pose a question crucial to the whole plot—"Why wouldn't we be happy?"

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

arr. Walter Beeler

*Two Equale*

The *Two Equale* from Beethoven's *Three Equale for Four Trombones* is music in which all four parts are equal throughout. This selection is an example of "tower music," music originally meant to be played from atop a tower. Commissioned by the Stadtkapellmeister of Linz in 1812 for performance on All Souls' Day, there is an unmistakable gravitas to these pieces. Some of this music was heard at Beethoven's own funeral as well.

A Suite of 17th Century Dances (Raymond Mase, ed.)

Thomas Simpson (1582—1628)

*Intrada*

William Brade (1560—1630)

*Paduana*

Simpson—Brade

*Galliard—Galliard*

A suite of four discrete pieces of the Jacobean era opens the ABQ segment of the concert; the music has been transcribed and edited by Raymond Mase. These pieces are animated by some of the core values retained from the monarchy of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). Perhaps chief among them is the embrace of Italian madrigals or the emulation of their style—a process that had begun in 1588 with the publication of a large anthology of Italian madrigals, under the title *Musica Transalpina*. Further Italian influence is seen in Elizabeth's favoring instruments like the lute. Indeed, secular vocal and instrumental music were an integral part of life in the royal household; and it has been estimated that, during the course of her 45-year reign, some 700 musicians passed through the court. She was the supreme exemplar of musical taste, emulated by both the court entourage and society at large.

The suite opens with an *Intrada* and is followed by a pavane (*Paduana*—"staid music ordained for grave dancing"). It is typically paired, as here, with the athletic and lively *Galliard*, a dance noted for its leaps, jumps, and hops. It was a favorite



dance of Queen Elizabeth I, who, until late in life, would include six or seven galliards as part of her morning exercise routine. Originally, this instrumental music was performed by a so-called “consort”—a generic term in vogue for over a century from around 1570 on—for a small ensemble of viols, or by a “broken consort,” which involved a mix of strings and winds.

Raymond Mase, editor of these pieces, has provided the following additional commentary:

William Brade and Thomas Simpson are among a group of notable English musicians who worked in Germany during the early decades of the 17th century. Both were accomplished viol players, and while Simpson worked primarily in Heidelberg, Brade held numerous posts in Copenhagen, Berlin, Hamburg, Gottorp, and Halle. Between 1610 and 1630, several important collections of dances by these composers were published in Germany, including Simpson’s most famous instrumental opus, *Taffel Consort* (1621). Interestingly, these collections are stylistically quite varied, including not only traditional German dances, but pieces of English, Italian, and even French origin. A new style of voicing seen in these pieces employs two equal, continually crossing soprano parts unlike dances of earlier composers, such as Anthony Holborne (1599), who generally used only one upper part (cantus).

As in other American Brass Quintet performances of early music, these editions adhere to several performance practices of the period, including ornamentation and changing instrumentation. Combined with these, the crisp articulation and homogeneous tone quality of brass instruments make these dances stylish and exhilarating in modern performance.

### Anthony Barfield (1983– ) *Samsāra* (2022)

The next work on the program is Anthony Barfield’s *Samsāra*. Its title is actually a Pali and Sanskrit word connoting “wandering” and “cyclic change.” This composition came about in the autumn of 2020 thanks to a commission from The Juilliard School in celebration of the American Brass Quintet’s 60th anniversary.

The American Brass Quintet has put this commission in context:

This one was especially significant for ABQ, as Anthony Barfield had been a trombone student in the quintet’s chamber music seminar at Juilliard before he embarked on his very successful career as a composer. The premiere was delayed by a pandemic, a bit of revising, playing injuries and a sudden unexpected change of personnel in the quintet. This led to an even greater anticipation of this piece. Knowing the composer since he was a first-year undergraduate was immensely gratifying as we added another excellent brass quintet to the chamber music repertoire. The premiere performance was dedicated to our beloved trombonist, Michael Powell, who was Anthony’s private teacher for several years and was unable to join us due to

medical reasons. The quintet is extremely grateful to the Juilliard School for this commission and support of new music.

Anthony Barfield himself has had this to say:

The title, Samsāra, can be interpreted as “wandering” or “world,” but it also is a concept of rebirth; the cyclicity of all life, matter and existence.” As I started writing this piece during the winter of 2020, I would drive to my favorite place on earth, Sleepy Hollow in Tarrytown, New York. As I’d go for long walks in the woods to gain inspiration, there was one word that kept entering my mind . . . “Rebirth.” During this time, as the events unfolded all over the world and close to home, this idea of Rebirth became a powerful message and my main source of inspiration. Samsāra refers to the belief that we all go through constant births and rebirths. It’s about the fact that everything changes but yet everything remains the same.

Jennifer Higdon (1962– )  
*Book of Brass* (2022)

Turning to Jennifer Higdon, the trajectory of her career provides a stunning lesson in what a relative late bloomer can accomplish. After teaching herself to play the flute at age 15, she began formal music studies at 18, and made an even later start in composition at age 21. Despite these obstacles, she was unfazed. After earning her Bachelor’s degree at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, Higdon went on to earn an Artist Diploma from the Curtis Institute of Music, as well as an M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. And Philadelphia is now her home base, where she teaches at Curtis. She has become a major figure in contemporary music with her works representing a wide range, including opera, and music for orchestra, chamber ensemble, and chorus.

Higdon’s list of commissions is extensive and includes The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Chicago Symphony, The Atlanta Symphony, The Cleveland Orchestra, The Minnesota Orchestra, The Pittsburgh Symphony, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, as well such groups as the Tokyo String Quartet, the Lark Quartet, and the American Brass Quintet. She has also written works for such artists as baritone Thomas Hampson; pianists Yuja Wang and Gary Graffman; and violinists Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Jennifer Koh and Hilary Hahn. Her first opera, *Cold Mountain*, won the prestigious International Opera Award for Best World Premiere in 2016; the first American opera to do so in the award’s history. Performances of *Cold Mountain* sold out during its premiere run in Santa Fe, North Carolina, and Philadelphia (becoming the third highest selling opera in Opera Philadelphia’s history).

Higdon received the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her *Violin Concerto*. She has also received awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts & Letters, the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Pew Fellowship in the Arts, The Independence Foundation, the NEA, and ASCAP.

Higdon's music has been hailed by *Fanfare Magazine* as having "the distinction of being at once complex, sophisticated but readily accessible emotionally," with the *Times* of London citing it as "...traditionally rooted, yet imbued with integrity and freshness." She has spoken of her music as being defined by melody and color rather than by thematic development. Her focus tends to be on bright patches of color, exuberant rhythms, and shifts in texture. Such is the case with her Book of Brass, an American Brass Quintet commission which received its world premiere in October 2022 at the Bowling Green New Music Festival, on the campus of her alma mater. It is a quirky work of four brief sharply contrasted character pieces—*Ramp Up*, *Acrostic*, *Glide and Fade*, and *Punch It Up*—running to a total of about 14 minutes.

Reena Esmail (1983– )  
*Khirkiyaan: Three Transformations for Brass Quintet*  
(2015/2017)

Reena Esmail is an Indian-American composer who works between the worlds of Indian and Western classical music. She is based in her hometown of Los Angeles. Writing music, whether for orchestra, chorus, or chamber ensemble, Esmail is committed to bringing communities together through the creation of equitable musical spaces.

Esmail holds degrees in composition from The Juilliard School and Yale School of Music. Her primary teachers have included Susan Botti, Aaron Jay Kernis, Christopher Theofanidis, and Samuel Adler. She received a Fulbright-Nehru grant to study Hindustani music in India. Her Hindustani music teachers have included Srimati Lakshmi Shankar and Gaurav Mazumdar, and Saili Oak. Her doctoral thesis, entitled *Finding Common Ground: Uniting Practices in Hindustani and Western Art Musicians* explores the methods and challenges of the collaborative process between Hindustani musicians and Western composers.

Reena Esmail has this to say about her piece:

So much of my work with brass instruments has come into being because of incredible and intrepid brass players who have shown me new windows into my own music. Hence the title: *Khirkiyaan* means 'windows' in Hindi, and this brass quintet is made up of three 'windows' into my work. Each movement is a transformation of another piece of mine for another instrumentation, reimaged for brass quintet.

*Tuttarana*, the third movement of this piece, was commissioned by The Brass Project, a brass ensemble formed from graduates of the Curtis Institute of Music. It was originally a piece for women's choir. The title of this movement is a conglomeration of two words: the Italian word 'tutti', means 'all' or 'everyone', and the term '*tarana*' designates a specific Hindustani (North Indian) musical form, whose

closest Western counterpart is the ‘scat’ in jazz. Made up of rhythmic syllables, a *tarana* is the singer’s chance to display agility and dexterity. While the brass version of this piece doesn’t have the actual syllables that the vocal version does, it does aim to showcase the brilliant virtuosity of the ensemble.

The other two movements were added later, as a commission from Kansas State University’s faculty brass quintet. The first movement, *Jog*, is a movement of my string quartet, *Ragamala*. Though not entirely in the purest form of the Hindustani raag called Jog (I was still learning it at the time), it does use the characteristic raised/lowered 3rd that switches between the Western perception of major and minor.

The second movement, *Joota*, comes from my song cycle for guitar and mezzo soprano, called *Chuti Hui Jagah* (The Space Between). The title, which means ‘shoe’ in Hindi, comes from a tiny couplet by poet Manav Kaul, which translates to: ‘When the shoe bites / Then it becomes difficult to navigate through the world / And when the shoe stops biting / Then it becomes difficult to navigate through time.’

If I had set out to write a brass quintet, I am sure it wouldn’t have been this piece. I would have started with my own limited, preconceived notions of what I thought a brass quintet should be, and worked outward from there. But it was through working with brass players, being shown the seeds of what was already there in my existing work, and then transforming it for these instruments that allowed these windows to be opened in my work.

Carlo Gesualdo (1566-1613)  
*Three Madrigals*  
(Brandon Ridenour, ed.)

Don Carlo Gesualdo has been called “The Prince of Darkness.” He is notorious for at least one murderous rampage, wanton acts of cruelty, and sadomasochistic sessions. Beyond dispute is the blood-soaked double murder of his wife and her lover on the night of October 16, 1590.

For all his savagery—there were eyewitnesses who left no doubt—Gesualdo was never held accountable. He was a prince, after all, and could flee to his castle. In fact, about a year after the bloody end to his first marriage, he became one of the richest men in the Kingdom of Naples—largely thanks to his pedigree, with the death of his father. Besides, his mother, named Girolama Borromeo, was sister of Cardinal Borromeo and niece of Pope Pius IV. Barely three years later, Gesualdo had remarried, this time to Eleonora d’Este, a cousin of Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara.

Having gained access to the Ferrara court and its musical luminaries, Gesualdo was now set. The period from 1594 to 1611 saw the composition of not only his six books of madrigals, but also a sizeable body of sacred music. All three madrigals on today’s program date from 1611. They are in what is called a mannerist style, a phase of the late Renaissance that marks the transition to early opera. These pieces show Gesualdo pushing

the boundaries of harmony and tonality, creating “chromatic labyrinths,” and anticipating the chromaticism of late 19th-century romanticism. That said, his madrigals, like the ones on today’s program, show a special volatility, and are saturated with sighs and expressions of pain and anguish.

David Biedenbender (1984– )  
*Sacred Geometry* (2022)

David Biedenbender is a multi-faceted musician, composing music that combines excitement, intensity, and freshness. He earned a Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degrees from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and is now an Associate Professor of Composition in the College of Music at Michigan State University. According to his official profile, “he has written music for the concert stage as well as for dance and multimedia collaborations, and his work is often influenced by his diverse musical experiences in rock and jazz bands as an electric bassist; in wind, jazz, and New Orleans-style brass bands as a euphonium, bass trombone, and tuba player; and by his study of Indian Carnatic music. His creative interests include working with everyone from classically trained musicians to improvisers, acoustic chamber music to large ensembles, and interactive electronic interfaces to live brain data.”

Biedenbender’s *Sacred Geometry* was premiered in February 2022. It owes its inspiration to Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926), and in particular, his building in Barcelona, Basilica de la Sagrada Família, and its complex geometric forms. The first movement, *Ripples*, evokes the sense of a vast space, with trumpets suggesting a chanted invocation against reverberations coming from the lower brass. There are also “distant echoes” of William Byrd’s 1605 setting of *Ave Verum Corpus*.

The second movement, *Gaudí*, draws upon the etymology of the architect’s very name and its association with joy. It is an exercise in what is “playful and whimsical, even irreverent.” It threads “the seemingly fantastical aspects of our world into dream-like designs and surreal structures.” In short, one can think of it “as a walk through a garden of strange delights.”

*Nautilus* evokes the spirals of the marine mollusk. The movement “is built on a small, simple phrase that spins and rotates into longer and longer threads and swirling, circular harmonic progressions.” The fourth and final movement is called *Helix*. It is a word with “many connections and connotations, appearing in everything from spiral staircases to seashells, forming the structure for the molecules from which life is built, and lying at the center of mathematical formulas that describe both infinitesimally small subatomic particles as well as the mechanics of the entire universe.”

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# Coming Up



April 21, 2024

As part of WCMS's Youth Initiative,  
the **SEAL String Quartet** from White Plains High School  
will perform at the start of this concert featuring the  
renowned **Momenta Quartet**.

**The SEAL String Quartet**  
from White Plains High School  
Lucas Rhode, *violin*  
Emiliano Juarez, *violin*  
Aria Mukhopadhyay, *viola*  
Saskia Aikman, *cello*

The SEAL plans to perform

Haydn  
First movement of  
*String Quartet in D Minor, Op. 76, No. 2, the "Quinten"*

**The Momenta Quartet**  
Emilie-Anne Gendron, *violin*  
Alex Shiozaki, *violin*  
Stephanie Griffin, *viola*  
Michael Hass, *cello*

The Momenta plans to perform

Haydn  
*String Quartet in F Minor, No. 5, Op. 20*  
Brown  
*Just Visible in the Distance*  
Schubert  
*Quartet No. 13 in A Minor,*  
*Op. 29/D 804 ("Rosamunde")*

