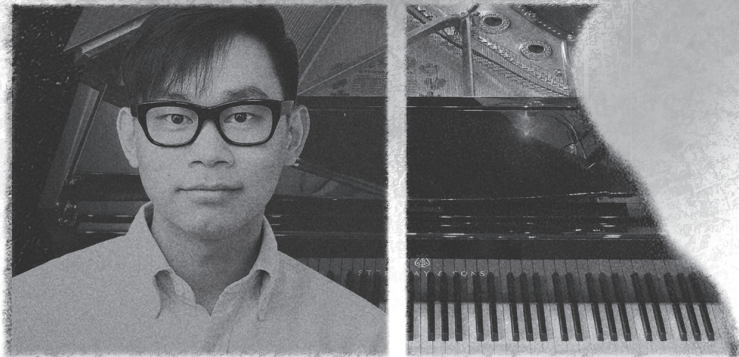
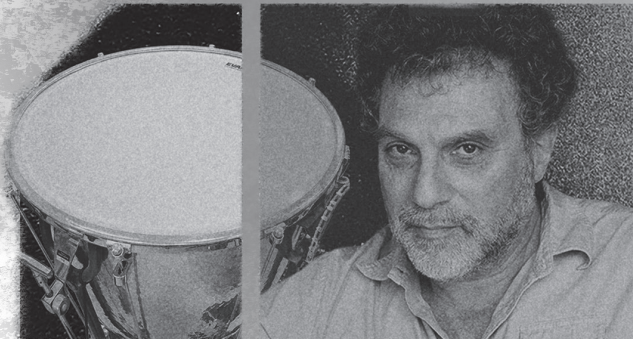
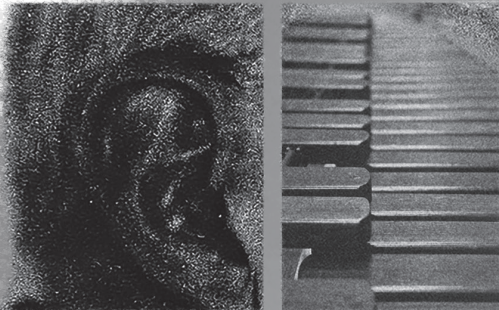




SECRET ARTISTS SERIES



BARTÓK REBÓRN

THE SECREST ARTIST SERIES

Presents

ICARUS QUARTET



Monday, September 30, 2024

7:30 pm

Brendle Recital Hall, Scales Fine Arts Center

Wake Forest University

Winston-Salem, North Carolina



PROGRAM

Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Variations on a Theme by Paganini

Witold Lutoslawski (1913-1994)

arr. Marta Ptaszynska and icarus Quartet

INTERMISSION

Tonight's concert celebrates the world premiere performances of the following three works commissioned by the Secret Art Series.

Hagyaték

Martin Bresnick (b. 1946)

Cloak of Night

Viet Cuong (b. 1990)

Turbo Shift (A Crafter's Workshop)

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)





PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, Sz. 110, BB 115 (1937) by Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Bartók's *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* is one of his most acclaimed masterpieces and stands as a seminal work in the 20th-century classical music repertoire. Written in 1937, the piece was premiered with Bartók and his wife playing the two piano parts. Later Bartók rewrote the work as a concerto for two pianos and orchestra, but as it is most often played in its original form, the work is generally considered a chamber piece. Bartók called it a "sonata" because he did not know whether the percussion part would require two or three players and thus circumvented the word "quartet." He later found that two percussionists were sufficient but kept the title nonetheless.

The piece's instrumentation is quite unusual and caused Bartók much trepidation in how it would be performed and received. He had a fascination with percussion that came partly from Stravinsky and partly from Varèse, but what influenced him most were the percussive timbres and colors of the Far East and Africa. As for the piano, Bartók had an intimate relationship to the instrument, being a teacher, performer, and composer of it. In his two piano concerti written prior to the sonata, he experimented with the percussive nature of the piano

by occasionally matching it with the percussion section of the orchestra. In this sonata, the piano's percussiveness is exploited to its fullest. Bartók chose to have two pianos instead of one in order to take advantage of antiphonal possibilities between them. He may have also been thinking of the prospect of performing the piece with his wife.

The first movement opens with an ominous, circular, seven-note theme that gradually gains momentum until a dramatic arrival at the allegro section, where the two pianos shout in rhythmic unison. From there the movement, whose length takes up half the entire piece, is a series of climaxes within extended sonata form. In the midst, a rising sixth motive appears like a horn call and is present throughout the rest of the movement, including as the subject of a fugato at the end.

The second movement is an example of Bartók's signature "Night music," also heard in such pieces as his third piano concerto and his concerto for orchestra. In Night music, instruments simulate the sounds of nature at night, which may include anything from evoking a nocturnal aesthetic to portraying actual nighttime noises. This second movement opens with a sturdy rhythm from the percussion that sets the mood for a spacious, dark melody from the pianos. A second section introduces nocturnal creatures through





short quintuplet figures that rap over bell-like chords. The movement is in ternary form, though when the opening section returns it sounds like a dream sequence by way of the rippling scales and tremolos rolling around it. The return also brings with it the percussion's steady, square beat.

To contrast, the music of the last movement evokes the brightest of sunshine. The xylophone first introduces a folk-like melody that is more diatonic and linear than the chromatic and circuitous first movement theme. The movement is full of humor, irony, and energy. At the end, a steady, slowly fading snare drum ostinato sounds as if a marching band drummer is walking away, and a surprising, delightful C major chord in the upper registers of the pianos gives the piece finality with a smile. — Laura Usiskin

Béla Bartók

Béla Bartók was born in the Hungarian town of Nagyszentmiklós (now Sînnicolau Mare in Romania) in March 1881, and received his first instruction in music from his mother, a very capable pianist; his father, the headmaster of a local school, was also musical. After his family moved to Pressburg (now Bratislava in Slovakia) in 1894, he took lessons from László Erkel, son of Ferenc Erkel, Hungary's first important operatic composer, and in 1899 he became a student at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest, graduating in 1903. His teachers there were János Koessler,

a friend of Brahms, for composition and István Thoman for piano. Bartók, who had given his first public concert at the age of eleven, now began to establish a reputation as a fine pianist that spread well beyond Hungary's borders, and he was soon drawn into teaching: in 1907 he replaced Thoman as professor of piano in the Academy.

Béla Bartók's earliest compositions offer a blend of late Romanticism and nationalist elements, formed under the influences of Wagner, Brahms, Liszt and Strauss, and resulting in works such as *Kossuth*, an expansive symphonic poem written when he was 23. Around 1905 his friend and fellow-composer Zoltán Kodály directed his attention to Hungarian folk music and, coupled with his discovery of the music of Debussy, Bartók's musical language changed dramatically: it acquired greater focus and purpose – though initially it remained very rich, as his opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (1911) and ballet *The Wooden Prince* (1917) demonstrate. But as he absorbed more and more of the spirit of Hungarian folk songs and dances, his own music grew tighter, more concentrated, chromatic and dissonant – and although a sense of key is sometimes lost in individual passages, Bartók never espoused atonality as a compositional technique.

His interest in folk music was not merely passive: Bartók was an assiduous ethnomusicologist, his first systematic collecting trips in Hungary being





undertaken with Kodály, and in 1906 they published a volume of the songs they had collected. Thereafter Bartók's involvement grew deeper and his scope wider, encompassing a number of ethnic traditions both near at hand and further afield: Transylvanian, Romanian, North African, and others.

In the 1920s and '30s Bartók's international fame spread, and he toured widely, both as pianist (usually in his own works) and as a respected composer. Works like the *Dance Suite* for orchestra (1923), the *Cantata profana* (1934) and the *Divertimento* for strings (1939), commissioned by Paul Sacher, maintained his high profile; indeed, he earned some notoriety when the Nazis banned his ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin* (1918–19) because of its sexually explicit plot. He continued to teach at the Academy of Music until his resignation in 1934, devoting much of his free time thereafter to his ethnomusicological research.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, and despite his deep attachment to his homeland, life in Hungary became intolerable and Bartók and his second wife, Ditta Pásztory, emigrated to the United States. Here his material conditions worsened considerably, despite initial promise: although he obtained a post at Columbia University and was able to pursue his folk-music studies, his concert engagements became very much rarer, and he received few commissions. Koussevitzky's request for a *Concerto for*

Orchestra (1943) was therefore particularly important, bringing him much-needed income. Bartók's health was now failing, but he was nonetheless able virtually to complete his Third Piano Concerto and sketch out a Viola Concerto before his death from polycythemia (a form of leukemia) in September 1945.

Béla Bartók is published by Boosey & Hawkes. Reprinted by kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes

Variations on a Theme by Paganini for Two Pianos (1941) by Witold Lutosławski (1913-1994)

As good luck would have it, Witold Lutosławski did not spend World War II in a German prison camp, even though his status as a minor officer in the Polish Army would have normally assured it. Instead, when Poland was invaded (Soviets from the east and Nazis from every other direction) and he was initially captured, he managed an escape on foot to his home in Warsaw 400 kilometers away. Although this left him without an official identity for the rest of the war, he managed to make ends meet teaming up with local cabaret performers and playing in small clubs. Larger music venues in Nazi-occupied Warsaw were more carefully monitored.

Making the best of an otherwise intolerable situation, another pianist and composer destined to be a giant of Polish music





after the war, Andrzej Panufnik (1914-1991), formed a piano duo with Lutosławski. The two composers performed in a handful of popular and famous nightclubs for the next few years, with Lutosławski arranging over 200 pieces for them.

Finally, in anticipation of the momentous and devastating 1944 Warsaw Uprising (which led to the Nazis systematically demolishing 85 percent of the city and executing several hundreds of thousands of people), both Lutosławski and Panufnik wisely fled to less populated areas, taking with them only their most essential possessions. Among the few music scores that Lutosławski managed to carry out to safety (all others now presumed destroyed), only one was from the 200 arrangements for his piano duo: *Variations on a Theme by Paganini* (1941).

Part humorous parody and part furious display of virtuosity, this theme and eleven variations, with an added twelfth variation and finale, pokes fun at the fact that even a nightclub audience will probably recognize the catchy tune from the 24th Caprice by Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840). An abrupt tempo change in variation six proves to be an embellishment compared to the original, although this also reflects that over the centuries countless different versions of this Caprice have been created.

Further humor derives from exploiting that the original Caprice serves the primary purpose of showcasing a catalogue of

effects only playable on a violin. The pianists nonetheless mimic at least symbolically pizzicato, harmonics, double stops, and other effects proceeding moment to moment through each of the original variations, polychords, and other dissonant anachronisms ironically compensating for the faux instrumental character. — Gregg Wager

Witold Lutosławski

Witold Lutosławski was indisputably one of the major composers of the twentieth century. Born in Warsaw in 1913, he showed prodigious musical and intellectual talent from an early age. His composition studies in Warsaw ended at a politically difficult time for Poland so his plans for further study in Paris were replaced by a period which included military training, imprisonment by the Germans and escape back to Warsaw, where he and his compatriot Andrzej Panufnik played in cafes their own compositions and transcriptions. After the war, the Stalinist regime banned his first symphony (1941-47) as 'formalist', but he continued to compose and in 1958 his *Musique Funèbre*, in memory of Bartók, established his international reputation. His own personal aleatoric technique whereby the performers have freedom within certain controlled parameters was first demonstrated in his *Jeux Venitiens* (1961) and is to be found in almost all the later music. Over the years, Witold Lutosławski was frequently inspired by particular ensembles and artists including the London Sinfonietta, Sir Peter Pears,





Heinz and Ursula Holliger, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Mstislav Rostropovich and Anne-Sophie Mutter. His Symphony No. 4 was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and received its world premiere in February 1993 under the baton of the composer. A powerful work, it reflected his increasing concern with expansive melody. Among many international prizes awarded to this most modest man were the UNESCO Prize (1959, 1968), the French order of Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres (1982), Grawemeyer Award (1985), Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medal (1986), in the last year of his life, the Swedish Polar Music Prize and the Inamori Foundation Prize, Kyoto, for his outstanding contribution to contemporary European music, and, posthumously, the International Music Award for best large-scale composition for the fourth symphony. Lutosławski's contribution to the musical world was enormous and his loss in February 1994, at the age of 81, will continue to be deeply felt.

— Chester Music

Hagyaték

Hagyaték, the title of my composition, is the Hungarian word for “Legacy.” In this work, commissioned by and dedicated to the icarus Quartet, I honor my most direct musical ancestors, Béla Bartók and György Ligeti, the influence of whose imaginative and exhilarating compositions are not far to seek. Also present is a sonorous

memory trace of my friend, the composer Loren Rush. The only legacy or Hagyaték worthy of the name must not only derive from but also extend and engage the energies of its still vital source. May it be so with Hagyaték! — Martin Bresnick

Cloak of Night

This piece owes something to Béla Bartók. After all, he chose the instruments. The commission, from my friends in the wonderful icarus Quartet, called for a response to his *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*. More specifically, I was asked to respond to the second movement, an exemplar of Bartók's “Night Music.” With this somber, eerie selection as my point of departure, the prismatic work that emerged stands in rather stark contrast. *Cloak of Night* is imbued with the energy of its own creation—sometimes anxious, often ecstatic, and always looking ahead. The title nods to Bartók, but more refers to its compositional process, with the work being done mostly in those darkest hours of night, with all the lonely secrecy they afford. — Viet Cuong

Turbo Shift (A Crafter's Workshop)

Imagine you are a very small drone, flying around a somewhat magical clock maker's workshop. As you move through the air, you see all sorts of mechanical





inventions, lying around in full form or in partial construction--tiny pieces and very large ones. And sitting at his desk is the maker himself...carefully constructing new gizmos and fixing old ones. He is meticulous—carefully notating every MEASURE of the small, intricate parts that go into his masterpieces. There is a joy in his dreaming up new creations: figuring out what can be put in, and what must be left out, and how much crafting each piece takes to make a spectacular thing.

While the tools of our craftsman are laid out neatly upon a work desk, a look around reveals a workshop where there are many projects in process. Two obvious things: a

complexity of ideas and joy in the making.

I have always felt that Bartok is just such a master craftsman. Studying his Sonata, I found the 3rd movement to be some of his most joyous music. In tribute, I have built a piece on fragments, progressions, rhythms, and intervallic relationships from that particular movement. So hang on for a turbo speed journey in honor of a crafter and his workshop.

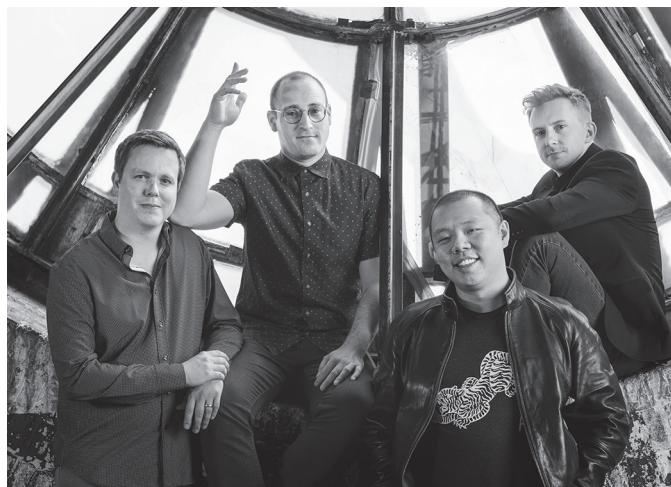
“Turbo Shift” ...subtitled: (A Crafter’s Workshop) is dedicated to the gifted, meticulous, and imaginative *icarus Quartet*.

— Jennifer Higdon



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BIOGRAPHIES



Like the mythological figure from which it draws its name, the half piano/half percussion **icarus Quartet** dares to fly towards the sun, aspiring to new heights of artistry. Following their Carnegie Hall debut, composer Paul Lansky simply remarked, “This is music making of the highest order.” *The Wall Street Journal* hailed icarus Quartet’s 2022 album, *BIG THINGS*, as “a beautifully immersive recording...an impressive calling card.”

Winner of the 2019 Chamber Music Yellow Springs Competition, icarus Quartet has given new life to old masterpieces as well as the future of their instrumentation. The quartet was chosen as Chamber Music Northwest’s 2020 Protégé Project Ensemble and was subsequently the first ensemble to hold the Klinger ElectroAcoustic Residency at Bowling Green State University. Past engagements include appearances at the Kennedy Center’s REACH, the Vienna Summer Music Festival, the Horowitz Piano Series, the Queens New Music Festival, the São Paulo Contemporary Composers Festival, the Adalman Chamber Series, and at Princeton University for a Lansky tribute concert held in honor of the emeritus professor’s 75th birthday.

Fostering the development of new works through commissioning and collaborating lies at the core of the group’s mission, inspiring partnerships with titans of the classical contemporary field, established artists of electronic and indie music scenes, as well as gifted student composers through their annual “iQ Tests” program. Recent and upcoming collaborators include Andy Akiho, Amy Beth Kirsten, Nick Zammuto, Viet Cuong, Michael Laurello, Martin Bresnick, and Jennifer Higdon as well as 2024-25 iQ Test Scholars Boggy Ge and Erik Texter. The ensemble’s work often extends beyond the realm of music; *Wilderness Suite*, an ongoing intermedia project combining icarus Quartet with the forces of composer Ruby Fulton, geographer Teresa Cavazos-Cohn, and eight independent video artists, examines the unique anti-development of the 2.4 million-acre Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness site through still imagery, data, film, recorded interviews, natural sound samples, and live music.

Passionate about educating and engaging with the next generation of musicians, icarus Quartet thrives in school and university settings. They have given classes on chamber music and composition seminars on writing for their instruments at institutions including the





Peabody Conservatory, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Bridgeport University, the University of Florida, the University of Northern Iowa, Florida State University, Lebanon Valley College, Yale College, Wright State University, and the University of Idaho's Lionel Hampton School of Music, in addition to presentations for grade school and Pre-K students.

Larry Weng, Max Hammond, Matt Keown, and Jeff Stern are all celebrated soloists in their own rights, and together they have found a special chemistry and inimitable joy playing chamber music. They are dedicated to the discovery, creation, and performance of new music, but what distinguishes their approach to contemporary music is a strong training and background in the classical genre. icarus Quartet is committed to performing new works with a studied and convincing interpretation that mirrors the validity of works with performance practices developed over centuries.



Martin Bresnick

Martin Bresnick's compositions, from opera, chamber and symphonic music to film scores and computer music, are performed throughout the world. Bresnick delights in reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable, bringing together repetitive gestures derived from minimalism with a harmonic palette that encompasses both highly chromatic sounds and more open, consonant harmonies and a raw power reminiscent of rock. At times his musical ideas spring from hardscrabble sources, often with a very real political import. But his compositions never descend into agitprop; one gains

their meaning by the way the music itself unfolds, and always on its own terms.

Besides having received many prizes and commissions, the first Charles Ives Living Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, The Rome Prize, The Berlin Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Koussevitzky Commission, among many others, Martin Bresnick is also recognized as an influential teacher of composition. Students from every part of the globe and of virtually every musical inclination have been inspired by his critical encouragement.

Martin Bresnick's compositions are published by Carl Fischer Music Publishers, New York; Bote & Bock, Berlin; Common Muse Music Publishers, New Haven; and have been recorded by Cantaloupe Records, New World Records, Albany Records, Bridge Records, Composers Recordings Incorporated, Centaur, Starkland Records and Artifact Music.

For more information: www.martinbresnick.com





Viet Cuong

Called “alluring” and “wildly inventive” by *The New York Times*, the music of American composer Viet Cuong has been commissioned and performed on six continents by musicians and ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, Eighth Blackbird, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Sō Percussion, Alarm Will Sound, Atlanta Symphony, Sandbox Percussion, Albany Symphony, PRISM Quartet, and Dallas Winds, among many others. Cuong’s music has been featured in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Kennedy Center, and his works for wind ensemble have amassed several

hundreds of performances worldwide. Passionate about bringing these different facets of the contemporary music community together, his recent projects include a concerto for Eighth Blackbird with the United States Navy Band. Cuong also enjoys exploring the unexpected and whimsical, and he is often drawn to projects where he can make peculiar combinations and sounds feel enchanting or oddly satisfying. His works thus include a snare drum solo, percussion quartet concerto, and double oboe concerto. He is currently the Pacific Symphony’s Composer-in-Residence and serves as Assistant Professor of Music Composition at The University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Cuong holds degrees from Princeton University (MFA/PhD), the Curtis Institute of Music (AD), and Peabody Conservatory (BM/MM).

For more information: www.vietcuongmusic.com





Jennifer Higdon

(b. Brooklyn, NY; New Year's Eve, 1962) makes her living solely from commissions and publishing. Her works represent a range of genres, from chamber to orchestral and wind ensemble, as well as vocal, choral and opera.

Higdon's list of commissioners is extensive and includes The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Chicago Symphony, and The Cleveland Orchestra, as well such groups as the Tokyo String Quartet, Eighth Blackbird, and the President's Own United States Marine Band. She has also written works for such renowned artists as baritone Thomas Hampson and mezzo Sasha Cooke; pianist Yuja Wang; and violinists Joshua Bell and Hilary Hahn. Her first opera, *Cold Mountain*, was commissioned by Santa Fe Opera, Opera Philadelphia, and North Carolina Opera. It was awarded the prestigious International Opera Award for Best World Premiere in 2016; a suite from that opera was recently co-commissioned and performed by a group of 36 orchestras.

Jennifer received the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her *Violin Concerto*. She is also a three-time Grammy-winner.

Higdon enjoys more than 250 performances annually of her works. Her orchestral work, *blue cathedral*, is one of the most performed contemporary orchestral pieces in the repertoire (having had more than 1,100 performances).

For more information: jenniferhigdon.com





Thursday, Nov. 7, 2024
Cuarteto Casals

The Cuarteto Casals from Spain, with its distinctive tonal balance and interpretive brilliance, is one of the finest string quartets in the world. Founded 25 years ago, they have received first prizes at the International String Quartet Competition in London and the International Johannes Brahms Competition in Hamburg. Their concert will feature works by Haydn, Beethoven, and Shostakovich.



Monday, January 20, 2025
Tonicity, vocal ensemble

Founder and Artistic Director Alexander Lloyd Blake (Wake Forest '10) created Tonicity to connect people through song, using choral music to stimulate community conversations about important issues in the contemporary world. On this Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, the 2024 GRAMMY-winning vocal ensemble will present their "America Will Be" program, a renewed vision for an inclusive America.



Thursday, March 6, 2025
Vijay Iyer Trio, jazz

Described by *The New York Times* as a "social conscience, multimedia collaborator, system builder, rhapsodist, historical thinker and multicultural gateway," Vijay Iyer is one of today's most in-demand jazz musicians, and is a composer, pianist, and professor in the Harvard University music department. His honors include a MacArthur Fellowship, a Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, a United States Artist Fellowship, and a GRAMMY nomination.

About his all-star trio (including Australian bassist Linda May Han Oh and Tyshawn Sorey, MacArthur Foundation Fellowship-winning percussionist and composer), *All About Jazz* says, "the visionary musician [Iyer] leads an ensemble that formulates an exquisite redefinition of jazz's well-established instrumental concept of the piano trio."





Wednesday, March 26, 2025

Thomas Dunford, lute

Frenchman Thomas Dunford is a rising star of the European early music movement, and a dynamic and charismatic performer of Renaissance, Baroque, and modern music on the lute. *BBC Music Magazine* has written of him, “Dunford’s supple technique, combined with his passion for jazz, allows him to decorate and elaborate ... with improvisatory abandon, shedding new light on old favourites. He really plumbs the depths, too, of Dowland’s melancholy ‘blues’ style, proving himself to be an Eric Clapton of the lute.”

Wake Forest University expresses its deep appreciation to the late Mrs. Marion Secrest for generously endowing the Secrest Artists Series in honor of her husband Dr. Willis Secrest.

Ushers for tonight’s performance are members of Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Service Fraternity.

Admission for all Secrest events is available without charge to all Wake Forest students, faculty, and staff by showing a WFU ID. You are encouraged to reserve seats in advance of a concert through the Secrest Artists Series website.

For community tickets or a season subscription visit Secrest.wfu.edu or call 336-758-5757.

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Hayden Barnes, *Artistic Director*

Scott Klein, *Artistic Advisor*

MaryAnna Bailey, *Student Intern*

Katherina Tsai, *Student Intern*

Jasmine Xu, *Student Intern*





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