

CLARK RESIDENCY

# AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET

Tuesday, December 3, 2024  
Kilbourn Hall  
12:30 PM



**EASTMAN**  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

## PROGRAM

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### **Courtly Dances and Canzons**

Canzon

Paduana

Two Galliards

William Brade

(1560-1630)

arr. Raymond Mase

### **Frost Fire (1989)**

I. Bright and Fast

Eric Ewazen

(b. 1954)

### **Samsāra (2022)**

Anthony Barfield

(b. 1983)

### **Book of Brass (2022)**

Acrostic

Ramp Up

Jennifer Higdon

(b. 1962)

### **Sacred Geometry (2021)**

Ripples

Gaudí

Nautilus

Helix

David Biedenbender

(b. 1984)

## **THE AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET**

Brandon Ridenour, trumpet

Micah Killion, trumpet

Eric Reed, horn

Hillary Simms, trombone

John D. Rojak, bass trombone

## PROGRAM NOTES

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### **Courtly Dances and Canzons**

William Brade

William Brade is among a group of notable English musicians that worked in the German courts in the early decades of the 17th century. He was universally recognized as one of the finest early violinists and held numerous positions in Copenhagen, Berlin, Hamburg, Gottorp, and Halle between 1594 and 1630. He seems to have led a restless life, never staying with one post for more than several years, and was described in a letter to the Hamburg authorities from the Count Ernst III of Holstein-Schaumburg as that "mischievous, wanton, fellow" after a dispute over his salary. Brade had a strong influence on the German instrumental music of the period and after his death in 1630, eight funeral songs were published in his memory.

Between 1607 and 1621 Brade published several important collections of five and six part instrumental music. These collections are stylistically quite varied and include not only traditional German dances, but also "non-German" dances like the volta, maschera, and bransle, and the canzon, a popular piece of Italian origin. He incorporated a new type of voicing using two soprano parts -- unlike the dances of earlier composers like Anthony Holborne (1599) that use only one upper part (cantus). As was customary in the period, these pieces have no specified instrumentation, but were likely to have been played by a consort of viols, or winds and brass. The crisp articulation and homogeneous sound of modern brass, combined with appropriate ornamentation, make these pieces stylish and engaging in modern performance.

— *Raymond Mase*

### **Frost Fire (1989)**

Eric Ewazen

*Frost Fire* was gratefully dedicated to the American Brass Quintet in honor of their 30th anniversary. Over these past years, it has been performed worldwide and has been recorded on the Well-Tempered label. It was commissioned by them in 1989 with support from the Jerome Foundation. The work, based on traditional musical forms and models, is in three movements. The first movement, marked Bright and Fast, is a joyous celebration of sonorous chords, playful motives, and rhythmic gestures. It is in a strict sonata-allegro form with a clearly defined and classically proportioned exposition-development-recapitulation framed by complimentary introduction and coda sections.

— *Eric Ewazen*

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**Samsāra** (2022)

Anthony Barfield

In autumn of 2020 The Juilliard School once again offered to commission a new work for The American Brass Quintet for its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. 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.

— *John Rojak*

sam·sa·ra /səm'sārə/ noun

HINDUISM • BUDDHISM the cycle of death and rebirth to which life in the material world is bound.

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.

— *Anthony Barfield*

**Book of Brass** (2022)

Jennifer Higdon

A chance meeting with Dorothy and DuWayne Hansen in October of 2017 led to a personal introduction with the great American composer Jennifer Higdon. With that introduction, ABQ asked if there was a

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possibility of commissioning her for a quintet since it clearly fit into the part of ABQ's mission to gain works from the leading composers of our time. Jennifer kindly responded affirmatively although the piece would fall into her queue and possibly be written by 2024--seven years later. In 2020, however, we heard from Jennifer that she had composed faster than expected and could deliver a piece for a premiere in October 2022, two years earlier than expected. An inquiry from the Lyrebird Quintet from Melbourne, Australia allowed us to combine funding for a major piece as well as around the world premieres.

*Book of Brass* is written in 4 movements, or chapters, of which any number may be played together for performance. Ramp Up is a lively, spirited piece that stays busy from first note to last. Acrostic begins leisurely and, as one might gather from the title, becomes more complex and intricate until its satisfying ending. Glide & Fade is slow, meditative, and harmonically rich. The final chapter is Punch It Up, with a funky groove and high energy eliciting virtuosity from all voices.

The American Brass Quintet is grateful to the Hansens not only for a fortuitous introduction, but also for their generous funding to create this new landmark for brass chamber music.

—John Rojak

### **Sacred Geometry** (2021)

David Biedenbender

*Sacred Geometry* is inspired by the work of Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926). Gaudí is best known for creating la Basílica de la Sagrada Família, a cathedral in Barcelona, Spain, which has been under construction since 1882. Gaudí integrated symbols of his faith into every detail of the Basílica, weaving them into complex geometric forms he studied in the natural world, like hyperbolic paraboloids, hyperboloids, helicoids, and cones. He also utilized Trencadís, a form of mosaic art made by cementing together recycled shards of tile and chinaware, fashioning beautiful new things out of the broken and discarded. The inside of the cathedral mimics a forest, with tree-like columns and branches supporting hyperboloid vaults in spectacular fractals, evoking the infinite—connecting God and Creation. I think of this piece like a strange liturgy—or ritual—to meditate on this striking space, to contemplate Gaudí's way of seeing the world, and, hopefully, to discover a similar sense of awe and wonder.

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The first movement, Ripples, is quite simple—a chanted invocation in the trumpets with orchestrated reverberations evoking the large spaces inside the cathedral. There are also distant echoes of William Byrd’s setting of Ave Verum Corpus (1605) in this movement. My favorite moment of Byrd’s work is this surprising, fleeting dissonance, the result of a major chord in the upper voices against a weeping, descending minor melody in the bass, coinciding with the text Miserere—have mercy. It is bittersweet and broken.

The second movement, Gaudí, is playful and whimsical, even irreverent. The Latin root of Gaudí is gaudere, which means “to rejoice” or “to take pleasure in.” Gaudí threaded the seemingly fantastical aspects of our world into dream-like designs and surreal structures that seem unnaturally natural, or naturally unnatural. Imagine stopping to marvel at some small, unusual flower like *Orchis italica* or hearing the peculiar call of a Brown Sicklebill or a Black-throated Loon. I think of this movement as a walk through a garden of strange delights.

A nautilus is a marine mollusk with a shell in the shape of a logarithmic spiral. As the nautilus grows, it lives in the outermost chamber of the shell, sealing off the previous chamber with a wall that prevents it from returning to its old home. As a symbol, it has many meanings and connections, but, for me, I find it to be a powerful metaphor: building anew while always leaving behind an artifact of the past—a stunningly beautiful one, in fact. The third movement, Nautilus, is built on a small, simple phrase that spins and rotates into longer and longer threads and swirling, circular harmonic progressions.

The final movement is called Helix. The helix also has 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.

— *David Biedenbender*

## MEET THE ARTISTS

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The **American Brass Quintet** is internationally recognized as one of the era's premier chamber music ensembles. "The most distinguished" of brass quintets (*American Record Guide*), the group has earned its stellar reputation through its celebrated performances, genre-defining commissioned works, and ongoing commitment to the education of generations of musicians. Since its founding in 1960, the American Brass Quintet has performed on five continents, made nearly 60 recordings, and premiered more than 150 contemporary works for brass.



The American Brass Quintet has commissioned works by leading composers that 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. The Quintet's Emerging Composer Commissioning program produced brass quintets by rising stars Gordon Beferman, Jay Greenberg, Trevor Gureckis, and Shafer Mahoney. Recent commissions include Ching-chu Hu's *A Distant Hope*, premiered at Chamber Music Columbus, Jennifer Higdon's *Book of Brass*, debuted at Bowling Green State University, and an upcoming work by Tyshawn Sorrey.

The group's latest recording *Perspectives* (2017), one of 12 albums with Summit Records, features music by Robert Paterson, Jay Greenberg, Sebastian Currier, and Eric Ewazen, and has earned praise for bringing the "utmost cohesion, balance, and expressivity to each of the scores they perform with ear-catching intensity and finesse" (*Gramophone*).

In the 2023-2024 season, the Quintet can be heard in recital at Aspen, The Juilliard School, Ashland, OR, Westchester, NY, and Kalamazoo, MI. Recent season highlights include performances at University of Delaware's Master Players Concert Series, Chamber Music Society of Wichita, Frost School of Music in Miami, New Orleans Friends of Music, Westchester Chamber Music Society, Arts Council of Moore County in Southern Pines, NC, DePaul University School of Music, Impromptu Classical Concerts in Key West, FL, Tryon Concert Association, Beaches Fine Arts

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Series in Jacksonville, FL, Danbury Concert Association in Connecticut, and Chamber Music Society of Logan in Utah.

Committed to the development of brass chamber music through higher education, the American Brass Quintet has served as Ensemble-in-Residence at The Juilliard School since 1987 and at the Aspen Music Festival since 1970. President Emeritus Joseph Polisi has said of the group's residency at Juilliard, "With intelligence, artistry, and imagination, the American Brass Quintet has exemplified the highest standards of chamber music for brass instruments during its remarkable existence." In 2018, the group launched the ABQ Seminar @ Aspen, a four-week brass chamber music intensive at the Aspen Music Festival that offers the highest caliber of training for emerging brass quintets and musicians. Since 2000, the Quintet also has shared its expertise in chamber music coaching and performance through a program of short residencies that feature regularly in the group's touring schedule. Offering young musicians an intense chamber music experience over several days, the Quintet's residencies have been embraced by schools and communities throughout the United States and in a dozen foreign countries.

Among its numerous distinctions and citations, the American Brass Quintet is the 2013 recipient of the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award for significant and lasting contributions to the field, the highest honor accorded by Chamber Music America.

*We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the "Great Hill People" and "Keepers of the Western Door" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.*



## UPCOMING EASTMAN SERIES CONCERTS

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Tickets for all series concerts can be purchased at [EastmanTheatre.org](http://EastmanTheatre.org)

### KILBOURN CONCERT SERIES

## Barbara Hannigan & Bertrand Chamayou

Kilbourn Hall

Sunday, December 8, 2024 at 3:00 PM

The sensational, internationally recognized soprano Barbara Hannigan and acclaimed pianist, Bertrand Chamayou make their Kilbourn Series debut with works by Scriabin, Messiaen, and John Zorn. Embodying music with an unparalleled dramatic sensibility, soprano and conductor Barbara Hannigan is an artist at the forefront of creation. Acclaimed pianist Bertrand Chamayou is a regular chamber music performer, with partners including Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Quatuor Ébène, Antoine Tamestit, and Sol Gabetta.

### KODAK HALL SERIES

## Elf in Concert

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre

Saturday, December 14, 2024 at 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM

Experience your favorite Christmas film transformed with the music of a live symphony orchestra in Elf™ in Concert! For the first time ever, audiences can rediscover the magic of this holiday classic while a live symphony orchestra performs John Debney's wonderful score and Santa Claus soars across the big screen in high-definition.

## UPCOMING STUDENT ENSEMBLE CONCERTS

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All student performances are free unless otherwise noted.

## Eastman Jazz Ensemble

Kilbourn Hall

Wednesday, December 4, 2024 at 7:30 PM

## Celentano Quartet Award Recital

Hatch Recital Hall

Wednesday, December 4, 2024 at 7:30 PM



For the most up to date information on Eastman concerts and events, scan this code to visit our online calendar.



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