

78TH SEASON OF

CONCERTS

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART | NOVEMBER 24, 2019



PROGRAM

Cherokee Chamber Singers
Winston-Salem Symphony Musicians
Jodi Burns, guest soprano

November 24, 2019 | 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

William Brittelle (b. 1976)
Si Otsedoha (We're Still Here) (2018)

“Overture”

“Phoenix Rising”

Soloists: Joshua Driver, Ella Montelongo, Silas Driver

“When Money Becomes Religion” (poem by Kyra Sneed)

Orator: Ella Montelongo

“Walls of Glass”

Soloist: Kimberly Hendrix

Si Otsedoha (We're Still Here)

Soloists: Acecia Lambert, Staci Spicer, Logan Lequire

Traditional

Arr. Bruce Stevenson

“Amazing Grace”

Intermission

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

String Quartet in F Major, op. 96 (*American Quartet*) (1893)

Allegro ma non troppo

Lento

Molto vivace

Finale: vivace ma non troppo

Traditional Native American

Arr. Roger Emerson

“Shoshone Love Song” (“The Heart’s Friend”)

Lebo M (b. 1964)

From *The Lion King* (1997)

“Grasslands Chant”

“The Lioness Hunt”

Soloist: Dominyk Arch

THE MUSICIANS

Cherokee Chamber Singers

The Cherokee Chamber Singers are the premier vocal ensemble of the Eastern Band of Cherokee from Cherokee High School in Cherokee, North Carolina. Under the direction of Michael Yannette, the Cherokee Chamber Singers have enlightened audiences by telling the remarkable story of the Eastern Band of Cherokee through powerful vocals that express the tribe's unique and vibrant history. They have proudly represented the Cherokee community through traditional choral, classical, musical theater, and pop/rock genres.

This talented group of young men and women have performed at various venues including Carnegie Hall, the Smithsonian Institution, and Disney World. Most recently, the ensemble toured with the North Carolina Symphony to share the Cherokee's rich history and culture through the work of William Brittle. The piece entitled *Si Otsedoha (We're Still Here)* was created from the thoughts and feelings of the Cherokee Chamber Singers themselves and through collaboration with other students from Cherokee High School.

Sopranos

Acecia Lambert
Kimberly Hendrix
Autumn Greene
Amiya George
Abigail Taylor

Tenors

Logan Lequire
Silas Driver
Dominyk Arch
Eli McCoy

Basses

Lucian Davis
Keegan Curtice
Julius Bolden
Joshua Driver
Julian Para Rubio

Altos

Ella Montelongo
Staci Spicer
Ally Reed
Maiya Davis
Emma Taylor
Takota Sexton

Jodi Burns

Guest soprano Jodi Burns has been described as singing with a “plush voice and rich expressivity” (*New York Times*). In addition to numerous operatic roles, she has collaborated with the Piedmont Wind Symphony in a concert that featured her own compositions, along with her band Judy Barnes. She duetted with Ben Folds at his 2015 “Home for the Holidays” concert. In summer of 2018, she appeared in a concert series with composer and pianist Ken Frazelle, collaborating on a program of music from his song sets *Appalachian Songbooks I and II* and *Songs from the Rearview Mirror*. Burns holds a master of music degree from the A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, where she studied with Dr. Marilyn Taylor and Jamie Allbritten.

Michael Yannette

Performance artist and music director Michael Yannette is a concert pianist, actor, singer, playwright, and music educator. He has provided musical direction for professional shows and school musicals alike. As an actor and musician, he wrote, produced, and starred in the title role of *An Evening with George Gershwin* and is currently finishing work on his second theatrical work, *Fantasia on Mysterium*, about the life of Russian composer Alexander Scriabin.

As an educator, Yannette is currently director of choirs, musical theatre, and piano at Cherokee Central Schools. Yannette has been named Teacher of the Year at Cherokee Central Schools and also at his previous school, Grandview Preparatory School, in Boca Raton, Florida.

William Brittle

William Brittle is a North Carolina-born, Brooklyn-based composer of genre-fluid, electro-acoustic music. His work is increasingly multidisciplinary and often focuses on the intersection of music, technology, environmentalism, and secular spirituality. His compositional style is characterized by a refusal to acknowledge traditional genre boundaries, a trait perhaps most evident in his recent commercial releases: the digital single “Dream Has No Sacrifice” and the album *Loving the Chambered Nautilus*.

Brittle's compositions have been presented at venues throughout the world, and his music has been commissioned by the Seattle, Indianapolis, Baltimore, Alabama, and Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestras, as well as by the North Carolina Symphony/Walker Art Center and the Basel Sinfonietta.

Brittle has been the recipient of grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the American Music Center, the American Composers Forum, the Jerome Foundation, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the New York State

Council on the Arts, and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers. Along with composers Judd Greenstein and Sarah Kirkland Snider, he cofounded and serves as coartistic director of New Amsterdam, a vital Brooklyn-based record label and presenting organization.

Winston-Salem Symphony

Presently in its seventy-third season, the Winston-Salem Symphony (WSS) is one of the State of North Carolina's oldest and most respected professional performing arts organizations. This season inaugurates the symphony's new music director, Timothy Redmond.

Hailing from Great Britain, Maestro Redmond brings over twenty years of exceptional experience on orchestral and operatic podiums across the globe. Under his artistic leadership, the WSS's 2019–2020 season presents a Classics Series, a Pops Series, and Symphony Unbound, which is an avant-garde series that combines outstanding musicians from multiple genres in unexpected performance locations.

Education and community engagement are essential to the WSS mission, and it presents many school programs through its P.L.A.Y. initiative that provides underserved youth with free instrumental instruction. It also offers a regional Youth Orchestras Program with four levels of ensembles for talented young musicians and hosts the Peter Perret Youth Talent Search, an annual statewide student concerto competition.

Members of the WSS performing today include Rebecca Willie on first violin, Fabrice Dharamraj on second violin, Louise Campbell on viola, Ryan Graebert on cello, William Morris on double bass, Christopher Heckman on keyboard, and John Beck on percussion.

NOTE FROM THE COMPOSER

The creation of the work you hear today, *Si Otsedoha (We're Still Here)*, has been one of the most transformative musical experiences of my life. Three years ago, the North Carolina Symphony had the vision to develop a partnership with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and to commission new work as part of that partnership. Through initial visits, we had the opportunity to spend time with the elders and other leaders in the community, learning about Cherokee history and culture, as well as becoming devastatingly aware of the atrocities committed against the Cherokee people.

My time in Cherokee set me on a truly unfathomable path of personal and spiritual growth. I began to challenge the way that I think of time, space, community, self, and others. I also started to reckon with my own cultural history in a way that was extremely uncomfortable at the time—a process that is still happening.

The whole project blossomed as we got to know the youth in the community and came to understand their boldness and their vision. Although I composed the music of *Si Otsedoha*, this work was truly shaped and driven by sixteen amazing students—the Cherokee Chamber Singers. The text, spirit, and overall direction of the project is theirs alone.

These are remarkable young adults with over 10,000 years of history behind them and an incredibly beautiful, complex, and resilient culture. They're also youth of the modern age, with a truly unique perspective and deep insight into what's happening in the world today. This is their platform to tell their story—and the story they've chosen to tell is not one of victimhood or persecution, but one of the transcendent strength of the Cherokee spirit. It's been my great pleasure and privilege to support them in that pursuit.

The most transformative part of the process has been getting to know these young adults and seeing the courage they have displayed every step of the way. It has been truly inspirational for me—and as we bring this work across the United States, I hope our audiences will also feel the power in these singers' words and messages.

William Britelle, composer

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is not often that enormous opportunities just drop in the laps of school music directors for their students. Most of the time we are used to *making* things happen for and with our students—rehearsals, competitions, travel opportunities, educational experiences, and the like. However, the opportunity to create *Si Otsedoha (We're Still Here)* with my students at Cherokee High School and with the remarkable composer William Brittelle was one such opportunity. It has been the project with the most far-reaching musical, cultural, and educational impact in my thirty-three years of teaching.

Five years ago, we were contacted about a grant that was given to the North Carolina Symphony from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation for a new work that was to be composed, at least in part, in Cherokee language for both the symphony and the vocal students at Cherokee High School (before the Cherokee Chamber Singers were officially formed). The vocal program at that time was in its infancy, so the idea of having the students perform a newly composed work throughout the State of North Carolina with a major symphony was a daunting undertaking to consider.

A few years later, however, the students had gained sufficient training, and composer William (Bill) Brittelle, best known for combining the elements of traditional orchestral scoring with popular elements such as synthesizer and pop and rock vocal styles, was chosen for the project. Bill traveled from New York to Cherokee, North Carolina, and spent quite a bit of time absorbing himself in the local Native American culture. He got to know the students of the Cherokee Chamber Singers, and he studied traditional Cherokee musical styles. His first musical sketches, for instance, were a combination of the vocal music of traditional Cherokee dances accompanied by the brief theme and variations style of string quartet compositions.

It was decided by all of the project stakeholders that the work should be student-driven. A committee formed of three Chamber Singers members—Ella Montelongo, Cece Lambert, and Eason Esquivel—and they decided the themes and content of the piece. As a group, they clearly wanted their voices and the voices of their community to be heard in a truthful, very real way. They wanted an absolutely unflinching look into what it means to be Cherokee on every level—historically, culturally, and socially in the past, present, and future.

The committee created a questionnaire that was answered by all of the students in Cherokee High School and Middle School. Questions were asked, such as “What are the stereotypes you have faced as a Cherokee person? What would you like people to know about the Cherokee Community? What are you most proud of as a member of the Cherokee Community?” Approximately fifty of these questionnaires were sent

to Bill, and a few months later *Si Otsedoha (We're Still Here)* was born. The libretto came from direct quotations from the students' questionnaires, often translated into Cherokee language.

The movement entitled “When Money Becomes Religion” was a full poem written by Chamber Singers' member Kyra Sneed, now a graduate. Kyra, a shy and humble member of the group, produced this powerful poem that belies her quiet nature and gives fresh meaning to the phrase “the pen is mightier than the sword.”

Through the creation of this complete work, the students have learned not only more about their tribe's history, but have also deepened their pride in their cultural heritage. They have, indeed, enthusiastically embraced their role as cultural ambassadors, performers, and co-creators of the composition.

In today's performance of the entire composition, we are especially proud to have members of the outstanding Winston-Salem Symphony join us in a reduced orchestration of the work, revised by William Brittelle. It has been an immense pleasure working with these tremendous musicians and with the management of the WSS. We are eternally grateful to them for being a part of today's performance at the National Gallery of Art.

Michael Yannette, Music Director, Cherokee Central Schools

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Eighth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin Concerts

Unless otherwise noted, concerts are held in the West Building, West Garden Court.

Alicia Svigals, klezmer fiddler
Uli Geissendoerfer, piano
With special guest William Schimmel, accordion

Beregovski Suite: Reimagining a Long-Lost Klezmer Archive
Reimagining the long-lost melodies from the early 20th-century fieldwork of Moshe Beregovski.

This concert is part of a series of performances by female violinists, showcasing the brilliance and stylistic versatility of the instrument.

December 1, 3:30

Capitol Hill Chorale
Frederick Binkholder, Artistic Director

Caroling in the Rotunda
December 7, 1:30 and 2:30
West Building Rotunda

JACK Quartet

Modern Medieval
Music by Thomas Morley, Solage, Rodericus, Chaya Czernowin, Marcos Balter, and John Zorn.
December 8, 3:30

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

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cover Roy Lichtenstein, *A Cherokee Brave* (detail), 1952, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Roy and Dorothy Lichtenstein © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein, 1996.56.16