

COLORADO COLLEGE



Program Notes
by
Michael Grace

FESTIVAL ARTISTS CONCERT

Monday, June 22, 2026

7:00 PM

Packard Hall

Quintet, Movement II: Little Suite of Miniatures

Air: Allegretto

Presto brillante

Andante

Largo—Allegretto—Largo—Allegretto

Presto

Steven Christopher Sacco
(b.1965)

Steven Sacco holds a doctorate from Columbia University, an M.F.A. from Princeton University, and a bachelor's degree from the Juilliard School. And, he has held distinguished teaching positions at the Mannes School of Music, Rutgers University, and SUNY at Purchase. But more importantly, his compositions have been performed by many prominent soloists and ensembles. His Quintet was commissioned by the American Brass Quintet which has performed the work many times and on numerous significant series or festivals. Sacco has described the work as “a serious introspection punctuated by wit, whimsy and sparkle.”

We will hear only the second movement on this concert, but we might note that this movement alone has five short subsections. It is like a free-standing 5-movement composition. But each of these “sections” are very short and the entire movement lasts only about 12 minutes. The opening *Air* features the first trumpet while the following *Presto* is full of cute little rhythmic chordal interjections by the full ensemble. The following *Andante* is again a slow lyrical movement with lots of little solos.

The *Largo—Allegretto* alternations are between a slow chordal melody which opens the movement and a faster passage of descending scales in which all the instruments participate. Finally, a section marked *Presto*, with its cute rhythmic syncopations and alternating blocks of sound, illustrates the composer's reference to the “wit, whimsy and sparkle” that often characterize his music. This *Presto* brings the “movement” to a cheerful climax.

An Linne Ghlas (Grey-green Estuary)

Jennifer Barker
(b. 1965)

Jennifer Barker is a Scottish composer who clearly loves her country, its shapes, colors, and its beautiful geography. She has left a video narrative of what this composition—*An Linne Ghlas*—means to her. From the western edge of Scotland, one can look over the ocean and mountains and be a part of this beautiful nature. She describes the bird calls, the movement of the ocean waves, and the shapes of the mountains, and how they all find musical shapes in this tone poem of pure Scottish folk music. Barker's spiritual absorption of her homeland is profound and sincere.

For this composition, she chose the pure sounds of solo flute and cello. It opens with very sparse textures made of interlocking solo lines for each instrument. Gradually, almost un-noticingly, the two instruments merge more and more into a beautiful duet of intriguing dialogue and rich sonorities. Without the benefit of pictures, the listener can get a sense of the "Linne Ghlas." And while the opening lines for flute and cello may not feel like traditional melodies at first, as the piece progresses more and more, Barker's musical language takes on a sonority that is beautiful and pleasing to the listener. The ending is a stunning denouement into silence.

Mass Transit (Colorado premiere)

Sam Wu
(b. 1995)

network architecture
garden city
airport express
night skyline
interchange station

Sam Wu has provided the following succinct statement on the general subject of his composition titled *Mass Transit*, a musical overlook of the massive Shanghai public transportation network:

"Mass Transit is inspired by Shanghai's metro system—an elaborate network of lines, trains, tunnels, overpasses, and interchange stations. Each movement explores a facet of the subway network: the elegance of optimizing a system map; the variety of connections available in the city (gardens, airports, skyscrapers); and the complexities of multi-layered interchanges, where up to four lines converge. The piece as a whole is also envisioned as a musical "voyage;" the train stops briefly to take in the sights before resuming its journey onward."

Oboe Quartet, Op. 61

Allegro non troppo

Allegretto

Vivace con brio

Malcolm Arnold

(1921-2006)

Sir Malcolm Arnold was a very well-known English composer who wrote in many genres. His corpus includes nine symphonies, numerous concertos, and a variety of chamber ensembles. But he achieved his most significant fame for his more than 100 film scores. These included his Oscar-winning score for *The Bridge on the River Kwai* in 1957. He was a facile composer whose musical productivity was astonishing. He began his career playing trumpet professionally with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and later the London Philharmonic, but in 1950, focused more and more on composition while enduring psychological hardships.

His oboe quartet was composed for the 60th birthday of the then-celebrated oboist, Leon Goosens. The work is in three movements that show Arnold's keen sense for appealing melody and moments of virtuosity for individual players. These musical characteristics are beautifully present in the clever dialogues between the parts.

The first movement, *Allegro non troppo*, finds the oboe navigating wide jumps and broken chords. These have been described as "athletic and conversational." The second movement, *Allegretto*, is in an entirely different mood. It is delicate, almost pastoral-sounding and tender. It exists as a beautiful interlude between the more aggressive outer movements. The third movement, *Vivace con brio*, stands as an exciting finale that requires great rhythmic precision between the oboe and the other instruments. After a brief reflective pause, it closes with an energetic cadence.

Trio for violin, clarinet and piano

Andante con dolore, con molto espressione

Allegro

Moderato

Presto

Aram Khachaturian

(1903-1978)

Aram Khachaturian was born in Tbilisi, Armenia, but soon moved to Moscow where he studied and ultimately remained for most of his life. During the years of Soviet restrictions, he came under attack (along with most of his famous compatriots) and even issued an occasional apology for having strayed from the Soviet aesthetic constraints. However, he did prevail and established himself as one of the most important composers in the USSR in the 1940's and 50's. The ultimate success of his career is due in part to his manifestation of one important Soviet arts policy: "the interpenetration of regional folklorism and the great Russian tradition." As Boris Schwartz has pointed out, "his native Armenian heritage is reflected in his languid melodies, stirring rhythms and the pulsating vitality of his musical idiom; yet his imagination was disciplined by an academicism based on Rimsky-Korsakov [one of his Russian forbears]."

His Trio for violin, clarinet and piano was composed in 1932 when he was only 29 years old and still a student. In this work, however, one can hear some important characteristics of his later music. Most notable are the vestiges of Armenian folk music. The first movement, *Andante con dolore, con molto espressione* (Slow with grief, with much expression), has a characteristically languid melody which unfolds in the violin and clarinet above a plodding accompaniment in the piano. In the melody, there are moments of flashy activity which contrast with the generally slower and grieving flow.

The second movement, *Allegro*, is in a far more rhythmic triple time. It opens with a dance-like passage where the clarinet seems to lead. This is followed by a much faster center section which eventually gives way to a return of the opening music. The third movement, *Moderato*, begins quietly but soon pursues more aggressively rhythmic dance melodies which sound distinctively folk-like. There is a striking middle section where the piano takes the lead in a contrasting dance which is more stately and calm in character. This eventually gives way to an exuberant *Presto* which brings forth distinctive oriental-sounding melodies passed back and forth between the violin and clarinet. The movement finally closes with a denouement of tender lyricism.

UPCOMING SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL EVENTS

www.coloradocollege.edu/musicfestival

Music & Wine Night Cap

June 22, Follows tonight's concert - Evergreen Restaurant, ticket add-on

Music at Midday

June 24, 12:15 p.m. - Packard Hall, free

Music at Midday

June 25, 12:15 p.m. - Packard Hall, free

Festival Artists Pre-Concert Recital

June 25, 5:45 p.m. - Packard Hall, free

Wine Social

June 25, 6:15 p.m. - Packard Courtyard, free

Festival Artists Concert

June 25, 7 p.m. - Packard Hall, free

Music at Midday

June 26, 12:15 p.m. - Packard Hall, free

Festival Orchestra Pre-Concert Lecture

June 26, 5:45 p.m. - CAC Screening Room, free

Festival Orchestra Concert

June 26, 7 p.m. - Celeste Theatre



Summer
Music
festival