

Faculty Recital

**Dawn Sonntag, Composer**

Saturday, September 14, 2024 at 7:30pm  
Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Center

Pacific Lutheran University  
The College of Professional Studies and School of Music, Theatre & Dance present

Faculty Recital

**Dawn Sonntag, Composer**

with

Holly Boaz, *soprano*  
Korine Fujiwara, *viola*  
Jason Gilliam, *euphonium*  
Lisa Pearson, *violin*

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Welcome to Lagerquist Concert Hall.  
Please disable the audible signal on all watches and cellular phones for the duration of the concert.  
Use of cameras, recording equipment, and all digital devices is not permitted in the concert hall.

**PROGRAM**

*All works by Dawn Sonntag*

**Psalm 42 for Solo Viola**

Korine Fujiwara, *viola*

**Fantasy for Viola**

Korine Fujiwara, *viola* • Dawn Sonntag, *piano*

**Three Love Songs**

*Speak to me, my love*  
*Patience*  
*Set Me as a Seal*

Holly Boaz, *soprano* • Dawn Sonntag, *piano*

**Violin Sonata**

*I. Pesante*  
*II. Lament*  
*III. Cantabile*

Lisa Pearson, *violin* • Dawn Sonntag, *piano*

**Euphonium Sonata**

*I. Emporté*  
*II. Pas de Deux*  
*III. Joyeux*

Jason Gilliam, *euphonium* • Dawn Sonntag, *piano*

## Program Notes

*Psalm 42* was composed for the Deus ex Musica “I Will Lift My Eyes Unto the Mountains” project, which consisted of twelve new works for solo viola inspired by the psalms. The program, which was meant to further ecumenical discussion of the psalms, premiered at Boston’s Old Church in 2022. The video recording of the concert has been aired across the U.S. and in the United Kingdom. The opening verse of Psalm 42 is often illustrated with peaceful images of deer by calm forested streams. Deer do not pant because of thirst, but rather to cool themselves after fleeing a predator. The waterfalls in this psalm “roar” as “deep calls to deep.” The author – probably David – was living in exile, fleeing enemies. Taunted by his adversaries, the psalmist oscillates between agitated angst and calm hope. This psalm illustrates the role of faith in resilience during times of angst, isolation, and grief.

The timbre and expressive range of the viola has always fascinated me. *Fantasy for Viola and Piano* was commissioned by the Cleveland Composers Guild for the 2012 Learning Through Creativity program, which pairs composers with prodigious young performers. It was my first foray into composing for solo viola as well as my first time experimenting with the octatonic scale.

### *Three Love Songs*

“Set Me as a Seal” was commissioned in 2003 for the wedding of my friends John and Catherine O’Brien, who sang in the choir I conducted at Christ Church on Capitol Hill in St. Paul, Minnesota. It became the first of a set of four biblical songs I composed in ensuing years. Fifteen years later, I composed and premiered the two Tagore songs for the 2018 Oregon Bach Festival Composers Forum with pianist Caleb Wenzel. I plan to set additional Tagore poems to create a cycle.

The Washington State Music Teachers Association commissioned me to compose *Violin Sonata* after I was selected as the WSTMA 2021 Composer of the Year. I began composing it during the Covid pandemic, when intense political unrest raged across the country. The first movement, *Pesante*, expresses the heaviness, anger, and agitation of that time. The second movement, *Lament*, which I composed first, was inspired by the gospel hymn *Precious Lord, Take My Hand*, by composer Tommy A. Dorsey (1899-1993). After the sudden death of his wife and infant son, Dorsey set the text to the hymn tune *MAITLAND* (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, No. 424) by George Allen (1812-1877). *Precious Lord, Take My Hand* became Martin Luther King’s favorite hymn. The third movement, *Cantabile*, was inspired by the flow of the Nisqually River; an anonymous pentatonic Native American chant; and a Native American prayer for peace from the Day of Prayer for World Peace during the U.N. International Year of Peace, 1986.

O Great Spirit of our Ancestors, I raise my pipe to you.  
To your messengers the four winds, and to Mother Earth  
who provides for your Children, give us the wisdom  
to teach our children to love, to respect and to be kind to each other  
so that we may grow with peace of mind.  
Let us learn to share all good things that provide for us on this earth.

Although most of my education and performing life has been centered around vocal music, I began my musical life as a trumpet player, studying for ten years and performing with the Milwaukee Symphony Youth orchestra. I composed *Sonata for Euphonium* for euphoniumist and conductor Travis Scott, who premiered it with me at Hiram College, where I was teaching at the time. Travis later commissioned me to arrange the second movement, *Pas de Deux*, for his wind ensemble at Lone Star College in Houston; they performed it in December 2023. Composing a piece for the brass world brought me back to the musical roots of my childhood and youth, and I hope to do more brass and wind ensemble composing in the future.

## Texts

### *Psalm 42*

As the deer pants for water, so I long for you, O God.

I thirst for God, the living God. Where can I find him to come and stand before him? Day and night I weep for his help, and all the while my enemies taunt me. “Where is this God of yours?” they scoff.

Take courage, my soul! Do you remember those times (but how could you ever forget them!) when you led a great procession to the Temple on festival days, singing with joy, praising the Lord? Why then be downcast? Why be discouraged and sad? Hope in God! I shall praise him again. Yes, I shall again praise him for his help.

Yet I am standing here depressed and gloomy, but I will meditate upon your kindness to this lovely land where the Jordan River flows and where Mount Hermon and Mount Mizar stand. All your waves and billows have gone over me, and floods of sorrow pour upon me like a thundering cataract.

Yet day by day the Lord also pours out his steadfast love upon me, and through the night I sing his songs and pray to God who gives me life.

“O God my Rock,” I cry, “why have you forsaken me? Why must I suffer these attacks from my enemies?” Their taunts pierce me like a fatal wound; again and again they scoff, “Where is that God of yours?” But, O my soul, don’t be discouraged. Don’t be upset. Expect God to act! For I know that I shall again have plenty of reason to praise him for all that he will do. He is my help! He is my God!

### *Speak to me, my love*

Speak to me, my love!  
Tell me in words what you sang.  
The night is dark. The stars are lost in clouds.  
The wind is sighing through the leaves.  
I will let loose my hair.  
My blue cloak will cling round me like night.  
I will clasp your head to my breast,  
and there in the sweet loneliness,  
Murmur in your heart.  
I will close my eyes and listen. I will not look in your face.  
When your words are ended, we will sit still and silent.  
Only the trees will whisper in the dark.  
The night will pale. The day will dawn.  
We shall look at each other's eyes and go our different paths.  
Speak to me, my love!  
Tell me in words what you sang.

– Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

### *Patience*

If you will not speak, I will fill my heart with your silence and endure it.  
I will keep still and wait like the night with starry vigil  
and its head bent low with patience.

The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish,  
and your voice pour down in golden streams, breaking through the sky.

Then your words will take wing in songs from every one of my birds' nests,  
and your melodies will break forth in flowers in all my forest groves.

– Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

### *Set Me as a Seal*

Set me as a seal upon your heart, a seal upon your arm,  
For love is strong as death, its flames are flames of fire.  
Many waters cannot quench love, nor floods wash it away,  
For love bears all things, believes all things,  
hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.  
Set me as a seal upon your heart, a seal upon your arm,  
For love is patient and kind, love rejoices in truth,  
Love binds all in perfect harmony.  
Love never fails.

– Dawn Sonntag, from *Song of Solomon* 8:6,7; *I Corinthians* 3:4, 6-8; *Colossians* 3:14

### About the Composer

The music of composer **Dawn Sonntag** has been called “profound,” “hauntingly lyrical,” and “freshly relevant.” Infused with varied influences acquired via her background as a collaborative pianist, singer, choral conductor, and former trumpet player, her works have been performed by soloists and ensembles across the U.S. and abroad, including Burning River Baroque, the Delgani Quartet, the Ensign Chorus and Orchestra, the Portland Symphonic Choir, the Cleveland Chamber Chorus, the Choral Arts Ensemble, Portland; Corvus; the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival Orchestra, the Cleveland Opera Theater, the Hartford Opera Theater, and more. Her art songs have been widely performed in recital and are included in recordings by sopranos Michelle Murray Viertel (*Every Tiny Thing*) and Megan Ihnen (*Currents in Time*) and by Burning River Baroque duo Malina Rauschenfels, and Paula Most. Her music has been broadcast on WLCV in Cleveland and in Portland, Oregon, and is published by Carl Fischer, North Star Music, Note Nova, and Dagny Press. Her opera *Verlorene Heimat* (Lost Homeland), for which she also wrote the libretto, was awarded Honorable Mention in the American Prize competition. Her mini opera *For Life* was commissioned for the Operas [In Place] festival, which was selected as a winner in the category of Artistic Creation in the 2023 Awards for Digital Excellence. Sonntag has been a three-time resident of the Visby International Centre for Composers, receiving a Swedish government International Cultural Fellowship in 2019. She was the statewide Music Teachers’ National Association Composer of the Year in Ohio (2010) and Washington State (2021). Sonntag is currently a lecturer in music composition at Pacific Lutheran University. She is former Associate Professor of Music at Hiram College, and has also taught at Gonzaga University and the University of St. Catherine. She holds a D.M.A. from the University of Minnesota, an M.M. from the Ohio State University, a K.A. (graduate artist diploma) in collaborative piano from the Hochschule für Kirchenmusik, Heidelberg, and a B.M. from the University of Texas, El Paso. She is president of the new Salish Sea chapter of the National Association of Composers, U.S.A.

### About the Performers

Soprano **Holly Boaz** enjoys a varied career in opera, oratorio, chamber music, and small ensembles. Career highlights include appearances with Seattle Symphony, Symphony Tacoma, Hartford Symphony, Seattle Opera, Pacific MusicWorks, Music of Remembrance, the Russian Chamber Music Foundation, Vancouver Early Music Festival, Connecticut Opera, The Aspen Music Festival, the Emerald Ensemble, Early Music Tacoma, and in the UK, the Aldeburgh Festival and Caritas Chamber Choir. She is a winner of the Northwest Region of the National Association of Teachers of Singing Artist Award Competition (NATSAA), and the Ladies’ Musical Club of Seattle Competition. She received an encouragement award from the Connecticut District of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, was a finalist in the Palm Beach Opera Competition, and completed fellowships at the Aspen Music Festival, Music Academy of the West, and the Britten-Pears Programme in England. She is a graduate of the Seattle Opera Young Artists Program and the Baroque Performance Institute at Oberlin College and holds degrees from the Hartt School at the University of Hartford and from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is a passionate teacher, serving on the music faculty at PLU and maintaining a thriving private studio in Tacoma and online. She is the NW Regional coordinator of the Artist Awards Competition (NATSAA) and serves on the executive board of the Puget Sound Chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), an organization dedicated to advancing excellence in singing through teaching, performance, scholarship, and research.

**Korine Fujiwara** is professor of violin, viola, and composition at PLU. She served for many years on the music faculty of Ohio Wesleyan University and is in great demand for master classes and clinics throughout the United States. She is a founding member of the Carpe Diem String Quartet, a devoted and sought-after chamber musician and teacher, and a gifted composer and arranger. Named as one of *Strings Magazine’s* “25 Contemporary Composers to Watch,” Korine has received multiple commissions including works for opera, chamber ensembles, chorus, concerti, and music for modern dance. Her works have been performed throughout the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Italy, The Netherlands,

Switzerland, Spain, Australia, China, and Japan. Critics have remarked of Ms. Fujiwara's music, "The ear is forever tickled by beautifully judged music that manages to be sophisticated and accessible at the same time" (*Fanfare Magazine*); "She knows how to exploit all the resources of string instruments alone and together" (*Strings Magazine*). "Fujiwara beautifully meets the challenge of weaving together different emotions across generations that make sense musically while delighting the ear." (*WOSU Classical 101 by Request*) "Fujiwara's music is rich and beguiling throughout." (*The Columbus Dispatch*) "Artfully layered and knitted together" (*The Wall Street Journal*). Korine is a recipient of an Opera America Commissioning Grant from the Opera Grants for Female Composers program, made possible through the generosity of The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, for her award-winning composition *The Flood*, with Stephen Wadsworth, librettist, premiered in full production by Opera Columbus and ProMusica Chamber Orchestra in February 2019. Ms. Fujiwara holds degrees from The Juilliard School and Northwestern University and began her orchestral career with the Brooklyn Philharmonic and the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus. She was also a member of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, where she held the position of Acting Assistant Principal Second Violin. Korine performs on a 1790 Contreras violin, 2004 Kurt Widenhouse viola, and bows by three of today's finest makers, Paul Martin Siefried, Ole Kanestrom, and Charles Espey, all of Port Townsend, Washington. Outside of her musical endeavors, she enjoys chocolate, ramen, and geocaching.

**Jason Gilliam** is a native of Tacoma, Washington. He holds Bachelor of Music and Master of Arts in teaching degrees from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington, where he studied with Peter Ellefson, Ron Munson, and Steve Fissel. Jason has been the Lecturer of Euphonium at PLU for fifteen years. He has been an elementary school teacher (currently first grade) for 27 years, mostly in the Steilacoom School District. Jason has enjoyed an ever-increasing demand as a clinician and euphonium soloist. Gilliam has been a featured euphonium artist at the 2012 International Tuba Euphonium Conference in Linz, Austria, and guest soloist with many bands and orchestras in the northwest region. He has also presented clinics at many schools and universities around the United States and Canada. Gilliam was the solo euphoniumist in the Tacoma Concert Band for over 20 years and was a featured soloist in over 50 performances. He was a soloist on tours of Spain, France, Czech Republic, Austria, Budapest, Scotland, and Ireland. Other performance credits include the Seattle Symphony, Tacoma Symphony, Auburn Symphony, The Tubadours, and the Northwest Mahler Festival Orchestra. Jason Gilliam is a Buffet Crampon USA/Besson Performing Artist and plays the Besson 2052 Prestige Euphonium.

**Lisa Pearson** grew up in suburban Chicago, Illinois and began violin lessons at age seven. She has a Bachelor of Music from University of Missouri-Columbia and a Master of Music from the Crane School of Music at the State University of New York-Potsdam, both with an emphasis in violin performance. Lisa has lived in the Pacific Northwest since 2003. From 2004-2013, she was a private violin and viola instructor in Olympia. She obtained her teacher's certificate from St. Martin's University in 2014 and is currently an orchestra teacher in the Tumwater School District. Lisa is also a second violinist with the Olympia Symphony Orchestra and the Chinook String Quartet.