



SOR / NEXTGEN

February 23, 2025, 4:00 p.m. | UM School of Music Recital Hall

PROGRAM

5 Little Dances (1946).....Paul Creston
(arr. Robert Longfield) (1906-1985)

1. Rustic Dance
2. Languid Dance
3. Toy Dance
4. Pastoral Dance
5. Festive Dance

Voyage for String Orchestra (1971)..... John Corigliano
(b. 1938)

Boti's Dances (1978) with NEXTGEN.....Christian Woehr
(b. 1951)

Gahk (Everything)
Nappee (Nap)
Guck (Truck or Duck)
Gook (Gook)
Tymowt (Time Out)
Wahee (Water)
Ock (Rock)
Desseral (Cereal)

INTERMISSION

String Quartet no. 2 in F Major, op. 92 (*Kabardinian*) (1941) ... Sergei Prokofiev
(arr. Barry Lieberman) (1891-1953)

Allegro sostenuto
Adagio
Allegro

Today's performance is being recorded.

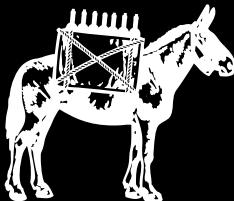
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PROGRAM NOTES BY SUSAN ISRAEL BENSEN

Paul Creston (1906-1985): *5 Little Dances* (1946), arr. Robert Longfield

Paul Creston was an Italian-American composer born in New York City. He studied organ and piano early on, while helping to support his family, and was an organist for St. Malachy's church in New York City beginning in 1934. He taught at Central Washington State College and was also a conductor; lecturer; author of books on music theory; and mentor to various jazz and classical composers, including John Corigliano, whose *Voyage* is on our program today.

Creston was a self-taught composer who considered his teachers to be Bach, Scarlatti, Chopin, Debussy, and Ravel. His compositions include six symphonies, six concertos, other orchestral pieces, and sacred choral works. His music is known for its unique rhythmic vitality and harmonic style. He sometimes incorporated song and dance idioms into his music, and he counted the poetry of Walt Whitman among his inspirations. His music was frequently performed in the 1940s and 1950s after he rose to prominence with two orchestral works, *Threnody* and *Two Choric Dances*, both written in 1938. His many awards include two Guggenheim Fellowships and a New York Music Critics' Circle Award.

Creston's *5 Little Dances* is exactly what the name implies: a composition in five movements representing five types of dances. Originally written for piano, it was later arranged for strings by Robert Longfield.

John Corigliano (b. 1938): *Voyage* (1971, arranged for string orchestra 1976)

John Corigliano was born in New York City; his father was concertmaster for the New York Philharmonic, and his mother was a pianist and teacher. He studied composition at Columbia University and at the Manhattan School of Music. Among his teachers was Paul Creston. Corigliano has served as distinguished professor of music at both Lehman College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and also has been on the composition faculty at The Juilliard School.

Corigliano has written over one hundred compositions and has won a Pulitzer Prize, five Grammy Awards, an Academy Award, and the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition. Many know of him for his Symphony no. 1, a response to the AIDS epidemic, and for his film score for *The Red Violin*.

Corigliano's work *Voyage* was first written as an a capella choral work based on Charles Baudelaire's poem "L'Invitation au voyage," translated into English by American poet and translator Richard Wilbur. The poem was part of Baudelaire's 1857 collection, *Les Fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*). The poems in this collection were considered decadent when published, but "L'Invitation au voyage," one of the more subdued, has been described as a "meditation on love." Corigliano reworked *Voyage* for string orchestra in 1976, omitting the text, and he has said that "Wilbur's poignant setting pictures a world of obsessive imagination—a drugged version of heaven full of sensual imagery," adding that his music is meant to echo this.

Christian Woehr (b. 1951): *Boti's Dances* (1978)

Christian Woehr, born in Dallas, Texas, is the son of two orchestral musicians. After spending his childhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Chautauqua, New York, he attended the Eastman School of Music, studying viola, French horn, and composition and graduated magna cum laude. Woehr has served as principal violist for the Rochester Philharmonic, Indianapolis Symphony, Aspen Festival Orchestra, and Saint Louis Symphony and also as violist with the Columbus String Quartet. His first orchestral work was premiered by the Pittsburgh Symphony when he was 16 years old, and he has performed as viola soloist at both Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center. He has composed more than 30 symphonies.

Boti's Dances was inspired by a joyful experience he had during the summer of 1978. He relates his story of visiting some friends who were living in tipis in the mountains above Aspen, Colorado. He found himself babysitting for the friends' two-year-old daughter one afternoon, a girl named Boti, to whom he refers as a "mountain child." He entertained the little girl by providing snacks and beverages, identifying flora and fauna, and, ultimately, playing viola for her. His improvisations evolved into dance tunes, which he jotted down and performed later that night during an outdoor birthday bash, accompanied by Boti's violinist father and some "drum-banging grownups, kids, horses, goats, and a belly dancer." This work that began as a violin and viola duet in four movements has evolved over the years, culminating in this lively, foot-tapping suite for string orchestra. *Boti's Dances* has what Woehr calls "eight more or less continuously played movements," with titles that reflect his own quirky words, and those of Boti, the little girl who inspired it all.

**Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953): String Quartet no. 2, op.92 (Kabardinian) (1941)
(arr. for string orchestra by Barry Lieberman)**

Soviet-Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev was born in Ukraine and died in Moscow. Along with other Soviet artists, Prokofiev was evacuated to the Caucasus after the Nazis invaded major Russian cities in 1941. He spent that year in the Kabardino-Balkar autonomous republic in the North Caucasus, about 900 miles south of Moscow. While there, he explored the local archive of folk music recordings of the Kabardinian tribe and wrote the String Quartet no. 2 in F major, op. 92, as a result.

Prokofiev, in writing this quartet, sought to evoke the character of Kabardinian folk music. He wove Kabardino-Balkar folk themes, rhythms, and textures into this quartet while retaining his own harmonic style, using string-quartet instruments to imitate Kabardinian plucked and percussion instruments. The second movement opens with a Kabardian dance with an accompaniment that imitates the playing of the kamancheh, a stringed instrument played by Caucasians. Prokofiev wrote that he thought "that the combination of new, untouched Oriental folklore with the most classical of classic forms, the string quartet, ought to produce interesting and unexpected results."



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FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Dear friends,

Our annual NEXTGEN concert with young artists is always a great joy for the musicians of the String Orchestra of the Rockies. The youthful energy and perspectives of our talented guests are energizing for us and bring a fresh outlook and special creative dynamism to our Recital Hall stage. It is also gratifying to see our young players develop over the years and become professionals—you already see many of them performing with the Missoula Symphony Orchestra and other orchestras in the region.

They join us for *Boti's Dances*, a piece inspired by a young child—a work particularly fitting for our side-by-side selection!

Our program's first half also features some American gems by composers who share a uniquely American voice and personality. The adorable *5 Little Dances* was originally written for piano solo, and the reworking into a string orchestra arrangement is very attractive. Our second work, *Voyage*, is a favorite among string players, and I find Corigliano's melodies to be haunting and soulful. If you saw the movie *The Red Violin*, you will remember the stunning soundtrack performed by Joshua Bell that features many of Corigliano's unforgettable melodies.

The second half of our concert features Prokofiev's String Quartet no. 2 arranged for string orchestra by my husband, double bassist Barry Lieberman. His use of the bass in this arrangement is strikingly original, often combining the solo violin and bass in melodic duets. The work also features a cello cadenza in the last movement performed by SOR principal cellist Adam Collins. Music historians suggest that Prokofiev was inspired by his friend Mstislav Rostropovich, one of the world's greatest cellists, in composing this fiendishly difficult cadenza.

Thank you for joining us today—we always appreciate each one of you in our audience, and we hope to see you again in May!

Musically yours,
Maria Larionoff
Artistic Director, String Orchestra of the Rockies

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