
McLennan Community Orchestra

Peter Olson, conductor

Friday, November 8, 2024, 7:30 p.m.
Wilbur A. Ball Performing Arts Center

Repertoire

Through the Bay

Joe Jaxson (b. 2000)

Allegro ma non troppo

(“Awakening of cheerful feelings
on arrival in the countryside”
from Symphony No. 6 (“Pastoral”))

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

The Moldau (Vltava)

from *Má Vlast (My Fatherland)*

Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884)

Allegretto from Symphony No. 2

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

Music from *How to Train Your Dragon*
arr. Sean O’Loughlin

John Powell (b. 1963)

Please turn off all cell phones and pagers or set ringers to silent mode.

Program Notes

Joe Jaxson was born in New York and raised in Staunton, Virginia. He credits his talent and love for music to his father’s love for Smooth Jazz, Soul, and R&B alongside his mother’s affinity to Classical and Christian Gospel. Jaxson completed his BM in composition at James Madison University in 2022. He recently completed an MA and started a DMA at the University of Texas at Austin, studying with Professors Donald Grantham, Yevgeniy Sharlat, Omar Thomas, and Sam Lipman. Jaxson composes for band, orchestra, and chamber ensembles. Recent premieres include *Joy of the Soul* (2024) with the Allentown Symphony Orchestra, *Through the Bay* (2023) with James Madison University Symphony Orchestra and eleven other consortium orchestras across the country (including the McLennan Community Orchestra), *Within the Flux* (2023) for Sax Quartet and Percussion, and *Treeflowers* (2023) performed by the Sandbox Percussion Quartet. In all his work, Jaxson’s overarching goal is collaborating and connecting with mass audiences. (www.joejaxsonmusic.com/about)

Through the Bay was inspired by Jaxson’s first ride on a ferry boat through the Elliot Bay in Seattle. The new experience left a lasting impression on him, having felt a mix of excitement, adventure, cold, and wonder. All of these emotions make their way into the music of *Through the Bay*, both musically and literally, as several captions in the score indicate thoughts and feelings associated with the journey. The piece begins calmly, with hints of the main theme presented in various instruments and slowly building into an exciting melody as we embark on the journey. The journey picks up and initially culminates in a feeling of wonder at the grandeur of nature. The “Heavy winds of nature” take over, followed by a calm spell. After a reprise of some of the beginning material, a “Swirling nimbus” starts and builds energy until we clear the storm. Thoughts of “What else is out there, waiting?” bring a brief sense of mystery before “The bay calls once more” to end the piece. Jaxson’s inventive use of rhythmic motives adds unity to the piece, and the creative harmonies and orchestration add color and interest throughout. The McLennan Community Orchestra joined a group of other college and community orchestras to commission this piece from Joe Jaxson in 2022, and we are happy to finally perform this piece that is now barely a year old.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) fundamentally changed the symphony in several ways throughout his career. His symphonies are bigger, longer, and more dramatic than earlier symphonies. He brought the symphony in line with the new Romantic sentiment taking Europe by storm in the early nineteenth century. Beethoven loved nature and was known to enjoy walks in the countryside while composing music in his head and pausing to write down notes. His **Sixth Symphony** became a celebration of that love for nature. Each movement has a subtitle that indicates what the music represents—another innovation for Beethoven—including a stream, a country dance, and a storm. The first movement is the “Awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside.” The music develops around cheerful and dance-like themes that evoke nature and the countryside. In the middle section, Beethoven builds the orchestral texture out of repeating motives taken from the longer themes. The small figures repeat and build in a way that seems to combine individual trees, flowers, and birds—each unremarkable on their own—into a grand landscape celebrating the beauty of nature.

Program Notes

Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884) is generally considered the father of Czech music. Through the nineteenth century, nationalism among the peoples of Europe was steadily increasing as different ethnic and national groups grew weary of rule (and sometimes oppression) by the Austrian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, and other large states. The Czech people, from the region of Bohemia (now the Czech Republic), were among those seeking to assert cultural and political independence. Smetana, living in this cultural climate, sought to compose music based in Czech cultural identity. One of his most successful products is the symphonic cycle *Má vlast (My Fatherland)*, a set of six symphonic poems, each representing aspects of Bohemia’s landscape or history. The second of the six, ***Vltava***, depicts the Vltava river (*Moldau* in German) on its journey, starting with two sources in the Bohemian Forest. As the sources combine and the river grows, we pass a forest hunt, a peasant wedding, and nymphs in the moonlight along the banks. The river swells into St. John’s Rapids and continues expanding as it passes the Vyšehrad Castle and flows through Prague. The river fades into the distance and eventually joins the Elbe River.

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) was a Finnish composer also known for his nationalistic works, particularly in support of Finland’s cultural independence from Russia. His most famous composition, *Finlandia*, is undoubtedly nationalistic in nature, and many of his other works are based in Finnish folk tales and culture. However, Sibelius’s **Second Symphony** is not overtly nationalistic. It is not explicitly “about” anything. It is just great music. But the sweeping nature of the music and overall triumphant tone at the end of the symphony lead many to draw connections to a struggle for independence. Although Sibelius composed the piece primarily while on vacation in Italy, many consider the piece evocative of Finnish landscapes with vast frozen forests, lakes, and mountains. “It opens with pristine Nordic pastoralisms juxtaposed with expressions of swelling self-pride, forceful determination and premonitions of conflict” (Grove Music Online).

John Powell is a prolific English film composer, with music credits on over 70 films. Through his career, he has collaborated with several other composers, notably John Williams and Hans Zimmer. Powell’s music for the 2010 DreamWorks film ***How to Train Your Dragon*** was widely praised and earned the composer an Academy Award nomination. The music evokes a Scottish Viking-influenced fictional world in which dragons roam freely and includes memorable moments of dragons soaring over ocean and mountain.

A special thanks to Katie James and the Vanguard College Preparatory School Orchestra for lending the music to How to Train Your Dragon.

Orchestra Personnel

Violin I

Melinda Coogan
Jennifer Hughes
Skylar Hunt*
Kailea Kuecker^M

Violin II

Becca Cassady
Michael Gallagher
Kristen Manley^M
Fernando Sanchez
Rodney Sturdivant*

Viola

Katie Kilmer
Gana Leggett
Carla Neuss
Abby Sitton
Brooke Smith*

Cello

Clara Griffey
Laura Hubbard
Kristen Jones*
Jessica Kincaid

Bass

Victor Leggett*

Flute

Karen Brown
Jamie Espen*
Rita Huie

Oboe

Franklin Allbright*
Carey Kuhl

Clarinet

Donna Flowers*
David Hooten
Mary Lampert

Bassoon

Tristen Collinsworth
Mark Stansel*

Horn

Johnny Harper
Tina Hays*
Deanna Mathis
David Rice

Trumpet

Rachel Kincaid
Arthur Torres
Hailee Yip*

Trombone

Jayland Brown
Roland Huie*
Ainsley McDaniel^M

Tuba

Aidan O'Shields^M

Percussion

Karen Brown
Tristen Collinsworth
Claire Mummert
Abby Sitton
Jennifer Sitton*

Harp

Kate Cockle*

Piano

Donna Flowers

* Principal

^M MCC Student

The McLennan Community Orchestra is a student and volunteer orchestra sponsored by McLennan Community College. The orchestra is made up of students, teachers, and other community members of diverse professions and ages who love to gather and make music together. The orchestra provides accessible performances of great orchestral works—both familiar and unfamiliar—to the community.

The MCO welcomes all string players and includes a limited number of winds and percussion. The group rehearses Thursday evenings during the school year. Full-time MCC students who play in the orchestra are eligible for scholarship. Interested players should contact orchestra@mclennan.edu for more information.

Donations to the McLennan Community Orchestra may be made through the MCC Foundation (indicate the donation is for the orchestra): www.mclennan.edu/foundation.

Scan here to receive updates about upcoming MCO concerts and events:



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Jon Conrad, Music Area Coordinator
Jonathan Kutz, Music Industry Careers Program Director
Meghan Wilfong, Senior Administrative Assistant
Bradley Christian, Dean of Arts and Sciences

ENSEMBLES

Noah Alvarado, *jazz band*
Jon Conrad, *band*
Jenna McLean, *choir*
Clark Nauert, *jazz band*
Peter Olson, *orchestra*
Edgar Sierra, *opera*
Arthur Torres, *mariachi*

MUSIC INDUSTRY CAREERS

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Shane Hall
Brian Konzelman
Jonathan Kutz
Maddison Livingston
Patrick McKee
Clark Nauert

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Brently Bartlett, oboe
Vanessa Davis, clarinet
Clay Garrett, euphonium/tuba
Kim Hagelstein, horn
Timothy Owner, trombone
Masha Popova, flute
Mark Schubert, trumpet
Matthew Singletary, saxophone

PERCUSSION

Jonathan Kutz

STRINGS

Ben Cantrell, violin/viola
Kate Cockle, harp
Peter Olson, bass

VOICE

Jenna McLean
Mandy Morrison
Edgar Sierra

PIANO

Jared Eben
Marsha Green
Ping-Ting Lan
James Pitts

MUSICOLOGY & THEORY

Ben Cantrell
Kate Cockle
Jared Eben
Marsha Green
Peter Olson
James Pitts
Matthew Singletary

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Randy Dockendorf,
Theatre Technician
Nick Webb, Box Office

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Concerts begin at 7:30 p.m. unless noted.



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