



School of

Music

College of Arts and Sciences

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

WSU School of Music

Presents

Transformations Senior Recital

Grace Nesbit, Oboe

Elena Panchenko, Piano

Fantasykker, Op.2
(*Fantasy Pieces for Oboe
and Piano*)

Carl Nielsen
(1865-1931)

- I. *Romance*
- II. *Humoresque*

*Six Metamorphoses after
Ovid*

Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

(*In order of performance*)

- I. *Phaeton*
- V. *Narcissus*
- III. *Niobe*

Sinfonia (Arioso) from Cantata No. 156

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Kimbrough Concert Hall – October 23, 2026



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To my audience:

Thank you all for being here and supporting me through my musical journey. As per the title of my recital *Transformations*, I really want this performance to show how far I have progressed in my career. I want to dedicate this performance to my family. To my mom who never complained with my countless phone calls and who was always the voice of reason when I would constantly doubt myself and my abilities. To my G-Dad, who would give me listening assignments and always be a source of good discussion regarding composers and their pieces. And to my brother who was always available for a conversation regardless of topic. I also want to give a special thanks to Dr. McCarthy, who I would not be here without. Day in and day out Dr. McCarthy has instilled a source of confidence within me and always has supported me regardless of my ability or level of performance. To all, thank you for believing in me.

Carl Nielsen and the Oboe Fantasy

Carl Nielsen (1865-1931) was a Danish Composer during the late Romantic and early 20th century. Born on the small island of Funen Denmark, his father was an artist and musician who introduced young Carl to the life of music. At age 14, Nielsen joined a military band in Odense where he played brass instruments, although he was also an accomplished violinist. In 1884, he received a scholarship to study at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen where he studied violin and composition. Following his graduation, he was a violinist in the Royal Danish Orchestra for about 16 years, where he continued to compose and eventually became one of Denmark's most important composers. His compositions feature traditional music forms with nontraditional harmonies and unexpected key changes. He is widely known for his six symphonies, concertos, chamber works and operas.

Nielsen's *Fantasie for Oboe and Piano* features two movements, "Romance" and "Humoresque". He showcases the strong lyrical voice of the oboe in "Romance", while also highlighting a complex technical side in "Humoresque". This fantasy is Nielsen's second opus. Meaning that Nielsen classified this as his second published piece, The significance of this is that the *Fantasie for Oboe and Piano* was his second mature work and shows how advanced his compositions were in his early career.

Benjamin Britten and *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid*

Benjamin Britten (1913-1973) is a mid-to-late twentieth-century composer. He is most well-known for his opera *Peter Grimes*, and his *War Requiem*. Britten was in fact a child prodigy and began composing at a young age. In fact, he studied at the Royal College of

Music with John Ireland. Britten is also credited with the revival of English opera and is to this day considered one of England's most accomplished composers. With *Peter Grimes*, he proved that English opera could stand alongside the infamous Italian and German operatic traditions. Many of Britten's compositions were written in collaboration with his life partner, and tenor, Peter Pears. It is important to note that Benjamin Britten was controversial for his time. Male homosexuality was illegal in Britain during his lifetime, and his relationship with Peter Pears faced constant social prejudice. Additionally, Britten was a conscientious objector and pacifist; he moved to the United States from London 1939 to 1942 in order to avoid the draft, which was viewed as unpatriotic by English colleagues.

Six Metamorphoses after Ovid is a collection of solo oboe pieces inspired from the Roman Poet Ovid's written *Metamorphoses*. This piece was premiered in 1951 at the Aldeburgh Festival, an outdoor festival where performers were set in front of dramatic landscapes. Britten wrote this piece as a means of relaxation while he was working on his opera *Billy Budd*. *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* was composed for the British oboist Joy Boughton, who he admired as a performer in the English Opera Group. This collection of pieces is considered a staple in oboe literature.

Phaeton, the son of Helios the Sun God, was often asked if he was the true son of Helios. When Phaeton asked his father for proof, Helios granted him a wish. With that wish Phaeton asked to drive the chariot of the sun for one day. Helios tried to warn Phaeton that this task was too dangerous, but his son refused to change his wish. As Phaeton drove the chariot, the horses were too strong to control and it bounced all across the sky, too high and too low and everything in between. Due to this parts of the earth were much too hot and others were too cold, so Zeus was forced to intervene to protect the planet. Zeus threw a thunderbolt to the chariot, causing Phaeton to tumble out of the chariot and fell into the river Padus. As you listen you will notice that this is a very energetic piece with the music "bouncing" as if it was the chariot itself. It may seem as if the music is 'out of control' just as Phaeton was losing control of the Chariot.

Narcissus as an infant was taken to a seer, who warned that he would live a long and healthy life as long as he never looks at his reflection. In turn he was a very attractive young man and would often attract the attention of other men, women and nymphs, and would then reject each offer in a cold and distant manner. One of his many admirers was a mountain Nymph named Echo, who was cursed by the goddess Hera to only repeat the last words that were spoken to her. When Narcissus rejected Echo's pursuits, she faded away until only her voice remained as an echo in the woods. Another one of his rejected lovers asks the gods for revenge. Artemis then cast a curse upon Narcissus that the next body of water he came across, he would become infatuated with his own reflection. At the water's

edge he began to have a conversation with the beautiful face he sees in the water, not knowing that it was his own reflection. However, as he began to talk, Echo responded. Narcissus and Echo engaged in a conversation in which they slowly begin to morph together and turn into one organism- a flower. This movement portrays the conversation between Narcissus and Echo until they ultimately morph. Within the music Britten brilliantly depicts the two voices through downward facing stems (Narcissus) and upward facing stems (Echo) which combine as the transformation begins.

Niobe was a very proud queen, who would often exclaim that she was superior to the goddess Leto, because she had 14 children, seven daughters and seven sons, whereas Leto had only two children. Now this upset Leto very much, so she sent her sons, Artemis and Apollo to punish the queen. Artemis killed Niobe's seven daughters, and Apollo killed her 7 sons. Overwhelmed by grief, Niobe wept and sobbed over the death of her fourteen children. The Gods ultimately continued her punishment and transformed her into a mountain, and her tears would continue to flow for the rest of eternity through the rivers below. This piece reflects her journey through grief, as if the oboe itself is crying and screaming "why did this happen?! oh why!" In the middle of the piece, Niobe begins to unravel as her grief becomes too much to handle and she breaks down, until the final transformation begins as she ends as a mountain where Britten marks "senza espress." or 'without emotion.'

Johann Sebastian Bach and Sinfonia

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was born in Eisenach, Germany into a family bursting with musical talent. Bach learned the art of music from his older brother who raised the younger siblings after the death of their parents. Bach was a very skilled organist, while also playing the harpsichord and violin aside from his compositions. Bach is most known for his career at St. Thomas Church in Leipzig where he produced hundreds of compositions for church services, choirs, and orchestras. Bach is one of the most famous composers from the Baroque era (1600-1750) and is known for both sacred and secular pieces. Some of his most-recognized pieces include *Brandenburg Concertos*, *Well-Tempered Clavier*, *Mass in B minor*, *Tocatta & Fugue in D minor*.

The piece you will be hearing today, "Sinfonia", is the first movement from *Cantata No. 156* "Ich Steh mit einem Fuss im Grabe", or "I stand with one foot in the grave". Traditionally the piece is solo oboe accompanied by strings and basso continuo, however, it will be heard with piano today. This piece was premiered in 1729, during Bach's residency in Leipzig. It is believed that this piece is derived from an earlier oboe concerto in D minor, later adapted as part of Bach's harpsichord concerto in F minor. This piece was written for the third Sunday after Epiphany, which is a Christian Feast Day. "Sinfonia" is a beautifully expressive piece; although it has a simple sound, it features a rich emotional depth.