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# The Ritz Chamber Players



Brock Recital Hall  
Samford University  
February 26, 2013

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# The Ritz Chamber Players

**Kelly Hall-Tompkins, violin • Kyle Lombard, violin**  
**George Taylor, viola • Tahirah Whittington, cello**  
**Alison Buchanan, soprano • Terrance Wilson, piano**

The Ritz Chamber Players is hailed by *The Baltimore Sun* as “one of the most interesting and dynamic ensembles to emerge in recent years.” Boasting some of the world’s preeminent musicians spanning the African diaspora, it brings a fresh, new energy to the classical music genre. Its members perform with prestigious organizations such as the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and the London Symphony. Founded in 2002 by clarinetist and Artistic Director Terrance Patterson, the Ritz Chamber Players combines exceptional artistry on stage with inspiring educational programs in schools and throughout the community. Through its concert series in Jacksonville and performances across the United States, the Ritz Chamber Players continues to build the participation of multicultural audiences that reflect our diverse society. Called “a remarkable ensemble,” the group’s flexible make-up allows for many astonishing combinations of virtuoso players, leading to “riveting” performances of the standard classical music repertoire. The Ritz Chamber Players is also unique in its dedication to showcase the works of African-American composers with exceedingly artistic and informed interpretations. The Ritz Chamber Players made its highly successful debut concert at New York’s Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall to a standing room only crowd, with critics proclaiming the group’s performance “extraordinary” and “vital and fresh.” The ensemble’s performances have been enthusiastically received in Miami, Atlanta, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Raleigh, the British Virgin Islands, Chicago, and Seattle, and in several New York venues, including Rockefeller University and Lincoln Center. The Ritz Chamber Players celebrated its international radio debut on the BBC World Service and WYNC New York with a concert broadcast to more than 40 countries, and its first national television appearance on the 37th Annual NAACP Image Awards. The Ritz Chamber Players has been guest of the highly-praised National Public Radio and the Tavis Smiley Shows and is a regular guest of the Madison and Amelia Island Chamber Music Festivals.

## **Kelly Hall-Tompkins – Violin**

One of New York City’s most in-demand violinists, Kelly Tompkin’s dynamic career spans solo, chamber, and orchestral performance. Her solo performances include the Dame Myra Hess Series in Chicago, broadcast live by WFMT Radio; in Baltimore, the Peggy and Yale Gordon Trust performances; and, through a special grant from the IBM Corporation, concerts at the Peace Center in Greenville, South Carolina. Hall-Tompkins has been a soloist with the Dallas, Greenville, and Monmouth symphonies, the Philharmonic of Uruguay, the Gateways Festival Orchestra, the Festival of the Atlantic Orchestra, and the Atlanta University Orchestra, and her performances in recital have been featured on several occasions on the McGraw-Hill Young Artist Showcase, broadcast in New York by WQXR. Her distinguished orchestral career has included extensive touring in the United



States and internationally with the renowned Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. In 1999 she won auditions held by the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and was subsequently appointed to the orchestra's First Violin section. Hall-Tompkins began her violin studies at age nine. She earned a Master's degree from the Manhattan School of Music.

#### **Kyle A. Lombard – Violin**

Kyle A. Lombard, a native of Kansas City, Missouri, was born in 1975. A recipient of Indiana University's Performer Certificate and also a graduate of Yale University, he enjoys a great variety of musical activities. As a chamber musician, Lombard has performed throughout Europe, the Middle East and the U.S. As a member of the Goffriller Piano Trio, his performances were broadcast on Israeli Public Radio during Isaac Stern's 3rd International Chamber Music Encounters in Jerusalem. As a soloist, Lombard debuted with the Kansas City Symphony at age 16. He has also concertized with the Savannah Symphony and the Sphinx Symphony, as well as recent recitals at the MOJA festival in Charleston, South Carolina and on the recital series of Southern Illinois University. Lombard has performed with the SLSO since the 1999-2000 season and is also on the faculty of the Webster University Community Music School.

#### **George Taylor – Viola**

Violist George Taylor is active in practically every aspect of performance as soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician. Taylor is associate professor of viola at Eastman. Before joining the Eastman faculty, he was a member of the Ciompi Quartet of Duke University, a position he held from 1979 through 1986. He has served on the artist faculties of the Encore School for Strings, the Meadowmount School, the Manchester Music Festival, and the Elan International Music Festival, among others. He has also served as a juror for international competitions in Europe and the United States. Taylor has given numerous solo recitals and appeared as a chamber musician in concerts throughout the United States and at the Tainan Cultural Center in Taiwan. He was also co-founder and conductor of the St. Stephens Chamber Orchestra (Durham, NC), an ensemble that is still active in performance and recordings to date.

An active advocate for the performance of music by African/American composers, Taylor has performed and premiered works written for him by many composers, including Ron Carter, Noel DaCosta, George Walker, David Liptak, and Carmen Moore. A native of New York City, Taylor attended the Manhattan School of Music. He made his recital debut at Carnegie Recital Hall in 1979.

Joseph Horowitz of the New York Times wrote: “He is already an unusually accomplished player, with a secure command of the instrument, and an ardent, refreshingly direct style.”

### **Tahirah Whittington – Cello**

Tahirah Whittington, originally from Houston, TX, has performed for audiences in the United States, Chile, France, Italy, Spain, Canada, Bermuda, St. Kitts, and Japan. Solo engagements include a performance with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC, as a result of winning first prize at the 1999 Sphinx Competition. She was a featured soloist at Carnegie Hall for the 2007 Sphinx Gala. An avid chamber musician, since 2001 Whittington has toured as a member of Core Ensemble which collaborates with actors to produce chamber music theater. Whittington is a founding member of The Young Eight, a touring string octet based in Seattle, WA. She is featured on Cedille Records’s recording of Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson’s unaccompanied cello work, “Lamentations: a Black Folk Song Suite.” Whittington collaborated with Ornette Coleman and Beres Hammond. She has played on the recordings of R&B artists Alicia Keys, Angie Stone, and Joe, as well as gospel singer, Donnie McClurkin. Whittington received her Master’s degree in Cello Performance from The Juilliard School and received her Bachelor’s degree at the New England Conservatory. She is currently pursuing her Doctoral degree at the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL.

### **Alison Buchanan – Soprano**

British soprano Alison Buchanan is making a name for herself internationally as a versatile and accomplished singer. During the 2006-7 season the soprano made her Carnegie Hall debut, premiered the opera *Hear our Voice* in Prague, London and Nuremberg, made her debut with the Jacksonville Symphony and the Philippines Philharmonic. She sang the role of Bess (*Porgy & Bess*) as her New York City Opera debut in 2002 and later with the Israel Kibbutz Orchestra on a national tour of Israel. She sang Elvira (*Don Giovanni*) at New York City Opera and for Sir Colin Davis. Also under Davis she sang 2nd Niece (*Peter Grimes*, with the LSO) and in Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*. The soprano also appears each summer in Prom’s concerts around the UK with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and has appeared at the Royal Opera Covent Garden, Michigan Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia, and San Francisco Opera, among others.

### **Terrence Wilson – Piano**

Since his professional debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra, American pianist Terrence Wilson has established a reputation as one of today’s most gifted young instrumentalists. He has already appeared with many other prestigious ensembles including the Houston Symphony, the Atlanta Symphony, the Cincinnati Symphony, the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne under Jesus Lopez-Cobos, the Detroit Symphony, the St. Louis and Colorado Symphonies, the Minnesota orchestra, and the Baltimore, Dallas, Indianapolis, San Francisco, and Columbus Symphonies. He has also made highly acclaimed recital debuts at the 92nd Street Y, at the Kennedy Center, and at the Louvre. In 1998 Mr. Wilson was awarded the Avery Fisher Career Grant. In May 2001 he graduated from the Juilliard School where he received the prestigious Sony ES Award for Musical Excellence and most recently the William Petschek Award.

# Program

CHARLES NORMAN MASON (1955-)

*Elegy for an Organist (2013)*

*Allegro con brio*

*Adagio, ma non troppo*

*Scherzo: Allegro*

*La Malinconia: Adagio; Allegretto quasi allegro*

JONATHAN BAILEY HOLLAND (1974-)

*After the Wailing, poems by Stephen Caldwell Wright  
for String Trio and Soprano*

*Design*

*Out of the Wailing*

*Echoes*

ANDRE PREVIN (1929-)

*Four Songs, poems by Toni Morrison for Soprano, cello, and piano (1994)*

*Mercy*

*Stones*

*Shelter*

*The Lacemaker*



## *Intermission*



JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

*Piano Quintet in F Minor, Op. 34 (1864)*

*Allegro non troppo*

*Andante un poco adagio*

*Scherzo: Allegro*

*Finale: Poco sostenuto – Allegro non troppo – Presto, non troppo*

# Program Notes

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## Charles Norman Mason Elegy for an Organist (2013)

One cannot pay tribute to a musician of the stature of Ted Tibbs without some reference to the music that engrossed his life. Therefore, I used three musical ideas that encompassed Ted's life: The doxology (something Ted played weekly), *In memoriam* by Langlais (In Paris in the 1950s, Ted was the first American student of the esteemed organist and composer Jean Langlais), and Widor's *Toccata* from *Symphony for Organ, No. 5 in F minor* (a favorite piece of Ted's to play at Easter). That being said, none of these works will be obvious or apparent to most listeners. The use of the musical materials from these works was abstract. Rather than creating a pastiche of musical quotes, I used small bits of those pieces as the building material for *Elegy*... One could get metaphysical and say that the soul of those works is retained while the material form in which they existed earlier is no longer apparent. But a composition in honor of Ted needed to be more than abstract musical references. I focused on three primary overarching traits of Ted: His eruditeness, his spirituality, and his playful sense of humor. My piece needed to capture something about Ted and the vacuum left by his passing and it is my hope that the listener will experience in *Elegy* the sorrow, the joy, and the life ever after that mark our remembrance of Ted.

Charles Norman Mason

Charles Norman Mason was born in Utah in 1955. He has received many awards for his compositions including the prestigious 2006 Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome. He was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Frost School of Music in 2009 and most recently received the University of Miami Provost Creative Grant to write an opera to be premiered April 19, 2013. He has received commissions and performances from many of the top ensembles including the Dale Warland Singers, the American Composers Orchestra, Miami String Quartet, and Eighth Blackbird to name a few. His music has been performed throughout the world including the FORO INTERNACIONAL DE MUSICA NUEVA in Mexico City, the Quirinale in Rome, the Aspen Summer Music Festival, and the Nuova Musica Consonante in Romania and his music has been featured on "Performance Today" on NPR. Dr. Mason is Chair of the Composition and Theory department at the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami.

Mason's work has received excellent reviews. Steve Smith of The New York Times wrote, "*Additions* by Charles Mason, offered a nearly seamless integration of electronic and acoustic sounds..." Mason has been recognized repeatedly for his originality and attention to color also. Peter Burwasser of Fanfare noted that Mason's music speaks in a "boldly, original voice". High Performance Review stated that the music is "full of invention... funky and colorful... consistently ingenious." Katherine Porlington wrote in Upstate Music (NY) "... Mason's *Senderos Que se Bifurcan* ... is, without doubt, one of the finest new clarinet chamber works of the past twenty years." Nancy Raabe wrote in *The Birmingham News* "Mason's brilliant *From Shook Foil* occupies a class of its own ... it is charged with creativity."

His website is [www.charlesnormanmason.com](http://www.charlesnormanmason.com)

## H. Edward (Ted) Tibbs (1933 – 2010)

Ted) Tibbs was an unstoppable force in the Birmingham music community and his legacy is without peer.

A New Orleans native, his life took him around the U.S. and eventually to France for his final musical training. He was educated at Furman University, the Eastman School of Music, the University of Michigan, and in the 1950s he was a student of Jean Langlais in Paris. While stationed for military service at Fort Holabird, Maryland, he was interim organist at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. In 1959, Ted came to Birmingham and became a driving force in the music scene here.



By the time of his death in 2010, Ted had been professor of music at Samford University for 42 years and organist at Southside Baptist Church for over 50 years. Additionally he was organist for Samford University and the Alabama Symphony Orchestra. Among his civic activities, he was long-time president of the Birmingham Chamber Music Society. He also served as the president of the Birmingham Music Club and as dean of the Birmingham chapter of the American Guild of Organists. He designed more than 50 organs, 8 of which are in the Birmingham area, including a small pipe organ in his home.

In 1983 Ted was honored with the Palmer Christian Award, for distinguished doctoral graduates, by the University of Michigan. Locally he was honored with a Silver Bowl Award for his extensive, outstanding civic contributions.

A delightful raconteur, Ted was known for his remarkable creativity, wit and gentle manner. He will be remembered always.



**Ted Tibbs with the pipe organ in his home.**

## Jonathan Bailey Holland • After the Wailing Poems by Stephen Caldwell Wright (2007)

Commissioned and premiered by the Ritz Chamber Players

Composer Jonathan Bailey Holland (b. 1974) has been heralded as “one to watch” by Newsweek magazine, and has been referred to as “a craftsman with an ear for effective orchestration, a fine theatrical sense and real skill when it comes to formal layout.”

Originally from Flint, Michigan, Holland began studying composition while a student at the Interlochen Arts Academy. Upon graduation from Interlochen, he continued his composition studies at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he received a Bachelor of Music degree. He went on to receive a Ph.D. in Music from Harvard University. Currently, he is Associate Professor of Composition at the Berklee College of Music.

Holland’s works have been performed and commissioned by numerous performing organizations. Highlights include the Dallas Symphony and the Dallas Black Dance Theater, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. In addition, as an advocate for music education, Holland has written several works for educational concerts, and has given lectures and presentations at over 50 schools and other public institutions. He has held several residencies and is the recipient of several awards. He has twice won the Indianapolis Symphony’s Marian K. Glick Young Composer’s Showcase, and he has received the Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

## André Previn • Four Songs on Poems by Toni Morrison for Soprano, Cello and Piano (1994)

André Previn—composer, conductor, pianist, author—is among the most prodigiously talented musicians of our time. Born in Berlin in 1929 to a family of Russian-Jewish descent, he first studied piano in Berlin until his parents were forced to flee Germany by the Nazis in 1938. The Previns settled briefly in Paris where the nine-year-old André continued his studies at the Conservatoire before moving permanently to Los Angeles. He became an American citizen in 1943.

His earliest professional experience, gained even before he finished high school, was as a jazz pianist and an orchestrator for MGM Studios, where a distant cousin, Charles, was music director. Previn joined the staff of MGM upon his graduation and composed his first film score in 1948. He also built a reputation at that time as a jazz pianist and recorded a number of successful albums. In 1951, he began studying conducting with Pierre Monteux, then Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony, and soon left MGM to work as a free-lance orchestrator of film scores, receiving thirteen Academy Award nominations and winning Oscars for *Gigi* (1958), *Porgy and Bess* (1959), *Irma la Douce* (1963), and *My Fair Lady* (1964), and to develop his career as a concert pianist and conductor. He guest conducted widely and has served as music director in Houston, London, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and Oslo. In 2009, he was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of Tokyo’s NHK Symphony

Orchestra. André Previn is among the most-recorded musicians in history, with over well 200 releases and ten Grammy Awards. His additional distinctions include Musical America's "Musician of the Year" award, Glenn Gould Foundation Prize and Lifetime Achievement Awards from Kennedy Center, London Symphony Orchestra, Gramophone, and Grammy Recording Academy.

Previn has composed in both popular and concert genres: musicals, films, a symphony for strings, a half-dozen concertos and other orchestral scores, chamber and piano works, an opera, and numerous songs. After a 1991 commission for a set of orchestral songs for Kathleen Battle with words by Toni Morrison, Previn found the collaboration so rewarding that three years later he asked Morrison to write several more poems for some songs for soprano Sylvia McNair. She agreed, and sent him the verses that he set as the *Four Songs for Soprano, Cello and Piano*. The premier was in 1994.

Toni Morrison is one of this country's most distinguished and beloved writers. Born to a working class black family in Lorain, Ohio in 1931, she majored in English at Howard University; she received her Master's degree from Cornell. After teaching at Howard and Texas Southern University, she joined the Random House publishing firm as an editor. In the late 1960s, she began writing, using her life experiences as a teacher, mother and keen observer of human nature for subjects and inspiration. While working at Random House, Morrison taught at the State University of New York at Purchase and at Yale. In 1981, she joined the faculty of SUNY/Albany as Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities. In 1987 she was named Robert F. Goheen Professor in the Council of Humanities at Princeton University, the first black woman writer to hold a named chair at an Ivy League institution. She has been honored with a Pulitzer Prize in 1987 and the Nobel Prize for Literature, the first African-American, the second American and the eighth woman to receive that honor.

In 2001, Stephanie McClure Adrian wrote following comments on the poems for *Four Songs* based on her discussion with Morrison:

"The first text, *Mercy*, is about how the media looks at starvation, blood and misfortune in settings such as Ethiopia. The traveler and the probing camera, referred to in the lyrics, attempt to exploit those who can only turn away in shame. Toni Morrison's lyrics express embarrassment at the way the media invades the privacy of the dying. The speaker could 'bear the purity of their shame' – the shame of the dying – if she knew that ultimately there would be mercy for them.

"*Stones* is based on an old blues song, *Rocks in My Bed*, and inspired by the singing style of blues singer Bessie Smith. The speaker in *Stones* is a brash, bold woman who is angry at the absence of a man in her life. Her tone is not one of complaint, but of anger. Only stones warm her bed at night. Her trigger finger, buttercake, roses and handmade quilts are intended to make up for the lack of a man.

"*Shelter* is about a woman who is 'having a good time in her imagination.' She thinks about her man and all of the challenges, both mythical and metaphorical, she can overcome with him in her life.

"The character in *The Lacemaker* is hollow, regretful and mournful. Toni Morrison's lyrics are an assessment of a spinster, a woman who has settled for less in life. Her vocation as a lacemaker has prevented her from committing 'crimes' in her life — passions she's left unexplored. In lieu of trips and personal adventures she has chosen to become a woman who creates lace for royalty."

## Mercy

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I could watch  
heads  
turn from the traveler's look  
the camera's probe  
bear the purity of their  
shame  
hear mute desolation in syllables  
ancient as  
death.  
I could do these things  
if  
only if only  
I knew that when milk  
spills  
and hearts stop  
underheel  
some small thing gone  
chill  
is right  
to warm toward a touch because  
mercy  
lies in wait  
like a shore.  
Mercy  
mercy  
mercy  
like a shore.



## Shelter

---

In this soft place  
Under your wings  
I will find shelter  
From ordinary things.  
Here are the mountains  
I want to scale  
Amazon rivers  
I'm dying to sail.  
Here the eyes of the forest  
I can hold in a stare  
And smile the movement  
Of Medusa's green hair.  
In this soft place  
Under your wings  
I will find shelter  
From ordinary things.

## Stones

---

I don't need no man  
telling me I ain't one.  
My trigger finger strong  
as his on a shot gun.  
Buttercake and roses smooth  
stones in my bed.  
Handmade quilts cover  
stones in my bed.  
I don't need no man  
telling me I ain't one.  
My backbone ain't like his  
but least I got one.  
High-heeled slippers break  
stones in my bed.  
Games played at night trick  
stones in my bed.  
Stones in my bed.  
Stones.  
I don't need no man  
telling me.

## The Lacemaker

---

I am as you see  
what most becomes me:  
miles skipped  
cancelled trips  
masters yet unmet.  
Lace alone is loyal, sacred, royal, in control  
of crimes stopped  
by patterns of blood bred to best behavior.  
As you see I am  
what has become of me.



## Johannes Brahms

### Quintet for Piano and String Quartet in F minor, Op. 34 (1864)

When Brahms ambled into his favorite Viennese café one evening, so the story goes, a friend asked him how he had spent his day. “I was working on my symphony,” he said. “In the morning I added an eighth note. In the afternoon I took it out.” The anecdote may be apocryphal, but its intent faithfully reflects Brahms’s painstaking process of creation, which is seen better perhaps nowhere than in his *F minor Piano Quintet*.

Brahms began work on the piece in early 1862 as a string quintet with two cellos, the same scoring as Schubert’s incomparable *C major Quintet*, and by August, he had the first three movements ready to send to his friend and mentor Clara Schumann and to the violinist Joseph Joachim. They both responded enthusiastically at first (“I do not know how to start telling you the great delight your *Quintet* has given me,” Clara wrote), but she expressed reservations about the piece during the following months. “The details of the work show some proof of overpowering strength,” Joachim noted, “but what is lacking, to give me pure pleasure, is, in a word, charm.”

By February 1863, the *String Quintet* had been recast as *Sonata for Two Pianos*, which Brahms performed with Karl Tausig at a concert in Vienna on April 17, 1864. The premiere met with little favor. Clara continued to be delighted with the work’s musical substance, but thought that “it cannot be called a sonata. The first time I tried the work I had the feeling that it was an arrangement . . . Please, remodel it once more!” One final time, during the summer of 1864, Brahms revised the score, this time as the *Quintet for Piano, Two Violins, Viola and Cello*, an ensemble suggested to him by the conductor Hermann Levi. “The *Quintet* is beautiful beyond words,” Levi wrote. “You have turned a monotonous work for two pianos into a thing of great beauty, a masterpiece of chamber music.”

The opening movement, tempestuous and tragic in mood, is in a tightly packed sonata form. The dramatic main theme is stated immediately in unison by violin, cello and piano, and then repeated with greater force by the entire ensemble. The complementary theme, given above an insistently repeated triplet figuration, is more subdued and lyrical in nature than the previous melody. The closing theme achieves a brighter tonality to offer a brief respite from the movement’s pervasive strong emotions. The development section treats the main and second themes, and ushers in the recapitulation on a great wave of sound. Brahms’s Schubertian strain rises closest to the surface in the tender second movement. The outer sections of its three-part form (A–B–A) are based on a gentle, lyrical strain in sweet, close-interval harmonies, while the movement’s central portion uses a melody incorporating an octave-leap motive. The *Scherzo* proper contains three motivic elements: a rising theme of vague rhythmic identity; a snapping motive in strict, dotted rhythm; and a march-like strain in full chordal harmony. These three components are juxtaposed throughout the movement, with the dotted-rhythm theme being given special prominence, including a vigorous fugal working-out. The central trio grows from a theme that is a lyrical transformation of the *Scherzo*’s chordal march strain. The *Finale* opens with a pensive slow introduction fueled by deeply felt chromatic harmonies, exactly the sort of passage that caused Arnold Schoenberg to label Brahms a “modernist.” The body of the movement, in fast tempo, is a hybrid of rondo and sonata forms. Despite the buoyant, Gypsy flavor of the movement’s thematic material, the tragic tenor of this great *Quintet* is maintained until its closing page.



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## *Final Concert for 2013*

Peabody Trio  
Brock Recital Hall, Samford University  
April 22, 2013 • 7:30 p.m.