



ASTRAIOS
CHAMBER
MUSIC

The August Winds

Ruth Ann Ritchie, Flute

Marianne Shifrin, Clarinet

Natasha Merchant, Oboe

Michael Jones, Bassoon

Jonathan Kuhns-Obana, Horn

Eight Russian Folk Songs, Op. 58

Anatol Liadov (1855-1914)

Religious Chant

Christmas Carol

Plaintive Song

Humorous Song ("I Danced with a Flea")

Legend of the Birds

Cradle Song

Round Dance

Village Dance

Quintet for Winds

Robert Muczynski (1929-2010)

I. Allegro risoluto

II. Andante

III. Moderato - Allegro con spirito

Three Spirituals

Valerie Coleman (b. 1970)

Little David Play on Your Harp!

Steal Away

Ev'ry Time I feel the Spirit

From Quintet for Winds No. 3

David Maslanka (1943-2017)

III. Very fast



Flutist Ruth Ann Ritchie is the founder and Executive Director of Astraios. Since 2007 she has established concert series in Texas and Colorado and led Astraios ensembles in performances across the U.S. She is the founding flutist of both The August Winds quintet and the Cirrus Quartet.

Ruth Ann studied at the Cleveland Institute of Music and the Cleveland Music School Settlement before receiving a Bachelor of Music with Distinction in Flute Performance from Indiana University. She continued her studies at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, receiving a Graduate Diploma in 2006. Her primary teachers have been Tom Robertello, Alexa Still, Linda White, and Joseph Juhos.

Ruth Ann also serves as Executive Director of the Dallas-based Orpheus Chamber Singers. Ruth Ann holds certificates of nonprofit management, development, and marketing from the Center for Nonprofit Management, and a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace Certificate from the University of South Florida. She is also the founder of Radial Arts Consulting, where she works with organizations across the country on best business practices for performing artists.

Dr. Merchant serves as an adjunct professor of Oboe at A&M-Commerce. She received a Bachelor of Music from Indiana University and a Master of Music from the University of Southern California, and continued her studies at the Colburn Conservatory in Los Angeles. She received a Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of North Texas, where she was a teaching fellow in chamber music. Her primary teachers have been Allan Vogel, Linda Strommen, Theodore Baskin and James Ryon. Merchant's previous teaching experience includes applied lessons at Brookhaven College, as well as a private studio in the DFW metroplex.

Before moving to Texas, Dr. Merchant was the second oboist for the Orquesta Sinfonica Sinaloa de las Artes in Culiacan, Mexico. Since moving to Texas, she performs regularly with the Irving and San Angelo Symphonies. Other symphonies with which she has performed are the Las Colinas Symphony, Amarillo Symphony, Allen Philharmonic, Sherman Symphony and Dallas Chamber Symphony. Recently, Dr. Merchant performed at the Red River Lyric Opera Festival in Wichita Falls, TX.



Marianne Shifrin was recently appointed principal clarinet of the New Mexico Philharmonic. She has also been a member of the Arizona Opera Orchestra since 2010. Previously, Marianne held positions with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the Greeley Philharmonic Orchestra in Colorado, and the Columbus Indiana Philharmonic. She is a frequent guest musician with many orchestras in Arizona and Colorado, such as the Tucson, Phoenix, and Colorado Symphonies, and the Colorado Springs Philharmonic. She has played under such conductors as Bernard Haitink, James Conlon, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Leonard Slatkin, David Robertson, and David Zinman. Marianne has performed at the Music Academy of the West, and the Aspen, Sarasota, Chautauqua, and Bowdoin music festivals. During the summers, Marianne has been performing with the Missouri Symphony since 2009, and the Artosphere Festival Orchestra in Fayetteville, Arkansas, since 2011. Marianne received her Bachelor of Music degree and a Performer Diploma from Indiana University and her Master of Music degree from Yale University. Her principal teachers include Eli Eban, David Shifrin, and Bil Jackson.

Michael Jones serves as Astraios's Programming Director, coordinating ensembles, arranging music for our versatile ensembles, and managing our elementary school programs.

Michael received his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from Indiana University, where he held an Associate Instructorship. Michael subsequently received a Fulbright Grant to study bassoon performance and pedagogy at the Sydney Conservatorium, where he received a Graduate Diploma in 2006. During this time, he also toured with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. In 2016, he was the Acting Principal Bassoonist of the Texarkana Symphony, and has performed regularly with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra since 2013. His teachers have included Carl Rath, Andrew Barnes, Arthur Weisberg, and Kim Walker.



Jonathan Kuhns-Obana currently holds positions in the Eugene Symphony Orchestra, Portland Opera Orchestra, and Eugene Concert Orchestra. Previously, he has held principal positions with the Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Hyogo Performing Arts Center Orchestra (Japan), and the Young Musician's Foundation Debut Orchestra. In addition, he has performed with a number of other orchestras, including the Eugene Opera Orchestra, Oregon Mozart Players, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, and Midland-Odessa Symphony and Chorale. When not performing, he can be seen working and helping students, parents, and staff at Network Charter School. Jon received his Master of Music from the University of Southern California and Bachelor of Music from Indiana University. His teachers have included Myron Bloom, Eli Epstein, Rick Todd, and James Thatcher.

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