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Photo credit: Owen Zhou.

Senior Recital

Grace Moon, bassoon

With Anastasiia Pavlenko, piano

March 8, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

S102

PROGRAM

Romance

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Concert Piece

Libby Larsen (b.1950)

- I. Strong, deliberate
- II. Ebb and flow, rubato throughout
- III. Flat out, groove

Intermission

Colored Stones

Jenni Brandon (b. 1977)

- I. Smoky Quartz
- II. Lapis Lazuli
- III. Tiger's Eye

Ciranda Das Sete Notas

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959)

PROGRAM NOTES

Romance

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Edward Elgar was a passionate autodidact, teaching himself composition skills by studying scores and learning to play individual instruments. He taught himself the violin at a young age and studied violin seriously for a time before committing to a career as a composer. He learned to play viola, piano, and organ. As a teenager Elgar taught himself bassoon and was part of a woodwind quintet comprised of friends and his brother. Years later when composing the Cockaigne Overture for large orchestra, Elgar even taught himself to play the trombone, and then confidently incorporated some trombone glissandi in the work. It is with this intense curiosity and knowledge of musical instruments that the Romance for Bassoon and orchestra was written. Elgar was fully aware of the expressive abilities of the bassoon, and rejected the typical cliché of the bassoon as a humorous “clown of the orchestra.” Instead, he presents the instrument in a lyrical and dramatic vein. The title Romance shows a gradual shift in music to use “romance” for shorter, more intimate works rather than a lengthy, extroverted, and showy concerto. This Romance, however, contains the virtuosity and expressiveness of a full concerto. The music asks much from the player, using notes at both the extreme high and low ends of the register. The orchestra is rather large, using a rich blend of winds and brass: calling for three horns and three

trombones, but no trumpets. Elgar wrote the Romance for his friend and colleague Edwin F. James, the principal bassoonist of the London Symphony Orchestra who gave the first performance the Romance in 1911, with Elgar conducting.

-Kim Diehnelt

Concert Piece

Libby Larsen (b. 1950)

In three movements, Concert Piece for Bassoon and Piano casts the bassoon in the role of minstrel/poet—a Broadway Bard, if you will—who has gathered us for a Tell about our culture’s expressiveness.

Our expressiveness, the way we speak, move, and communicate, is a deeply lyrical narrative combined with a syncopated, percussive, multi-inflected, and driving nature. I composed the music from this perspective.

The first movement of Concert Piece for Bassoon and Piano uses inflection and articulation to define the bassoon’s lyric melody as it moves over and around the piano’s driving, jazz-articulated music. Time and forward motion are suspended in the second movement, allowing room for the bassoon’s broadly lyrical lines to sing freely and emotionally. Bassoon and piano come together in the third movement for syncopated interplay in an abstract call-and-response dance.

-Libby Larsen

Colored Stones

Jenni Brandon (b. 1977)

Colored Stones for solo bassoon tells the story of three stones: smoky quartz, lapis lazuli, and tiger's eye. Some cultures and spiritual practices believe these stones have powerful qualities such as the ability to heal, protect, and offer spiritual guidance. The bassoon explores these beautiful stones' unique qualities.

Smoky Quartz – An incredibly grounding stone, this smoky brown stone transforms and diffuses negative energy. The bassoon changes from a sense of grounding to playfulness, exploring this balance of energy. In the end, it always finds its way back to telling the story of the grounding quality of the stone.

Lapis Lazuli – Prized for its colors, this deep blue stone was used by kings and queens in paintings and ceremonial robes. Believed to help foster truthful expression and communication, it supports the immune system and brings peace. The bassoon explores the luxurious blue color, mixing in flashes of gold found in the stone.

Tiger's Eye – Tiger's eye, a golden brown to deep red stone, is very grounding and can bring luck and ward off evil. The bassoon is sometimes “protective and seeing,” moving quickly

to remove the look of the “evil eye” and other times moving dreamily through an ancient landscape of protective energy.
-Jenni Brandon

Ciranda Das Sete Notas

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959)

The Ciranda is a traditional Brazilian children’s dance. In the ultimate expression of community, participants (including adults) join hands and engage in a round dance of moderate tempo.

The Brazilian composer, Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), was serving his country as minister for national music education when, in 1933, he wrote *Ciranda das sete notas* (“Round Dance for Seven Notes”). A single movement concerto for bassoon and string orchestra, the piece explores the sunny “seven notes” of the C major scale.

The piece opens with an exuberant C major scale in the strings which surges in contrary motion. It’s a suave, jazzy gesture which stylishly “raises the curtain” to introduce the star character, the bassoon. Following a series of pastoral adventures, the Concerto’s warm final section rises over an ascending ostinato. The bassoon’s final statement of the scale drifts off into jazzy, pan diatonic bliss, to be resolved by a single “C” in the strings.

-Timothy Judd

ABOUT THE PERFORMER

Grace Moon is a bassoonist of 11 years. Originally from Dallas, Grace moved to Boulder in 2022. Since then, she has performed with the CU Symphony, Wind Symphony, Symphonic Band, several chamber ensembles, the Boulder Concert Band, and the Colorado Wind Ensemble. She recently taught as a marching technician with the Centaurus High School Marching Band, earning 7th place at the CBA State Marching Contest. She has also taught at several schools in the North Texas area. She will graduate from CU Boulder with a Bachelor of Music in Bassoon Performance in May of 2026. In the fall, she plans to attend graduate school to earn a Master's degree in Bassoon Performance, where she hopes to better define her skills as an artist and start a private teaching career. In her free time, she enjoys reading, hiking, and trying local restaurants and breweries.

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*The Drowsy Chaperone (2023).
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