

**Jessie Montgomery, Composer**  
**UNCSA Media**

Jessie Montgomery is an acclaimed composer, violinist, and educator. She is the recipient of the Leonard Bernstein Award from the ASCAP Foundation, the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, and her works are performed frequently around the world by leading musicians and ensembles. Her music interweaves classical music with elements of vernacular music, improvisation, poetry, and social consciousness, making her an acute interpreter of 21st-century American sound and experience. Her profoundly felt works have been described as “turbulent, wildly colorful and exploding with life” (*The Washington Post*).

Jessie was born and raised in Manhattan’s Lower East Side in the 1980s during a time when the neighborhood was at a major turning point in its history. Artists gravitated to the hotbed of artistic experimentation and community development. Her parents – her father a musician, her mother a theater artist and storyteller – were engaged in the activities of the neighborhood and regularly brought Jessie to rallies, performances, and parties where neighbors, activists, and artists gathered to celebrate and support the movements of the time. It is from this unique experience that Jessie has created a life that merges composing, performance, education, and advocacy.

Her growing body of work includes solo, chamber, vocal, and orchestral works. Some recent highlights include *Shift, Change, Turn* (2019) commissioned by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, *Coincident Dances* (2018) for the Chicago Sinfonietta, *Caught by the Wind* (2016) for the Albany Symphony and the American Music Festival, and *Banner* (2014) – written to mark the 200th anniversary of The Star Spangled Banner – for The Sphinx Organization and the Joyce Foundation.

Since 1999, Jessie has been affiliated with The Sphinx Organization, which supports young African-American and Latinx string players and has served as composer-in-residence for the Sphinx Virtuosi, the Organization’s flagship professional touring ensemble. She was a two-time laureate of the annual Sphinx Competition and was awarded their highest honor, the Sphinx Medal of Excellence. She has received additional grants and awards from the ASCAP Foundation, Chamber Music America, American Composers Orchestra, the Joyce Foundation, and the Sorel Organization.

The New York Philharmonic has selected Jessie as one of the featured composers for their *Project 19*, which marks the centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, granting equal voting rights in the United States to women. Other forthcoming works include a nonet inspired by the Great Migration, told from the perspective of Montgomery’s great-grandfather William McCauley and to be performed by Imani Winds and the Catalyst Quartet; a cello concerto for Thomas Mesa jointly commissioned by Carnegie Hall, New World Symphony, and The Sphinx Organization; and a new orchestral work for the National Symphony Orchestra; a viola concerto, *L.E.S Characters*, for Masumi per Rostad commissioned by the Grant Park Music

Festival, City Music Cleveland, Interlochen Center for the Arts, the Orlando Philharmonic and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra; a new arrangement of a song cycle, *Five Freedom Songs*, written for Soprano Julia Bullock, and a site-specific collaboration with Bard SummerScape Festival and Pam Tanowitz Dance, *I was waiting for the echo of a better day*, with Choreography by Pam Tanowitz and music by Jessie Montgomery and Big Dog Little Dog.

Jessie began her violin studies, at the Third Street Music School Settlement, one of the oldest community organizations in the country. A founding member of PUBLIQuartet and former member of the Catalyst Quartet, she continues to maintain an active performance career as a violinist appearing regularly with her own ensembles, as well as with the Silkroad Ensemble and Sphinx Virtuosi.

Jessie's teachers and mentors include Sally Thomas, Ann Setzer, Alice Kanack, Joan Tower, Derek Bermel, Mark Suozzo, Ira Newborn, and Laura Kaminsky. She holds degrees from the Juilliard School and New York University and is currently a Graduate Fellow in Music Composition at Princeton University. She is Professor of violin and composition at The New School. In May 2021, she will begin her appointment as the Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.