

Statement of Mentorship Re: The Montani Quartet's collaborative performance of Jessie Montgomery's *Banner* with WVU Symphony Orchestra.

Dr. Mitchell Arnold

3 March 2021

It was a pleasure to work with our fine graduate string quartet, the Montani Quartet, to prepare and perform Jessie Montgomery's *Banner* for string quartet and string orchestra. Montani's preparation was exemplary. It should be noted that their personnel changes nearly every year by at least 25% and in the intensely collaborative environment of the string quartet performance, success is largely determined by not just talent and technical skill but the ability to collaborate. Before my work with the quartet began, they were already well along the way towards a successful performance of the work.

The first major step of mentorship was initiated when the quartet began rehearsing with the WVUSO strings in late January for the February concert. Weekly rehearsals with the group and the orchestra, led by me, helped us all to develop a unified musical approach, iron out tempo discrepancies, and make decisions as to when which collaborator (the quartet or the conductor, me) would be responsible for setting tempo. Of course, the exact tempo, mode of expression, articulation, balance, etc. were all collaboratively worked out during rehearsal and conversation.

We also held one session between myself – without the string orchestra – and the quartet to work out some details of tempo and coordination. In most cases I offered a range of possibilities that fit the overall musical conception of the piece and the group came to a decision that worked best for them.

In instances where passages played by the quartet also appeared simultaneously, or at different times, in the string orchestra, the quartet members shared their approach to articulation, expression, etc. with the respective sections of the orchestra. Sometimes this collaboration was initiated by the Montani members, sometimes by me.

All in all, it was a most rewarding experience for me, the members of the Montani, the members of the orchestra, and, I am quite sure, the members of the audience.

It was a pleasure work with Montani and a pleasure to write this statement in support of their application.

Sincerely,



Dr. Mitchell Arnold

Associate Professor of Music

Director of Orchestral Activities

Mitchell.Arnold@mail.wvu.edu

304.293.4490

Statement of Research Mentorship

The Montani Quartet's collaborative performance of Jessie Montgomery's *Banner* with WVU Symphony Orchestra

Dr. Erin Ellis

February 26, 2021

I have been coaching a majority of the current members of the Montani String Quartet for 3 years. We have worked diligently on a weekly basis on developing musical skills as an ensemble and also on developing organizational and communication skills necessary to conduct this type of research. For this particular project, the ensemble brought the piece to me for a couple of sessions to prepare for rehearsing with the orchestra. We worked on issues in rhythm, tone/timbre, and phrasing that are unique to this unusual piece. I also consulted with them after rehearsals with orchestra began to help ensure smooth communication during the rehearsal process.

Sincerely,

Dr. Erin Ellis

West Virginia University

Assistant Professor of Cello

<http://www.music.wvu.edu/faculty/erin-ellis>