KU Prairie Fire
Program Notes
Monday, November 30, 2026

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in in G Major, BWV 1048
Johann Sebastain Bach (1685-1750)
Johann Sebastian Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3* is one of his six concertos dedicated to Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, in 1721. Scored for three violins, three violas, three cellos, and continuo, the work showcases Bach's mastery of counterpoint and inventive approach to instrumental writing. Rather than featuring a single soloist, the concerto distributes its musical material among the nine string instruments, creating an intricate musical dialogue as melodies and rhythmic figures pass between sections.

The energetic first movement is characterized by lively rhythms and interweaving melodic lines that create a sense of continuous motion. Unusually, the second movement consists of just two chords, leaving room for performers to interpret or elaborate upon this brief transition. The final movement bursts forward with rapid passages, intricate imitation, and rhythmic vitality, bringing the concerto to an exhilarating conclusion. Through its balance of individual voices and collective expression, *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3* remains one of Bach's most celebrated instrumental works

Elegy for Harp and Strings
Lee Holdridge (b. 1944)
American composer Lee Holdridge is widely recognized for his contributions to film, television, and concert music. His *Elegy for Harp and Strings*, composed in 1976, reflects his lyrical, expressive style and ability to convey emotion through instrumental writing. Combining the delicate sonorities of the harp with the warmth of the string orchestra, the work creates an intimate and contemplative musical atmosphere.

The composition unfolds through flowing melodic lines and rich harmonies, with the harp adding a shimmering texture beneath the expressive strings. Gentle changes in dynamics and musical intensity evoke feelings of reflection, longing, and tenderness. Through its restrained beauty and emotional depth, *Elegy for Harp and Strings* invites listeners into a moment of quiet introspection.

Unbridled Spirit
Katie O'Hara LaBrie (b.1982)
Unbridled Spirit by contemporary American composer Katie O'Hara LaBrie was commissioned by the South County High School Chamber Orchestra in Lorton, Virginia, in celebration of its 2022 performance at the Virginia Music Educators Conference. Inspired by the school's stallion mascot, the dedication of its musicians, and the spirit of its community, the work captures a sense of freedom, determination, and collective achievement.

Written for string orchestra, the composition features soaring melodies, driving rhythms, and energetic syncopation that evoke the imagery of wild horses galloping across an open landscape. Contrasting musical textures and rhythmic figures create a sense of excitement and momentum, while the interaction between instrumental sections highlights the ensemble's unity. With its spirited character and vibrant musical energy, *Unbridled Spirit* celebrates perseverance, enthusiasm, and unity.