

Northwestern University

HENRY AND LEIGH
BIENEN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Earth and Heaven

Northwestern University Symphonic Band

Shawn D. Vondran, *conductor*

Michael Witt, *graduate assistant conductor*

PICK-STAIGER CONCERT HALL

2024–25 SEASON

Northwestern University Symphonic Band

Shawn D. Vondran, *conductor*

Michael Witt, *graduate assistant conductor*

SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 2025, AT 3 P.M.

Earth and Heaven

***In This Broad Earth* (2015)**

Steven Bryant

Michael Witt, *graduate assistant conductor*

***Deciduous* (2022)**

Viet Cuong

***Anahita* (2005)**

Roshanne Etezady

The Flight of the Night

Night Mares

Sleep and Repose/The Coming of Light

***Waking Angels* (1997)**

David Gillingham

***Of Our New Day Begun* (2015)**

Omar Thomas

PROFILE

Shawn D. Vondran is in his eleventh year as the Associate Director of Bands at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music. His responsibilities include conducting the Symphonic Band along with teaching courses in conducting, wind repertoire, orchestral repertoire, and other courses in the music performance and education curricula. During his tenure at Northwestern, the Symphonic Band was selected to perform at the 2020 College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) North Central Division Conference. The ensemble frequently engages with a number of composers and participates in consortia to support the creation and performance of new music for the wind band medium.

Dr. Vondran served on the faculties at Ball State University, Western Illinois University, and Youngstown State University prior to his appointment at Northwestern University. He began his career as a band director at Mentor High School in Ohio, where his ensembles consistently received accolades for their performances.

Recently, Vondran was elected by his peers to the prestigious American Bandmasters Association. He also received the College of Fine Arts Dean's Teaching Award while at Ball State University for excellence in teaching and dedication to his students. Additionally, the Ball State University Symphony Band was selected to perform at the 2012 and 2014 Indiana Music Education Association Conference during his tenure.

Vondran maintains an active schedule with engagements throughout the United States as a guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator. In addition to performance engagements, he is an on-going contributor to the *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band* series published by GIA and appeared in the *National Band Association Journal*. He has also presented a clinic at the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic. Dr. Vondran has worked with a number of composers in the preparation, performance, and/or recording of their works for the wind band medium. These artistic collaborations include John Corigliano, Christopher Rouse, David Maslanka, Michael Daugherty, Steven Bryant, Joel Puckett, and Jennifer Higdon. He is a member of the College Band Directors National Association, where he serves as the Illinois state chair, and Pi Kappa Lambda.

Vondran received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in instrumental conducting, with an emphasis in music education, from the University of Miami (FL). Vondran completed a Master of Music degree in instrumental conducting at Youngstown State University and earned a Bachelor of Music Education degree (magna cum laude) at The Ohio State University.

PROGRAM NOTES

In This Broad Earth

Bryant

Steven Bryant is a founding member of BCM International, a consortium made up of four stylistically-diverse composers dedicated to enriching the repertoire with exciting works for mediums often mired in static formulas. His contributions include works for wind ensemble, orchestra, and chamber groups as well as electronic and electroacoustic creations. Bryant studied composition with John Corigliano at The Juilliard School, Cindy McTee at the University of North Texas, and Francis McBeth at Ouachita University.

Inspired by the words of Walt Whitman's "Song of the Universal" from *Leaves of Grass*, Steven Bryant offers the following program note:

COME, said the Muse,
Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted,
Sing me the Universal.

In this broad Earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed Perfection.

In This Broad Earth is a short fanfare written for and dedicated to Kevin Sedatole and the Michigan State University Wind Symphony. Inspired by the beauty I witness when hiking in the Austrian Alps with my wife, Verena, the music celebrates the earth, our only home (for now).

The fanfare embodies the numerous threads that have connected my life with Michigan State University over the past decade. Verena was one of Dr. Sedatole's first conducting students at MSU, which coincided with the beginning of our relationship. I spent a great deal of time at Verena's apartment in Spartan Village where I wrote the opening sec-

tion of my Concerto for Wind Ensemble on a makeshift desk (a card table given to her by Director of Bands Emeritus John Whitwell). Over the years since, the MSU bands have performed many of my works, always at the very highest level, and though I was never a student there, I have great affection and loyalty to this extraordinary school on the banks of the Red Cedar River.

Deciduous

Cuong

Called “alluring” and “wildly inventive” by the *New York Times*, the music of American composer Viet Cuong has been performed on six continents by musicians and ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, Eighth Blackbird, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Sō Percussion, Alarm Will Sound, Atlanta Symphony, Sandbox Percussion, Albany Symphony, PRISM Quartet, and Dallas Winds, among many others. Cuong’s music has been featured in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Kennedy Center, and his works for wind ensemble have amassed several hundreds of performances worldwide. Passionate about bringing these different facets of the contemporary music community together, his recent projects include a concerto for Eighth Blackbird with the United States Navy Band. He is currently the Pacific Symphony’s Composer-In-Residence and serves as Assistant Professor of Music Composition at The University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Cuong holds degrees from Princeton University (MFA/PhD), the Curtis Institute of Music (AD), and Peabody Conservatory.

Deciduous offers a poignant meditation on the passage of time and the inevitability of change. The title alludes to the natural phenomenon of trees shedding their leaves in preparation for the changing seasons. At its core, *Deciduous* is a study in contrasts between light and shadow, motion and stillness, and chaos and order. Cuong’s music unfolds like a vibrant tapestry, revealing new layers of meaning with each successive listening. Structured in a single movement, this work unfolds as a series of interconnected episodes each marked by its own distinct character and energy. The work showcases Cuong’s distinctive voice as a composer, blending intricate rhythms, lush harmonies, and evocative textures to create a compelling sonic landscape. As leaves fall and seasons shift, his music reminds us of the resilience of the human spirit and the enduring beauty that emerges from moments of transition.

Cuong says of the work:

For a long time after my father passed away, I felt like I had “lost my leaves.” In the way that leaves harness light to create energy for trees

and plants, I felt like I had so little left to harness creatively. Many days I feared those leaves would never grow back. After struggling for months to write, I finally found some healing while creating *Deciduous*. This involved revisiting chord progressions that brought me solace as a child and activating them in textures that I have enjoyed exploring as an adult. The piece cycles through these chord progressions, building to a moment where it's stripped of everything and must find a way to renew itself. While I continue to struggle with this loss, I have come to understand that healing is not as much of a linear process as it is a cyclical journey, where, without fail, every leafless winter is followed by a spring.

Anahita

Etezady

Roshanne Etezady holds degrees from Northwestern University, Yale University, and the University of Michigan. As a young musician, she studied piano and flute and developed an interest in composition after a performance by Philip Glass. Etezady is a founding member of the Minimum Security Composers Collective, an organization to expand the audience of new music. As an active instructor and composer, Etezady has received commissions from the United States Military Band at West Point and Eighth Blackbird. She has served as an instructor at Arizona State University, Interlochen Arts Camp, the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam, and the University of Michigan, where she is a member of the composition faculty.

Located in the Assembly Chamber of the State Capitol Building in Albany, New York, there are two murals completed in 1878 by the New England painter William Morris Hunt. These works are enormous – each approaching 18 feet in length – and are considered the culminating works of the artist's career. One of these murals, *The Flight of Night*, depicts the Zoroastrian Goddess of the Night, Anahita, driving her chariot westward, fleeing the rising sun. Two years after Hunt completed the giant murals (and only one year after his death), the ceiling in the Assembly Chamber began to leak. By 1882, *The Flight of Night* had already been damaged, and by 1888, the vaulted ceiling in the Assembly Chamber had to be condemned. A false ceiling was erected, completely obscuring Hunt's murals and, today, most of *The Flight of Night* has been destroyed by the elements. Only the lowest portions of the original painting are still visible.

Anahita draws inspiration from photographs of Hunt's masterpiece before

its decay as well as from the Persian poem which originally inspired Hunt. The first movement, *The Flight of Night*, is characterized by dramatic, aggressive gestures that are meant to evoke the terrifying beauty of the goddess herself. The second movement, *Night Mares*, is a scherzo-like movement referring to the three monstrous horses that pull the chariot across the sky. In the final movement, *Sleep and Repose/The Coming of Light*, we hear the gentler side of the night, with a tender lullaby ending with trumpets heralding the dawn.

The following text is a translated Persian poem that Colonel Leavitt Hunt sent to his brother, William Morris Hunt.

Anahita

Enthroned upon her car of light, the moon
Is circling down the lofty heights of Heaven;
Her well-trained courses wedge the blindest depths
With fearful plunge, yet heed the steady hand
That guides their lonely way. So swift her course,
So bright her smile, she seems on silver wings.
O'er-reaching space, to glide the airy main;
Behind, far-flowing, spreads her deep blue veil,
Inwrought with stars that shimmer in its wave.
Before the car, an owl, gloom sighted, flaps
His weary way; with melancholy hoot
Dispelling spectral shades that flee
With bat-like rush, affrighted, back
Within the blackest nooks of caverned Night.
Still Hours of darkness wend around the car,
By raven tresses half concealed; but one,
With fairer locks, seems lingering back for Day.
Yet all with even measured footsteps mark
Her onward course. And floating in her train
Repose lies nestled on the breast of Sleep,
While soft Desires enclasp the waist of Dreams,
And light-winged Fancies flit around in troops.

Waking Angels

Gillingham

David R. Gillingham earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Instrumental Music Education from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. He earned his PhD in Music Theory and Composition from Michigan State

University. His works are regularly performed by nationally recognized ensembles including the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music Wind Ensemble, the University of Georgia Bands, North Texas University Wind Ensemble, Michigan State University Wind Ensemble, Oklahoma State Wind Ensemble, University of Oklahoma Wind Ensemble, Florida State Wind Orchestra, University of Florida Wind Symphony, University of Illinois Symphonic Band, Illinois State Wind Symphony, University of Minnesota Wind Ensemble, Indiana University Wind Ensemble, and the University of Wisconsin Wind Ensemble. Dr. Gillingham was a professor of music at Central Michigan University until his retirement in 2016.

Gillingham writes,

Waking Angels was inspired by the poem *Mercy* by Olga Broumas which is among a collection of poems on the subject of AIDS by various poets called *Poems of Life*. Broumas's poem makes reference to the "sea-smoke" rising from the ocean and how it is often referred to as the "breath of souls." The last stanza of the poem alludes to these lost souls that Broumas has been grieving for:

they leave, like waking angels rising
on a hint of wind, visible or unseen, a print,
a wrinkle of the water.

Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, AIDS has profoundly affected the world in which we live. Countless numbers of people have lost their lives to this merciless disease, and a cure is not yet within reach. Through the imagery of the music, *Waking Angels* emanates the mysteriousness, the pain and the ruthlessness of the disease. But it also provides us with the warmth and comfort of hope and the peace of eternity. One may recognize fragments of the old hymn, *Softly and Tenderly, Jesus Is Calling*, by Will Thompson which serves to unify the work. This, to me, is nostalgic, having grown up among the ambience of the old gospel hymns.

I have found the melody and text comforting over the years. The hymn motive goes through a degenerative process in the work paralleling the nature of the disease. My purpose in using the hymn tune is not necessarily religious. It simply provides a source of reflection -- to personally draw the listener into the music and toward a closer understanding of the pain and suffering of mankind.

Of Our New Day Begun

Thomas

Composer, arranger, and educator Omar Thomas has created music extensively in the contemporary jazz ensemble idiom. It was while completing his Master of Music Degree that he was appointed the position of Assistant Professor of Harmony at Berklee College of Music at the young age of 23. He was awarded the ASCAP Young Jazz Composers Award in 2008, and invited by the ASCAP Association to perform his music in their highly exclusive JaZzCap Showcase, held in New York City. Thomas's music has been performed in concert halls around the world, and he has received commissions to create works in both jazz and classical styles. His works have been performed by such diverse groups as the Eastman New Jazz Ensemble, the San Francisco and Boston Gay Mens' Choruses, and the Colorado Symphony Orchestra. *Of Our New Day Begun*, his first work for wind ensemble, was written in 2015. The consortium assembled to create this work was led by Dr. Gary Schallert and the Western Kentucky University Wind Ensemble.

Thomas says of the work:

Of Our New Day Begun was written to honor nine beautiful souls who lost their lives to a callous act of hatred and domestic terrorism on the evening of June 17, 2015 while worshipping in their beloved sanctuary, the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (affectionately referred to as "Mother Emanuel") in Charleston, South Carolina. My greatest challenge in creating this work was walking the line between reverence for the victims and their families, and honoring my strong, bitter feelings towards both the perpetrator and the segments of our society that continue to create people like him. I realized that the most powerful musical expression I could offer incorporated elements from both sides of that line - embracing my pain and anger while being moved by the displays of grace and forgiveness demonstrated by the victims' families.

Historically, black Americans have, in great number, turned to the church to find refuge and grounding in the most trying of times. Thus, the musical themes and ideas for *Of Our New Day Begun* are rooted in the Black American church tradition. The piece is anchored by James and John Johnson's time-honored song, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, and peppered with blues harmonies and melodies. Singing, stomping, and clapping are also prominent features of this work, as they have always

been a mainstay of black music traditions, and the inclusion of the tambourine in these sections is a direct nod to black worship services.

Of Our New Day Begun begins with a unison statement of a melodic cell from “Lift Every Voice...” before suddenly giving way to ghostly, bluesy chords in the horns and bassoons. This section moves to a dolorous and bitter dirge presentation of the anthem in irregularly shifting 12/8 and 6/8 meter, which grows in intensity as it offers fleeting glimmers of hope and relief answered by cries of blues-inspired licks. A maddening, ostinato-driven section representing a frustration and weariness that words cannot, grows into a group singing of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” fueled by the stomping and clapping reminiscent of the black church.

In the latter half of the piece the music turns hopeful, settling into 9/8 time and modulating up a step during its ascent to a glorious statement of the final lines of “Lift Every Voice...” in 4/4, honoring the powerful display of humanity set forth by the families of the victims. There is a long and emotional decrescendo that lands on a pensive and cathartic gospel-inspired hymnsong. Returning to 9/8 time, the piece comes to rest on a unison F that grows from a very distant hum to a thunderous roar, driven forward by march-like stomping to represent the ceaseless marching of black Americans towards equality.

SYMPHONIC BAND

Dr. Shawn Vondran, *conductor*

Rachel Stiles and Michael Witt, *graduate assistant conductors*

Flute/Piccolo

Amara Ahalt
Emily Kim
Katelyn Lee
Joshua Rascon
Julianna Wang

Saxophone

Seth Alexander
Miguel Flores-Padilla
Hari Maheswaran
Josephine Mascarenhas

Euphonium

Brandon Baade
Will Claudius
Rohan Venkatesan

Oboe/English Horn

Tanya Ganesh
Orly Lindner
Ezequiel-Alain Navarro

Trumpet

Sam Ferguson
Braxton Leek
Rachael McKay
Lilie Shlyak
Jonathan Taylor
Sam VanLoo

Tuba

Angel Cocone
Luke Interrante

Clarinet

Jose Aguilar
Gavin Boudreau
Josie InTham
Aydin Iqbal
Casey Li
Peter Platosh
Leo Shen
Hannah Webb

Horn

Samuel Bangert
Anton Fernandez
Michael James
Jordan Petan
Elizabeth Smith
Molly Sullivan
Landon Young

Percussion

Sam Kim
Jonathan Kravchuk
Ellie Lebovich
Ryan Lee
Simeon Lee
Mark Li
Jacob Scheidt
Charlize Yeh

Bassoon

Wilson Aron
Elizabeth Myers
Bowie Wu

Trombone

Madi Bayaca
Tim George
Ian Lilly
Lola Stevenson
Adam Uliassi

Harp

Marin Trendel

Piano

Yance Zheng

Double Bass

Leo Buckman

BAND PROGRAM

Director of Bands

Robert Taylor

John W. Beattie Chair of Music

Associate Director of Bands

Shawn Vondran

Director of Athletic Bands

Daniel Farris

Department Assistant

Maggie Whiteman

Doctoral Assistants

Imran Amarshi, Sheldon Frazier

Graduate Assistants

Rachel Stiles, Michael Witt

Stage Managers

Troy Archer, Stewart Bridgeforth,

Chris Carrigg, Arlo Hollander,

Zachary Hommel, Raúl Orellana, Sarah Perry

Ensemble Librarians

Maggie Umanetz-Lertprasopsak, Kevin Acuña

Equipment Managers

Brian Kachur, Micah Northam

AV Manager & Outreach Coordinator

Oliver Stark

CONCERT MANAGEMENT OFFICE STAFF

Director of Concert Management	Jerry Tietz
Concert Operations Manager	Kait Samuels
Ticketing Manager	Maxwell A. Johnson
Marketing Manager	Laura Nielsen
Marketing Coordinator	Elizabeth Avery
Technical Services Manager	Bill Milgram
Technical Services Manager	Zachary Lovitch
Concert Business Manager	Meg Lindsey
Supporting Staff	150 Northwestern Students
Dean, Bienen School of Music	Jonathan Bailey Holland

KEYBOARD MAINTENANCE

Supervisor of Keyboard Maintenance	Wesley Owen
Piano Technician	Chris Scroggins

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

- Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of the house manager. In consideration of the artists and other members of the audience, patrons who must leave before the end of the concert are asked to do so between pieces.
- Photography and audio/video recording of performances is strictly prohibited without prior written consent of the Concert Management Office.
- A limited number of assisted listening devices are available for the hearing impaired. Inquire at the box office.
- Smoking is prohibited by law in all Bienen School of Music performance venues.
- Every patron who will be occupying a seat must have a ticket in order to be admitted into the concert.
- The presenter reserves the right to ask any patron who is disrupting the event in any way to leave the concert hall.
- In the event of a medical emergency, please notify the nearest usher.
- When joining us for upcoming concerts, please leave the Concert Management Office phone number (847-491-5441) with anyone who might need to reach you in case of emergency.