

Northwestern University

HENRY AND LEIGH
BIENEN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Contemporaries

Northwestern University Symphonic Band

Shawn D. Vondran, *conductor*

Michael Witt, *graduate assistant conductor*

PICK-STAIGER CONCERT HALL

2025–26 SEASON

Northwestern University Symphonic Band

Shawn D. Vondran, *conductor*

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2026, AT 7:30 P.M.

Contemporaries

***Rise* (2018)**

I. Beginnings

Adam Schoenberg

***Shenandoah* (2019)**

Omar Thomas

***Rising Light* (2022)**

Kevin Charoensri

INTERMISSION

***Shimmering Sunshine* (2019)**

Kevin Day

Michael Witt, *graduate assistant conductor*

***An Gé Fhiáin (The Wild Goose)* (2014)**

Ryan George

***Rise* (2018)**

II. Farewell Song

Adam Schoenberg

SYMPHONIC BAND

Shawn D. Vondran, *conductor*

Michael Witt and Rachel Stiles, *graduate assistant conductors*

Flute/Piccolo

Sophia Bian
Eunice Kim
Claire Lee
Katelyn Lee
Ruiqi Liu

Oboe/English Horn

Christopher Axline
Tanya Ganesh
Alain Shi

Clarinet

Christopher Cui
Ian Dodd
Angela Guan
Josie InTham
Leah Kang
Lena Kwon
Erin Lee
Michael Li
Oscar Tamez
Hannah Webb
Larry Zhao

Bassoon

Wilson Aron
Jack Pasacreta
Max Walaszek

Saxophone

Hari Maheswaran
Boss Lee
Everest Li
Josephine Mascarenhas

Trumpet

Brendan Breen
Isaac Brown
Kylie Holes
Rachel McKay
Lilie Shlyak

Horn

Anton Fernandez
Michael James
Elizabeth Smith
Molly Sullivan
Nick Taylor
Isaiah Thomason-Redus

Trombone

Madi Bayaca
Harry Guan
Ian Lilly
Andrew Ng
Lukas Orozco

Euphonium

Chris Carrigg
Will Claudius

Tuba

Angel Cocone
Chrisjovan Masso

Percussion

Sam Carpenter
Isaac Chiang
Alex Davis
Sam Kim
Jonathan Kravchuk
Hila Kuperman
Zoe Li
Ivan Mendoza

Double Bass

Sai Vignesh

Piano

Thomas Nguyen

Harp

Kayleen Cho

PROFILE

Shawn D. Vondran is in his twelfth 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.

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 ongoing 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

Rise

Schoenberg

Emmy Award-winning and Grammy nominated Adam Schoenberg has twice been named among the top ten most performed living composers by orchestras in the United States. With more than 200 orchestral performances worldwide, his works have been performed by orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. His numerous achievements include the Goddard Lieberon Fellowship and Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts & Letters, as well as the MacDowell Fellowship in both 2009 and 2010.

Adam Schoenberg provides the following information about the work:

Rise is a two-movement work commissioned by the California Wind Band Consortium. I wanted to create a new piece that could be presented in three distinct ways: Both movements played back-to-back; standalone movements (*Beginnings* can be a concert opener or encore, and *Farewell Song* can be placed anywhere in a program); or having the movements bookend an entire program (i.e., the concert begins with *Beginnings* and closes with *Farewell Song*.)

Beginnings is designed to function as a long gradual crescendo. It begins with a rhythmic ostinato that becomes the driving force for the entire movement. As it progresses, the orchestration and overall intensity grow, ultimately creating an uplifting and optimistic ending.

Farewell Song is based on the final movement of my violin concerto, *Orchard in Fog*. This movement is meant to have a timeless feel, simultaneously serving as an atmospheric and pastoral-landscape type of sonic experience, while also being imagined as a goodbye song to a loved one.

A special thank you to John Burdett and Rickey H. Badua, who were not only instrumental in making the commission happen, but also provided me with invaluable guidance in creating a piece that would work for both high school and collegiate ensembles.

Shenandoah

Thomas

Described as “elegant, beautiful, sophisticated, intense, and crystal clear in emotional intent,” the music of Omar Thomas continues to move listeners everywhere it is performed. Born to Guyanese parents in Brooklyn, New York, in 1984, Thomas moved to Boston in 2006 to pursue a Master of Music in Jazz Composition at the New England Conservatory of Music after studying music education at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He is the protégé of lauded composers and educators Ken Schaphorst and Frank Carlberg and has studied under multiple Grammy-winning composer and bandleader Maria Schneider. 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’ music has been performed in concert halls around the world, and he has received commissions to create works in both classical and jazz styles. His works have been performed by such diverse groups as the Eastman New Jazz Ensemble, the San Francisco and Boston Gay Men’s Choruses, and the Colorado Symphony Orchestra.

About the piece, the composer writes:

Shenandoah is one of the most well-known and beloved Americana folk songs. Originally a river song detailing the lives and journeys of fur traders canoeing down the Missouri River, the symbolism of this culturally-significant melody has been expanded to include its geographic namesake- an area of the eastern United States that encompasses West Virginia and a good portion of the western part of Virginia- and various parks, rivers, counties, and academic institutions found within.

Back in May of 2018, after hearing a really lovely duo arrangement of *Shenandoah* while adjudicating a music competition in Minneapolis, I asked myself, after hearing so many versions of this iconic and historic song, how would I set it differently? I thought about it and thought about it and thought about it, and before I realized it, I

had composed and assembled just about all of this arrangement in my head by assigning bass notes to the melody and filling in the harmony in my head afterwards. I would intermittently check myself on the piano to make sure what I was imagining worked and ended up changing almost nothing at all from what I'd heard in my mind's ear.

This arrangement recalls the beauty of Shenandoah Valley, not bathed in golden sunlight, but blanketed by low-hanging clouds and experiencing intermittent periods of heavy rainfall (created with a combination of percussion textures, generated both on instruments and from the body). There are a few musical moments where the sun attempts to pierce through the clouds, but ultimately, the rains win out. This arrangement of *Shenandoah* is at times mysterious, somewhat ominous, constantly introspective, and deeply soulful.

Rising Light

Charoensri

Kevin Charoensri is a Thai American composer, pianist, conductor, and arts advocate from San Diego, California. Described by *The Washington Post* as offering a “bristling musical response”, his music seeks to transcend the score, often centering stories from historically marginalized communities, particularly those within the AAPI community. Beyond composition, Charoensri is an active public voice for the arts and representation, having appeared on CNN, NPR, and several podcasts to speak about cultural advocacy and youth leadership in music.

Charoensri provides the following about the work:

A few months ago, my mother asked me to walk with her to get groceries because she felt fearful of the violent, racist attacks on Asian American women across the country, such as the seven attacks on innocent Asian women in New York. From this, *Rising Light* was born. I knew I had to say something with my voice I had been given, which was in music.

Asians Americans are raised to stay quiet and be non-confrontational about issues, and I found it hard to break my shell in writing. I was scared to write moments too big and often thought about scrapping the piece. I, along with other Asian Americans, including my parents, had a fear of speaking up, which plagued me much of my life composing. Comments such as calling my music “too Asian” always got to my head, and I made sure I never used common Asian musi-

cal language or instruments in my music, such as a pentatonic scale or a gong in my pieces. I also wanted to incorporate the sound of protest that I grew up with in my piece. During my time growing up in Thailand, there were many protests that fought against oppressive governments and censorship, and I recall those around me finding anything they could to make noise. And if they couldn't, they made noise using their bodies through stomps and claps.

The name, *Rising Light*, is inspired by the floating Lantern Festival in Thailand, where I was raised, where people write their fears, worries, and thoughts on their mind and send it off in a lantern. For me, writing this piece has felt much like that, being a place for me to vent and express all my emotions regarding this issue.

Despite being disgusted and saddened by the surge of Asian hate, I wanted this piece to nonapologetically celebrate both the beautiful cultures I grew up in. While there are dark moments in this piece, I wanted this piece to celebrate the beautiful bi-cultural identity of Asian Americans.

Shimmering Sunshine

Day

Kevin Day is an award-winning, multi-disciplinary composer, jazz pianist, and conductor. A unique voice in the world of classical music, Day takes inspiration from a broad range of sources, including romanticism, late 20th century music, jazz fusion, and gospel. Day burst onto the musical scene in 2018 with his Concerto for Euphonium, and many of his works are now performed internationally including *Ignition*, commissioned by the Boston Symphony Low Brass, and *Unquiet Waters*, commissioned by Jordan Van-Hemert. Outside of his compositions, Day enjoys an active career as a jazz pianist and works as Lecturer of Music Theory and Musicianship at the UC San Diego Department of Music.

Shimmering Sunshine is a composition that depicts the sun whenever it is positioned at high noon, at its brightest point during the day. Throughout the piece, there are different “shimmers” of bright light that bounce around from instrument to instrument, depicting moments of sunshine both beautiful and, at the same time, powerful. This work was written in conjunction with the M.O.T.I.F triptych consortium, including *Across a Golden Sky* by Quinn Mason and *Midnight Skyline* by Josh Trentadue.

–Kevin Day

An Gé Fhiáin (The Wild Goose)

George

Ryan George is a composer and arranger specializing in music for concert bands and marching ensembles. George completed his first concert commission in 2007, and since then, his works have received performances at the American Bandmasters Association Convention, the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, the National CBDNA Conference, and multiple state music educator conferences. George's music is also regularly programmed by all-state, region, inter-collegiate, and honor ensembles. George currently resides in Austin, Texas, with his wife and three children.

About the piece, the composer writes:

The ancient Celtic people who occupied the British Isles around 1,600 years ago were a people who shared a deep connection with nature and the world they found themselves in. Around this time, Christianity found its way to this land and the Celtic people would often draw on their surroundings for symbolism. In the Celtic tradition, the Holy Spirit is represented as a bird, not as the delicate and peaceful dove found in other cultures, but as *An Gé Fhiáin*. The Wild Goose.

Like a wild goose, they perceived the Spirit of God as wild and untamed. Geese are loud, raucous, and strong. They are uncontrollable, difficult to catch, and their actions cannot be anticipated (thus the phrase "wild goose chase"). The Celtic people saw spirituality as an adventure that you chased after.

Juxtaposed against the chaos of the goose chase, the Celtic people also had a phrase for places where the distance between earth and the spiritual realm collapsed. These locales, known as "thin places", were places where the Celtic people felt that they could glimpse into the divine.

In writing this piece, I was intrigued by these two impressions: the wild and rambunctious goose that calls us on an adventurous chase, and the tranquil thin places that the goose leads us to. These two thoughts intertwine, sometimes gracefully, and other times forcefully. The piece is written in the free-form of a fantasy overture and is built around a five-note motif that variates throughout the allegro sections. A simple chordal hymn first stated by the horns provides

the basis for the adagio segments. The goose, represented by an antiphonally staged solo English horn, shows up at various points in the work as both the boisterous motivator and the soothing counselor. Music influences coming from the Celtic traditions are faint early in the piece, but transition to the forefront towards the end as the emulated sounds of bagpipes, penny whistles, and Irish drumming transform the five-note figure into a reel and jig.

An Gé Fhiáin (The Wild Goose) was commissioned by Robert W. Clark as a gift to Dr. Barry K. Knezek in honor of his passion for and devotion to the Lone Star Wind Orchestra. The work was premiered by the same group in January of 2014.

BAND PROGRAM

Director of Bands	Robert Taylor <i>John W. Beattie Chair of Music</i>
Associate Director of Bands	Shawn Vondran
Director of Athletic Bands	Daniel Farris
Doctoral Assistants	Imran Amarshi, Maggie Whiteman
Graduate Assistants	Oliver Stark, Rachel Stiles, Michael Witt
Stage Managers	Stewart Bridgeforth, Kolbe Chapman, Andy Hankes, Henry Lazzaro, Cameron Leonardi, Chrisjovan Masso, Raúl Orellana, Toby Tse
Ensemble Librarians	Cameron Leonardi, Sarah Perry, Toby Tse, Maggie Umanetz-Lertprasopsak
AV/Equipment Manager	Micah Northam

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	Zach 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.

