

CU ★ PRESENTS

2023-24 Season



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UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

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Philharmonia Orchestra

Luminaries

Renee Gilliland, conductor

7:30 p.m., Monday, Feb. 12, 2024

Grusin Music Hall

Program

God Is Red—Who will find peace with the lands?

Blake Clawson

Two Scenes from the Banks

Alan Mackwell

From All Those Before Me—Linda Hogan

Nicholas A. Felder

Pioneering Love—

In honor of Clela Rorex and her legacy

Ryan Flat

Those Who Walk Among Us—

Orchestra + Fixed Media

Gracie Fagan

—Intermission—

Symphony No. 2 in A minor

Alice Mary Smith (1839-1884)

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Minuetto: Allegretto
- IV. Allegro

Program notes

The **Colorado Luminaries Project** is a collaboration between the CU Boulder Philharmonia Orchestra (Renee Gilliland, music director) and five CU Boulder student composers. These new works were written as tributes to five notable alumni of CU Boulder.

God Is Red—Who will find peace with the lands?

Blake Clawson

A tribute to Vine Deloria Jr. (1933-2005): a prominent Native American author, activist and scholar. As a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, he played a crucial role in advocating for Indigenous rights and highlighting Native American perspectives. Deloria's influential works, including *Custer Died for Your Sins* and *God Is Red*, challenged mainstream perceptions of Native Americans and addressed issues such as cultural identity, sovereignty and religious traditions. He was known for his sharp wit, critical analysis and commitment to advancing Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. Deloria's writings continue to inspire and shape Native American scholarship and activism.

God Is Red, the seminal work by Standing Rock Sioux author and Native American activist Vine Deloria Jr., presents a sophisticated social critique of Western culture. This work has been highly influential in Native American activist circles since its publication in 1973 and concludes with a powerful passage:

Who will find peace with the lands? The future of humankind lies waiting for those who will come to understand their lives and take up their responsibilities to all living things. Who will listen to the trees, the animals and birds, the voices of the places of the land? As the long forgotten peoples of the respective continents rise and begin to reclaim their ancient heritage, they will discover the meaning of the lands of their ancestors. That is when the invaders of the North American continent will finally discover that for this land, God is red.

Deloria's call for Western societies to look to Native leadership to restore order in our world is both compelling and complex; indeed, I cannot summarize it in this space while maintaining its nuance and cogency. For that purpose, Deloria's own words above will have to suffice. I encourage anyone interested in learning more to read *God Is Red*, or any of Deloria's other work, for that matter.

This piece for orchestra is a reflection on the tension Deloria identifies at the root of the problem: Western societies generally have a limited or nearly non-existent attachment to and stewardship of specific places in the way that Native cultures do. That is, Western culture as a whole places no spiritual or cultural significance on the relationship to the inhabited landscape. Deloria argues that this is why the cultural, religious and economic engine of Western society can be so dissociated from the responsibility of caring for the lands; in broader contemporary terms, he is referring to lands management and environmental conservation. The music I've written is intended to reflect this tension. The natural world demands preservation for innumerable reasons, yet the Western cultural system is in many senses diametrically opposed to that goal. What do we do? Who will find peace with the lands?

—Program note by Blake Clawson

Two Scenes from the Banks

Alan Mackwell

A tribute to Robert Redford: American actor, director, producer and environmental activist. Born in 1936, he gained fame for his roles in films such as *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *The Sting* and *All the President's Men*. Redford also founded the Sundance Institute and the Sundance Film Festival, which have become influential platforms for independent filmmakers. Throughout his career, he has received numerous awards and accolades for his contributions to the film industry and his commitment to environmental conservation. Redford is widely regarded as a legendary figure in Hollywood.

Inspired by descriptions of Montana's Blackfoot River and fly fishing techniques from Norman Maclean's short story *A River Runs Through It* (which was later adapted to screenplay in Redford's Academy award-winning film of the same name), *Two Scenes from the Banks* explores the nuanced sonic atmospheres

conjured by mountain rivers and the unique ways in which dry-fly fishing encounters these spaces by replicating the river's complex textures, ultimately yielding to a calm moment of focus and minute gestures.

—Program note by Alan Mackwell

From All Those Before Me—Linda Hogan

Nicholas A. Felder

A tribute to Linda Hogan: Native American poet, novelist and essayist. Born in 1947, she belongs to the Chickasaw Nation. Hogan's work often explores themes of environmentalism, nature, spirituality and the intersection of Indigenous cultures with contemporary society. She has written numerous poetry collections, including *Mean Spirit* and *The Book of Medicines*, as well as novels such as *Solar Storms* and *Power*. Hogan's writing has received critical acclaim and has been recognized with several awards, cementing her position as a significant voice in Native American literature.

Throughout her work, Hogan writes in relationship with her family and ancestors. As a Native American woman of the Chickasaw Nation, Hogan speaks of inheriting trauma and harsh judgements of the self and body—that there's a lot of darkness and pain and dismembering—yet she never succumbs to pessimism. Instead, she offers the honest truth of an adulterated and displaced people. But that all is not lost for we have also inherited connection and strength and love and kindness from all those before us.

I relate with and carry much of this sentiment and philosophy as a Black American man. I think of all the rich traits I am given from the people and the earth before me. In writing this piece, the questions remaining, then, were: how can we remember? And how can we sustain?

—Program note by Nicholas Felder

Pioneering Love— In honor of Clela Rorex and her legacy

Ryan Flat

A tribute to Clela Rorex (1943-2022): former county clerk from Colorado. On March 26, 1975, Rorex made history as the first county clerk in the United States to issue a marriage license to two men—Dave McCord and Dave Zamora. She made this decision after being informed by the district attorney that the Colorado marriage code, at the time, did not specify that marriage had to be between a man and a woman. This license sparked some of the first national debates surrounding marriage equality and was a landmark event in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights.

Rorex was an avid feminist and social justice advocate throughout her life, and her actions and voice have left a profound impact on the city of Boulder, the state of Colorado, and the United States as a whole. This piece was written to honor Rorex and to depict her fight for equal rights. It represents the triumphs and struggles of her journey as well as the lasting love and equality that she has helped enable for so many people.

—Program note by Ryan Flat

Those Who Walk Among Us— Orchestra + Fixed Media

Gracie Fagan

A tribute to Pamela Z.: renowned composer, performer and multimedia artist. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in music from the University of Colorado Boulder. Pamela Z. is known for her innovative work in electronic and experimental music, combining her vocal talents with live looping and interactive technology. Her performances and installations have been presented worldwide, and she has received numerous awards for her contributions to the field of sound art.

Paranoia—an emotion not new to the majority of humans, stirs in the back of our minds like a shadow. When darkness creeps into our psyche and it grows, we question ourselves and our judgement. We look for a spirit of guidance, a light to fix our eyes on, a beacon. When we find our authority—who or what

or within us—we find a sense of comfort. But when our authority becomes perhaps shaded or cloudy or corrupt, our paranoia runs askew and deeply stains our thoughts. Who can we trust if not ourselves?

—Program note by Gracie Fagan

Symphony No. 2 in A minor

Alice Mary Smith (1839-1884)

“Her music is marked by elegance and grace... power and energy,” reads an obituary from *The Athenaeum*, on Victorian composer and musician Alice Mary Smith. Smith was a British female pioneer in 19th-century England and her music, bathed in Mendelssohnian influence through her teachers, is well-orchestrated and compelling. She published her first song in 1857, aged just 18. And six years later, she became the first known British woman to compose a symphony, with her *Symphony No. 1 in C minor*, which was performed by the Musical Society of London. A review in *The Illustrated London News* read: “... Miss Smith’s symphony especially, coming from the pen of a young lady, was a striking proof of sound studies and high attainments of the female votaries of the art in this country”.

Born in the 19th-century into a comfortable family, Smith showed impressive musical promise in her early years and took private lessons. Years of practice paid off, and Smith went on to become a prolific composer in 19th-century England, writing two symphonies; several choral works, both sacred and secular; four piano quartets; three string quartets; a clarinet sonata and six concert overtures. She also composed two large stage works, including the operetta *Gisela of Rudesheim*, and boasts one of the largest collections of sacred choral music by a woman composer. Forever pioneering, Smith’s anthems *Whoso hath this world’s goods* and *By the waters of Babylon* mark the first recorded instance of music by a woman composer to be used for the liturgies of the Church of England.

In November 1867, the year she married lawyer Frederick Meadows White, she was also elected Female Professional Associate of the Royal Philharmonic Society. In 1884, she was made an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Music. That same year, she fell ill and died of typhoid in London.

Since 2010, Smith's manuscripts have been housed in the Royal Academy of Music Library. Today, her music is seeing a gradual revival. Her elegant Andante for Clarinet and Orchestra has been recorded by Howard Shelley and the London Mozart Players for Chandos, along with her Symphonies in A and C minor.

The Athenaeum's 1884 obituary, published in full in *Maestros, Original Obituaries of 101 Great Composers*, concludes: "Her forms were always clear and her ideas free from eccentricity; her sympathies were evidently with the Classical rather than with the Romantic school."

—Program note by Maddy Shaw Roberts

Personnel

Text that is bold and underlined is a hyperlink; click or tap for more information.

Renee Gilliland, conductor



Blake Clawson

Blake Clawson is a composer, performer, conductor and educator from the Pacific Northwest. His music weaves contemporary classical, jazz and folk influences into colorful, expressive pieces that captivate listeners. He draws inspiration from poetry and nature, and while choral works on the pensive and Arcadian poems of Sara Teasdale are central to his output, he also writes chamber works that range from scintillating and groovy to introspective and serene.

Clawson has written for and collaborated with a wide variety of ensembles, including the effervescent ~Nois saxophone quartet, who premiered his work *Boomerang* in 2023. Clawson's choral work *Fantasy Arabesque* was selected as the winner of the 2019 Opus 7 Robert Scandrett Memorial Composition Award and was performed in Seattle by Opus 7 Vocal Ensemble, directed by Loren Pontén. His orchestral rhapsody *Matara* was selected as the winner of the 2020 Whitworth University Concerto Competition and was premiered by the Whitworth Orchestra under the direction of Philip Baldwin.

Clawson has studied with Carter Pann and Brent Edstrom, and is currently pursuing a master's in music composition at the University of Colorado Boulder. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in music composition from Whitworth University and has studied at the University of Auckland.



Gracie Fagan (she/her)

As one of the country's youngest emerging multimedia artists, Gracie Fagan experiments with human perception to comment on the intersectionality of identity and pop culture. Fagan combines audio, projection, performance art, theatre and dance to create immersive performances and environments not typically found in the traditional concert hall setting. For her, the inclusion of electronics in traditional acoustic settings is only natural—integrating them together is simply where her creative spirit resides.

Her pieces continue to be selected for showcase in national conferences, including the SHE Festival for Women in Music, Electronic Music Midwest Festival, the International Women Composers Festival of Hartford, the Eugene Difficult New Music Ensemble, and completing a residency with the Walden school. She has received multiple grants to further her work, including the Ida M. Vreeland Award, the Vada Kinmann Oldfield grant for academic and artistic advocacy of minorities, the John Phillips Sousa Band Award and the 2018 Nebraska Young Artist award.



Nicholas A. Felder

Having a passion for community engagement and working with youth, Nicholas Felder creates art that inspires relational bonds between people in a given space. He builds community in artmaking, unlocking truths around self-identity and creating a space for embodied expression. Felder has led arts programs and workshops with El Sistema Colorado, Neutral Zone (Ann Arbor, Michigan), the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and American Composers Orchestra. He loves to encourage teens to express their social and political views through artmaking.

An active composer and collaborator, Felder has had his works performed nationally by ensembles such as the Hawaii Youth Symphony, Mivos Quartet, Kennesaw State University Symphony Orchestra, DC Youth Orchestra Program and University of Michigan Converge Quartet. He recently worked with co-composer Alfredo Cabrera at The School at Marygrove in Detroit on a project called “Sing My Song.” Under the Hampson Foundation’s partnership with the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, and Dance, Felder and Cabrera led workshops to guide a class through writing, recording and producing a song about experiencing and overcoming trauma.

Felder has earned degrees from the University of Michigan and Kennesaw State University and is currently earning a Doctor of Musical Arts in music composition at the University of Colorado Boulder. For more on Felder, find him at nicholasfelder.com.



Ryan Flat

Ryan Flat is a composer, instrumentalist and vocalist studying at CU Boulder. Greatly inspired by the music of movies, television and video games, he embraces musical storytelling and imagery in his writing, often crafting his music in support of a greater narrative and artistic experience. As a performer, he has sung with CU Boulder's chamber singers, Renova New Music Ensemble, and the CU Buffoons: the oldest acapella group at CU. He has also played trombone and percussion in CU Boulder's symphonic and campus bands, and acted as drum major in CU's Golden Buffalo Marching Band. Flat is in his fourth year pursuing undergraduate degrees in music and geology.



Alan Mackwell

Described as “an original composer with new ideas and a command of complex symphonic writing” (BroadStreet Journal), New Zealander-American Alan Mackwell (b.1998) is a BMI award-winning young composer and banjo-player based in Boulder, Colorado. In his work, Mackwell seeks to explore a unique blend of atmospheres inspired by his experiences in the Permian Basin, northern New Mexico and Appalachian North Carolina using a highly resonant and bluegrass-influenced musical language, as well as the utilization of original field recordings and interactive/generative digital interfaces. He earned his BM at the Boston Conservatory, where he studied with John Murphree, Eun Young Lee, Curtis Hughes and Marti Epstein, and earned an MA at Tufts University where he studied with John McDonald and Kareem Roustom. Mackwell is currently pursuing a DMA at the University of Colorado Boulder where he teaches an Intro to Music Technology course.

Mackwell's music has been played on three different continents, and several U.S. states. His compositions have been played by high-achieving groups such as The Philadelphia Youth Orchestra, The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, The Boston Conservatory Contemporary Music Ensemble, Hub New Music and the Corvus Ensemble. He was the grand prize winner of the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra's Inaugural Young Composers' Competition in addition to being a two-time finalist for the Todd Corporation Young Composers' Awards hosted by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Philharmonia Orchestra

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Michael Han
Regina Helgoth
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Gregory Nyberg
Eli Pouliot
David Schwartz
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Sam Nixon

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Bassoon

Larissa Harrison
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Joseph Rupprecht

Trumpet

Colin Terk
Liam Webb

Trombone

Melvin Casillas-
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Carl Enger
Alex Weeks

Tuba

Cameron Mitchell

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Gabe Brownlowe

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