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2024-25



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# Wind Symphony

## Second Nature

Matthew Dockendorf, conductor

Elias Gillespie, graduate conductor

7:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 14, 2024

Macky Auditorium

## PROGRAM

### Spiel für Blasorchester

Ernst Toch (1887-1964)

I. Overture

II. Idyll

III. Buffo

*Elias Gillespie, graduate conductor*

### Transitions

Henry Dorn (b. 1988)

### Intermission

### Traveler

David Maslanka (1943-2017)

### Second Nature

Viet Cuong (b. 1990)

I. Part One

II. Part Two

III. Part Three

*Featuring ~Nois Saxophone Quartet*

# PROGRAM NOTES

## Spiel für Blasorchester

Ernst Toch (1887-1964)

Ernst Toch was interested in the artistic potential of the wind ensemble, and jumped at the opportunity given to him by Paul Hindemith to compose such music for the 1926 Donaueschingen festival. Despite the breadth of his compositional output, which included symphonies, concerti, choral works and music for film, the *Spiel für Blasorchester*, Op. 39, is one of only five works for wind completed by Toch.

*Spiel* is split into three movements: *Overture*, *Idyll* and *Buffo*. The first movement is in a standard A-B-A form in which the A section is marked by mixed meter and bright, articulate melodies, while the B section contrasts with flowing lyricism. The second movement is also in ternary form (A-B-A), and features a prominent oboe solo throughout. The character of the movement is indicative of its name, invoking a peaceful and serene sonic landscape. It is the most romantic of the three movements, harkening back to the musical ideals of the prior musical era, an aesthetic that many other contemporary composers of the time were trying to extinguish.

The last movement is boisterous and playful. Written in sonata form, it carries with it a satirical, almost showman-like quality, somewhat akin to a circus band. The piece is dedicated to Hermann Scherchen, a 20th-century German conductor and champion of contemporary music.

—Program note from the University of Miami Frost Wind Ensemble

## Transitions

### Henry Dorn (b. 1988)

My mother passed in July 2017 from cancer. Her entire life could be summarized as endeavoring against opposition. This was true even right up to the end as she battled the suffocating effects of lung cancer. As I sat in wait with her in the hospital during her final days, I became an active participant in her transition from this life to whatever comes next. It was there that I started to write notes and ideas I felt about the experience, her journey, her unspoken strength and her quiet inner beauty. These sketches, which were too difficult to encompass at the time, were put to the side until I was able to set to paper my thoughts about her final days. This work is for her.

Cancer sucks. There's no nice way to say that. It comes like a thief in the night and enters like a pest, and then it proliferates. Before you know—it's everywhere! I spent a month with my mother in a hospital. She had lost a considerable amount of weight. Someone who always hummed and had melody in heart and could absolutely talk for hours was reduced to a silence, as if held captive as a gagged prisoner. In this work, I try to capture not the beauty we often try to find in the passing of a loved one, but the tumultuous, ravenous nature of this illness. There are moments that are dense and complex, dark and sometimes ugly. A menacing fugal idea that continues to proliferate—much in the way that cancer does. A rising melody like the sound of a ventilator helping to breathe when the body no longer has the capacity to do it on its own. The mechanical sounds of keys clicking and descending and ascending scales like rumbling of hospital equipment. Hint of the *Dies Irae* plainchant pointing to impending demise.

And yet—in all of this—I imagine my mother's gentle spirit. The middle of the piece paints a picture of a still, suspended state. It harkens to my experience in the hospital at night, after all others are gone and all is quiet. The silence disrupted only by the occasional beeps of machinery. I tried to imagine my mother's thoughts and envisioned this state of serenity led by a melody I could see her humming. This was her unspoken strength, still

present in the face of death. This piece again gives way to the chaos of cancer, returning more ruthless than before. The turmoil starts to totally boil over, with all the components of the work bearing down one final time. As a final call of strength, the horns raise their bells to sound my mother's melody (she was, herself, a hornist in school). The eminent [sic] end draws near, but not before a final nod to her and her life.

—Program note by composer

## Traveler

### David Maslanka (1943-2017)

The idea for *Traveler* came from the feeling of a big life movement as I contemplated my friend's retirement. *Traveler* begins with an assertive statement of the chorale melody *Nicht so traurig, nicht so sehr* ("Not so sad, not so much"). The chorale was not chosen for its title, although in retrospect, it seems quite appropriate. The last part of a life need not be sad. It is the accumulation of all that has gone before and a powerful projection into the future—the potential for a tremendous gift of life and joy. And so the music begins with energy and movement, depicting an engaged life in full stride. At the halfway point, a meditative quiet settles in. Life's battles are largely done; the soul is preparing for its next big step.

In our hearts, our minds, our souls  
We travel from life to life to life  
In time and eternity.

—Program note by composer

## Second Nature

Viet Cuong (b. 1990)

The term “second nature” typically describes a skill that, while baffling at first, becomes effortless once mastered. Naturally, *Second Nature* calls for a quartet of saxophonists to tackle the virtuosic demands of the piece and make their efforts look easy. But the virtuosity in their music runs deeper than speedy flurries of notes or sky-high belts. The solo quartet must also play with exacting ensemble coordination as they emulate complex electronic decay effects which, when combined with thumping four-on-the-floor drumbeats, capture the infectious exuberance of house music. If you see the soloists sweat, I hope that it’s at least in some measure because the music inspires them to move. I personally have never danced so much while writing a piece (and fortunately you’ll just have to take my word for it). Written in three unbroken movements, this concerto exudes pure, unbridled joy.

Indeed, when I think about my own nature as a composer, and the affective inclination of my earlier work, it was at first joy. Improvisation at the keyboard, my first childhood foray into composition, was a happy escape from the labors of piano practice. For many years, composition felt like play, and my music was infused with much more whimsy than gravitas. That changed to a great degree in 2020. My compositions, both by intention and the unconscious intrusions of the wider world, became darker and introspective. I had even come to terms with the possibility that my music would remain in this darker place for a very long time. However, with the brightness of its opening and closing C-major chords, *Second Nature* is me finding my way back. In that way, “second nature” is less of a description of something that has become effortless, but rather something which is relearned, an inclination rediscovered—nature, for the second time around.  
—Program note by composer

# PERSONNEL

*Hyperlinks are bold and underlined; click or tap for more information.*

## **Matthew Dockendorf**, conductor

### **Elias Gillespie**, graduate conductor

Elias Gillespie, a Kansas native, is pursuing a master's degree in wind band conducting at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he studies with Matthew Dockendorf. Before his studies in Colorado, Gillespie taught in Lincoln, Nebraska, for five years, where he served as director of bands at Lincoln Northeast High School. During this time, he received the 2022 Nebraska Young Music Educator of the Year award given to one person annually in recognition of outstanding promise in music education in the state of Nebraska. Gillespie received a Bachelor of Music Education in 2018 from Kansas State University. At Kansas State, he was heavily involved in university ensembles and community music-making and served in multiple leadership roles. Gillespie served as president of the Epsilon Pi chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi (National Honorary Band Service Fraternity) and studied conducting with Frank Tracz and trumpet with Gary Mortenson and Rebecca Walenz.



### **Viet Cuong**, featured composer

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, recent projects include a concerto for Eighth Blackbird with the United States Navy Band. Cuong also enjoys exploring the unexpected and whimsical, and he is often drawn to projects where he can make peculiar combinations and sounds feel enchanting or oddly satisfying. His works thus include a snare drum solo, percussion quartet concerto and double oboe concerto. 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 (BM/MM).



## ~Nois Saxophone Quartet

Take your preconceived notions of ‘noise’ and toss them out the window. Equal parts “fiendishly good and fiendishly goofy” (Chicago Tribune), ~Nois is a Chicago-based saxophone quartet dedicated to connecting with diverse audiences through the creation of new work. The ensemble has been awarded top prizes at prestigious chamber music competitions including the M-Prize International Arts Competition, the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and has presented more than 150 performances spanning 24 states. With more than 100 world premieres to date, the members of ~Nois have had the privilege of working closely with some of the world’s leading voices in composition. ~Nois is János Csontos (he/him), Julian Velasco (he/him) and Jordan Lulloff (he/him).

# Wind Symphony

## Flute

Annabell Grba  
Aria Henson  
Paige Michaud  
Sam Nixon  
Santiago Reveiz

## Oboe

Eirian Austeorrian  
Lauren Breen  
Laura Lambrech

## Clarinet

Carson Conley  
Harold Gomez-Montoya  
Kevin Halsey  
Karena Pruitt  
Ben Rathje  
Juan Tovar  
Jade Vens

## Bassoon

Raleigh Eversole  
Daniela Garzon Guerra  
David Guy  
Madison Triplett

## Saxophone

Shannon Donahoe  
Joel Ferst  
Ian Gunnarschja  
Dylan King  
Gavin Martellotti  
Gustavo Olguin  
Catherine Ryan

## Horn

Nate Bonin  
Jaila Carr  
Daniel Skib  
Jordan Spivack  
Danielle York

## Trumpet

Lucca Cidale  
Connor Johnson  
John Laszakovits  
Amy Millesen  
Will Reynolds  
Justin Sokolowski

## Trombone

Abby Burford  
Sam McDiarmid-  
Sterling  
Corey Nance

## Bass trombone

Scott Underwood

## Euphonium

EJ Lee  
Sam Webster  
Ryann White

## Tuba

Anton Akse  
Jared Hartl

## Percussion

Andrew Ferdig  
Lily Manzanares  
Ben McCorrison  
Izzy O'Neill  
Hank Sullivan  
Reese Whitaker  
Alex Yang

## Piano

Bobby Pace

## Double bass

Jacob Kaminski

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