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Photo credit: Owen Zhou.

Wind Symphony

The Blue Marble

Thursday, Nov. 13, 2025, 7:30 p.m.

Macky Auditorium

PROGRAM

Downey Overture

Oscar Navarro (b. 1981)

Transcribed by composer

Lexi Bixler, conductor

Clouds

Asher Dobrin (b. 2004)

Lexi Bixler, conductor

Mothership

Mason Bates (b.1977)

Transcribed by composer

Symphony No. 3

Alfred Reed (1921-2005)

II. Variations on the “Porazzi” Theme of Wagner

Elias Gillespie, conductor

Symphony No. 6 “The Blue Marble”

Julie Giroux (b. 1961)

1. The Big Blue Marble
2. Voices in Green
3. Let There be Life

PROGRAM NOTES

Downey Overture

Oscar Navarro (b. 1981)

Transcribed by composer

Downey Overture is dedicated, with all my affection, to the Downey Symphony Orchestra for its hard work and dedication and, of course, to its conductor, Sharon Lavery, for her professionalism and great passion for music. *Downey Overture* is a Latin-American fusion with which I have wanted to link my birth country, Spain and California, the land that, as a result of the two years I lived there, has left a permanent imprint on my heart. An amalgam of rhythm and musical color wrapped in an atmosphere of dance are the essence of this piece. It is joyful, energetic and written with all my enthusiasm and dedication.

—Program Note by composer

Clouds

Asher Dobrin (b. 2004)

Clouds is a short work for symphonic winds that explores the diverse worlds of its namesake. From the icy, crystalline upper atmosphere cirrus to the dense, turbulent clouds of tropical rainstorms, this piece dives into the vast palette of textures and temperaments of clouds. Through rapidly shifting sonorities and textures, *Clouds* reflects both the transient beauty and immense power of the sky-dwellers. Ethereal, serene and tumultuous. The CU Boulder Wind Band Award commissioned the piece as a result of the 2025-26 departmental awards.

Mothership

Mason Bates (b.1977)

Transcribed by composer

In this energetic piece, *Mothership* imagines the wind ensemble as a mothership that is “docked” by several visiting soloists, who offer brief but virtuosic riffs on the work’s thematic material over action-packed electro-acoustic orchestral figuration.

The piece follows the form of a scherzo with double trio (as found in, for example, the Schumann Symphony No. 2). Symphonic scherzos historically play with dance rhythms in a high-energy and appealing manner, with the “trio” sections temporarily exploring new rhythmic areas. *Mothership* shares a formal connection with the symphonic scherzo but is brought to life by thrilling sounds of the 21st century—the rhythms of modern-day techno in place of waltz rhythms, for example.

Recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra under Michael Tilson Thomas, *Mothership* received its world premiere at the Sydney Opera House and the YouTube Symphony on March 20, 2011, and it was viewed by almost two million people live on YouTube.

—Program note by composer

Symphony No. 3

Alfred Reed (1921-2005)

II. Variations on the “Porazzi” Theme of Wagner

Symphony No. 3 was commissioned in the fall of 1983 by the United States Air Force Band. Work on this score did not begin until February of the following year, when the first sketches were committed to paper and the general plan of the work began to take shape in the composer’s mind. Due to the pressure of previous commitments, however, work on the music proceeded slowly, and the piece was laid aside several times during this period. It was not until the end of 1985 that it could be taken up in earnest, and the final sketch of all three movements completed in September, 1987. The scoring, meanwhile, had begun before the final movement was fully worked out, and was finished in February, 1988. The first performance of the work took place on April 19th, 1988, at the opening concert of the M.E.N.C.’s 150th annual convention, in Indianapolis, Indiana, with the U.S. Air Force Band under the direction of Lt. Col. James M. Bankhead.

The second movement is a freely developed variation form based on what is probably the last piece of music Richard Wagner wrote before his death. Intended as a private, loving tribute to his wife Cosima, it has come to be called the “Porazzi” theme, named after the villa in Italy where the Wagner family had been staying for several months.

—Program note by composer

Symphony No. 6 “The Blue Marble”

Julie Giroux (b. 1961)

Movement 1: The Big Blue Marble. It is often said that the first full image of Earth “Blue Marble,” taken by Apollo 17 in 1972 was the first full picture of the planet Earth. The picture is actually upside down. It happened sometime between 4:59:05 and 5:08:14 hours after Apollo’s launch as they traveled up to 25,000 miles an hour. It is the most reproduced picture in history. It became painstakingly clear to humanity, just how small and vulnerable our one and only home actually is. This movement celebrates that home in a variety of ways; think of it as an abbreviated introduction to planet Earth through music.

Movement 2: Voices in Green. I spent hours simply listening to the recordings of the Amazon jungle by world-renowned sound engineer George Vlad. The recordings were made during the rainy season when humidity is at it’s highest and birds are the most vocal. The sounds transport you into the heart of the jungle which feels incredibly, alive. The exotic calls of the birds and the echos from other birds of the same species, the insects, the frogs and the rain; you can practically feel and smell the rain. The rain forest has it’s own music. The density of growth with every shade of green, is the backdrop for this beautiful, strange opera.

I knew I wanted to write music to those sounds. I composed Voices in the Green with the Amazon jungle sounds playing as my audio backdrop. It influenced every note and phrase. In my mind and heart I was there, adding my voice to theirs. Think of this movement as a concert taking place in the heart of the Amazon Rainforest.

Movement 3: Let There be Life. Violence, death, murder, birth, and life; I wanted to capture that commonality with music in the third and final movement. There is a recurring theme throughout the finale; it evolves, much like life on Earth. It moves through the music, transporting us from one musical setting to the next, ending in a majestic, grandiose way.

The miracle of Earth is life. It is the fragile, silken thread that holds existence together. As with the famous “Blue Marble” photograph, I hope this symphony reminds people just how frail and beautiful Earth is.

I hope *The Blue Marble* fills hearts and minds with a renewed love for our planet, our one and only home. Earth is the one thing we all have in common. It does not belong to us. We belong to it. It is our only home and we should always treat it as such with every generation leaving it healthier and happier than the way they found it.

—Program note by composer

PERSONNEL

Shanti Simon, conductor

Lexi Bixler

Lexi Bixler is a graduate part-time instructor, pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in wind conducting and literature at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Previously, she served for nine years as the Elementary/Middle School director of bands in the Midd-West School District, as well as the assistant director of the Midd-West High School Marching Band in Middleburg, Pennsylvania. Bixler was recognized and awarded by the Midd-West School District as “Internally Motivated” and “Results and Process Oriented.” She was a grant recipient of the Pennsylvania Association of School Retirees in 2018 and 2019, where she utilized the funds for instrument purchases, benefiting students in need.

Bixler holds a Master of Arts in music performance in instrumental conducting and clarinet performance and a Master of Arts in music education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). Bixler also holds a Bachelor of Music in music education from Susquehanna University, where she received the Outstanding Student Teacher Award. Bixler’s primary conducting teachers include Shanti Simon, Timothy Paul, Eric Hinton and Gregory Grabowski.

Outside of conducting/teaching/performing, Bixler is an official in both soccer and girls’ lacrosse.

Elias (Eli) Gillespie

Eli Gillespie is a conductor, educator and scholar pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in wind conducting and literature at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he studies with Shanti Simon. He previously earned a Master of Music in wind band conducting at CU Boulder, studying with Donald McKinney and Matthew Dockendorf, and holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Kansas State University. His development as a conductor has been shaped through extensive study at leading national conducting symposia and through broad experiences in both professional and academic settings.

He has served as a graduate part-time instructor at CU Boulder, where his responsibilities span large ensemble conducting, undergraduate conducting instruction, and leadership within the Golden Buffalo Marching Band. He also serves as assistant director of the CU Summer Music Academy. Prior to his graduate studies, he was director of bands and orchestras at Lincoln Northeast High School in Nebraska, where he was recognized as the 2022 Nebraska Young Music Educator of the Year.

As a clinician and presenter, Gillespie has been active at state and national conferences, with his work also featured internationally at the Cultural Diversity in Music Education Conference in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Gillespie's research and personal interests center on the ways conductors serve as both artists and educators. His work continues to explore how culturally responsive teaching and thoughtful artistry intersect to create meaningful and lasting musical experiences.

Asher Dobrin

Born out of the swamps of North Florida, Asher Dobrin is a young composer, educator, environmentalist, and performer with a thirst for innovation and provocative discussion. Asher Dobrin is a senior this year at the University of Colorado Boulder. His compositions during the last few years here have spanned a wide breadth of ensembles and genres, ranging from folk-inspired chamber music to symphonic works and innovative electronics collections. The tunes often explore intersections between environmentalism, storytelling, and sound. He has also played double bass in chamber music and university ensembles while studying under Susan Cahill. His composition teachers include Annika Socolofsky, Carter Pann, John Drumheller, and Michael Theodore.

Wind Symphony

Flute

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Principal

Santiago Reveiz

Annabell Grba

Andrew Stein

Tim Scott

Oboe

Laura Lambrech

Principal

Luka Vezmar

Thomas Goodwin

Riley Stone

Bassoon

Larissa Harrison

Principal

Raleigh Eversole

David Guy

Grace Moon

Clarinet

Juan Tovar Vargas

Co-principal

Nikhila Narayana

Harold Gomez Montoya

Co-principal

John Petefish

Caden Craig

Ben Rathje

Paige Scott

Steele Jackson

Jade Vens

Alto Saxophone

Spencer Cox

Co-principal

Joel Ferst

Co-principal

Catherine Ryan

Gavin Martellotti

Jack Beatenhead

Tenor Saxophone

Catherine Oles

Elise Luzietti

Baritone saxophone

Dylan King

Eli Ward

Horn

Daniel Skib

Co-principal

Jordan Spivack

Co-principal

Nathan Bonin

Aurora Conroy

Trumpet

William Bryant

Connor Johnson

Principal

Keegan Arnsmeier

Erik Horne

Justin Sokolowski

Amy Millesen

Henry Lesser

John Laszakovits

Trombone

Wesley Shores

Principal

Sam McDiarmid-Sterling

Abby Burford

Edward Wellman III

Jackson Franco (bass trombone)

Euphonium

Sam Webster

Principal

Nathan Kleve

Tuba

Jared Hartl

Principal

Anton Akse

Percussion

Jack Arman

Co-principal

Alex Yang

Co-principal

Hank Sullivan

Reese Whitaker

Jaxon Clough

Tryggvi Holt

Max Adams

Reid Pleuss

Cello

Kate Fornshell

Caleb Seifert

Piano/Celesta

Chirapa Wungkaom

Double Bass

Jacob Kaminski

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Aly Baran

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*The Drowsy Chaperone (2023).
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