

This grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never dried all at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor is ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal dawn and gloaming, on sea and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls.—John Muir

N 2014 WE STARTED AN ONGOING PROJECT IN WHICH WE COMMISSIONED COMPOSERS TO respond to our national parks. We then travelled to these parks and performed the music in the lands that inspired it. To date we have commissioned twenty composers and performed in fourteen national parks. This album is a collection of eleven of those works, as diverse and engaging as the parks they were based on. The music is deeply personal to the composers, who were each commissioned because of their strong connections to our natural environment. With performances in amphitheaters, visitor centers, lodges, and even deep in the wilderness, this music has reached thousands of park visitors and illustrated how incredible landscapes can impact creative artists.

—Bill Ryan, Director, Grand Valley State University New Music Ensemble

#### Red Vesper (2014) by David Biedenbender (b.1984)

The national parks are many things to many people, but for me, they have often been a place to find silence inside of myself. A vesper is an evening prayer, a meditation and reflection at the end of the day, and I found the idea of holding vespers in the wilderness to be profound and beautiful. Red comes from the glow of the evening sun and the beautiful red rock formations in Capitol Reef National Park.

#### Bite the Dust (2016) by Molly Joyce (b.1992)

Inspired by Badlands National Park and its process of rapid erosion, *Bite the Dust* was motivated by geologic formations within the park today and how the formations will eventually erode away. The electronic track represents the "dust" upon which the Badlands were formed upon and which will deteriorate, while the instrumental parts represent the creation of the geologic formations and elements around that. The form of the piece represents this gradual transition, from almost nothing to a very bold and thick texture, and eventually eroding back to its beginning.

#### Firehole Mists (2016) by Rob Deemer (b.1970)

In my research on Yellowstone National Park, I came across the Firehole River and was entranced at the descriptions of the tributary. When I found a number of photographs that show the river enshrouded in mist in the morning, I knew I found the location in the park that I wanted to write about. The instrumentation that makes up the GVSU New Music Ensemble suggested to me a more textural, environmental concept for the piece, and so I wrote the work with that flavor in mind.

## **Heat curls up from the dust** (2016) by Jeff Herriott (b.1972)

Growing up as a flatlands Florida kid, I instantly fell in love with Grand Teton National Park when I visited as a seven-year-old, awestruck by its giant, perfect mountainousness. I returned in my twenties, introducing the majestic Tetons to my wife as part of a cross-country move. When I was invited to compose for this project, the choice of park was easy, and I was delighted to share their wondrousness with my young daughter when we came out for the tour. Heat curls up from the dust attempts to capture a tiny moment, almost frozen, while staring up at the magnificent peaks.

## Dawn Chorus (2016) by Phil Kline (b.1953)

I'm obsessed with birds and their songs, and imagine *Dawn Chorus* beginning in the very early morning of a spring day in the Badlands. As the banded buttes reflect the first glow of a not-yet risen sun, a Western Meadowlark calls and is joined, one by one, by a community of birds from the vast prairie. Sparrows, warblers, thrushes, and thrashers combine to make a din that builds, then retreats and vanishes as quickly as it began, still an hour before daybreak. I based the main motive on contours of the Western Meadowlark's song, dramatically slowed down.

#### Night Sketches (2014) by Ashley Stanley (b.1991)

In 2014 I had the pleasure of packing up my flutes and heading on a national parks tour as a member of the GVSU New Music Ensemble. Before the trip, I became restlessly excited about getting to see the nighttime sky at Arches National Park in Utah. As I composed *Night Sketches*, I imagined lying inside huge cavernous rock structures and looking up at a sky full of glittering active stars. Finally being able to gaze at these skies in person, at 2 A.M. with the ensemble while we discussed life, was a remarkable experience and a highlight of the trip for me.

## Vixen (2016) by Alexandra Gardner (b.1967)

During the early planning stages for this music, the sound of the Vixen geyser's eruption pattern caught my ears. It has a rhythmic, punchy explosion, with a surprisingly mellow, gurgling finish as the water it just spewed out drains back into its crater. I decided to make the shape of the eruption into the form of the musical composition—the first three-quarters of the piece has a driving, relentless pulse punctuated with fits and starts, and then the rhythmic material slams to halt, replaced by gently overlapping layers of extended tones and bubbling trills that slowly disappear into thin air.

#### on the analogical understandings of space (2016) by Paula Matthusen (b.1978)

The practice of animating underground formations with light and evocative names by cave guides is magical. on the analogical understandings of space engages a similar task by exciting resonances of differently sized chambers within Wind Cave. Working this way, the cave becomes a synthesizer, generating tones by producing feedback in its variously sized chambers. Moved one way, a microphone cajoles the sound of a clarinet; moved another direction, a howling wolf arises. The piece draws from these resonances and the ambient noises from entering this acoustically unique environment.

# Wind Cave (2016) by Patrick Harlin (b.1984)

This music starts as if you are exploring the mysteries of Wind Cave National Park. Along the way you encounter sound echoing off the wall, drips from the stalactites rippling in underground lakes, and the intricate crisscrossing veins of minerals known as box work. As the music ends you exit the cave structure and are left with only the faintest soun of wind escaping the entrance. National parks inspire awe, reflection and for me an overwhelming appreciation for the beauty of the great outdoors.

## **Teewinot** (2016) by Betsey Biggs (b.1965)

Teewinot (pronounced TEE-win-aht) is a mountain set within Grand Teton National Park a landscape formed by earthquakes, glaciers, and creatures. *Teewinot*, the piece of music, is a musical ecology of sorts, a bundle of musical possibilities set within a larger structure of events. You might think of it as a sonic time lapse of the history of this land.

#### Canvas the Bear (2016) by Niko Schroeder (b.1994)

My granddad owns a very, very old jeep. Although it's decrepit, terrifying, and nearly nonfunctional, the vehicle still brought great joy to my childhood. One day, racing an afternoon thunderstorm back down the mountains of Yellowstone, my grandad slammed on the brakes to stop short of a hulking bear. The only thing standing between us and the enormous animal was the ancient jeep's rusting frame. The bear meandered on, apparently unbothered by the vehicle's sputtering. I spent many youthful afternoons thinking of that bear. Where does it live? How is it doing? Does it think of me too?

# **Grand Valley State University New Music Ensemble**

Based in Allendale, Michigan, the New Music Ensemble at Grand Valley State University promotes the music of our time through commissions, tours, recordings, educational events, workshops, and videos. Founded in 2006 by their director Bill Ryan, the ensemble not only prepares students for careers that include contemporary music, but also help them become exceptional educators, advocates, and leaders in the music field.

The group has been profiled in numerous publications including Newsweek and the New York Times, and featured on NPR's Weekend Edition, All Things Considered, WNYC's Radiolab, and Performance Today. They have released recordings named to year-end best release lists by the New York Times, NPR, the Washington Post, the LA Weekly, Time Out Chicago, and many others. Their recordings have appeared in film and television shows on MTV, Showtime, at over 75 film festivals around the world, and in movie theaters throughout the United States as part of the soundtrack to the 2015 film As I AM: The Life and Times of DJ AM. Their CD of Steve Reich's Music for 18 Musicians was named one of the top five classical recordings of the decade by WNYC.

The ensemble has completed five tours and performed at major cities and venues throughout the country including New York six times, Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Colorado Springs, Detroit, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Washington DC, and at fourteen National Parks. With awards from New Music U.S.A. and the National Endowment of the Arts, the ensemble has commissioned over 70 compositions from such notable composers as Sarah Kirkland Snider, Zoe Keating, Nico Muhly, Marc Mellits, Anna Clyne, and David Lang.

# Grand Valley State University New Music Ensemble

Bill Ryan: Director
Hannah Donnelly: flutes
Denise Finnegan: clarinets
Karsten Wimbush: saxophones
Wade Selkirk: percussion
Reese Rehkopf: piano
Sarah Dowell: violin
Kevin Flynn: cello
Niko Schroeder: sound engineer

Producer: Bill Ryan
Recording Engineers: Eric Wojahn and Josh Wiechmann at Solid Sound, Ann Arbor, MI
Mixing Engineer: Niko Schroeder
Mastered: Silas Brown at Legacy Sound, New Rochelle, NY
Cover and booklet photos of Arches National Park: Neal Herbert/National Park Service
Interior photos of Yellowstone National Park: Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI)
Design: Jim Fox

Composer commissions supported by the National Endowment for the Arts. Recording supported by New Music USA, made possible by annual program support and/or endowment gifts from the Helen F. Whitaker Fund and The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc.

Thanks to the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff and students at Grand Valley State University; the National Park Service; John Jansen and Ray King, and Néstor Prieto, Tom Farrell, and Blase LaSala.

innova is supported by an endowment from the McKnight Foundation
Philip Blackburn, director
Chris Campbell, operations director
Tim Igel, publicist

For more information on this and other projects visit www.newmusicensemble.com

- Red Vesper David Biedenbender 7:18
- 2 Bite the Dust Molly Joyce 7:49
- 3 Firehole Mists Rob Deemer 7.18
- 4 Heat curls up from the dust Jeff Herriott 7:21
- 5 Dawn Chorus Phil Kline 6:25
- 6 Night Sketches Ashley Stanley 4:41
- 7 Vixen Alexandra Gardner 5:59
- 8 on the analogical understandings of space Paula Matthusen 6:45
- 9 Wind Cave Patrick Harlin 5:53
- 10 **Teewinot** Betsey Biggs 6:40
- | | Canvas the Bear Niko Schroeder 3:56

total: 70:07

Music inspired by Arches, Badlands, Capitol Reef, Grand Teton, Wind Cave, and Yellowstone National Parks.



