

A large, natural rock arch made of reddish-brown sandstone. The arch is the central focus, with a blue sky and white clouds visible through the opening. The rock surface is textured with cracks and shadows.

Grand Valley State University New Music Ensemble

Dawn Chorus  
Music Inspired by Our National Parks

*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*

IN 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.



## 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

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Philip Blackburn, director  
Chris Campbell, operations director  
Tim Igel, publicist

For more information on this and other projects visit [www.newmusicensemble.com](http://www.newmusicensemble.com)

- 1 *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
- 11 *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.

