



**GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY**[®]

**DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC,
THEATRE, AND DANCE**

Lecture Recital of Lesser-Known Composers

Piano Studio of Dr. Helen Marlais

Greetings immediately after performance.

2:30 P.M.

Saturday, March 29, 2025

Sherman van Solkema Recital Hall

Haas Center for Performing Arts

GVSU Allendale Campus

Program

About George Washington Carver (1864 - 1943)

Kaitlyn Besley

Rabbit Foot, and Ticklin' Toes

Florence B. Price
(1887 -1953)

John Foster

Iconoclasm

Michael Abels
(b. 1962)

Ryan Holley-Mallo

Summerland, from Three Visions

William Grant Still
(1895-1978)

Mijeong Lee

Searchlight Rag

Scott Joplin
(1868-1917)

Emma Cornish

Dusk

Nkeiru Okoye
(b. 1972)

Rhonda Clarke

The Bamboula (African Dance), Op. 59, No. 8

Samuel Coleridge Taylor
(1875-1912)

Kaitlyn Besley

BIPOC: an acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This lecture recital is a celebration of composers and music that are often overlooked or neglected.

Kaitlyn Besley is a freshman earning a bachelor's in Business Administration and a Piano Pedagogy Certificate at Grand Valley. Born in Beijing and raised at the foothills of the Tibetan plateau, Kaitlyn was homeschooled with her three younger siblings as her parents pursued missions work in China until 2019. Kaitlyn has loved music her whole life and started piano lessons at seven years old, but was self-taught until she joined Dr. Marlais's piano studio last semester. In 2022, she began teaching another young homeschool girl and has gained students since then. Now, she is thrilled to be learning more at the piano with Dr. Marlais's help and looks forward to improving her piano-teaching skills. In the future, Kaitlyn hopes to continue teaching, use her degree to work for a family business, and someday homeschool her own children.

Rhonda Clarke's musical journey began at the age of 3. Coming from a family of musicians, she has always had an ear and heart for music. She began taking formal lessons at the age of 6, under Billie Alice Bowman in Saginaw, MI. Mrs. Bowman's exposure to Festivals, State testing, Interlochen and so much more provided a foundation for music that has lasted a lifetime. Moving to Jackson in 1989, she continued her musical journey with Gladys Messner in Spring Arbor, MI. During this time, she was the accompanist for many churches and community organizations, as well as the Parkside Middle and Jackson High School choirs and Ensembles. Following high school, she briefly attended Jackson State University, (Jackson, MS) and was an accompanist for the JSU Interfaith chorale, as well as other groups on campus.

With decades of musical experience, she has accompanied numerous soloists, vocal groups and choirs throughout the State of Michigan, most recently serving as a church musician and director of youth choirs in the Grand Rapids area.

In 2023, after an over 25- year hiatus in formal studies, Rhonda enrolled in the Integrative Studies degree program at GVSU and returned to her musical roots, enrolling in the Piano Pedagogy certification program under the tutelage of Dr. Helen Marlais. Her goal is to become a more accomplished musician, and use her passion to share the gift of piano playing with future generations.

Emma Cornish is a junior at GVSU. She is majoring in Communication Sciences and Disorders and just started a minor in music! Emma enjoyed music all through high school, participating in a number of different ensembles using different instruments. After coming to college, Emma realized she missed having music as part of her education. She is very excited to have a chance to continue studying music at GVSU!

John Foster is a junior in high school and is currently studying piano with Mijeong Lee and Dr. Marlais. He has participated in the Michigan Achievement State Piano Finals and earned an honorable mention in 2020. Outside of piano, John has performed in many shows with Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, Circle Theatre, and CARE Ballet. He would like to thank his wonderful family for enabling him to do all of the things he loves!

Ryan Holley-Mallo is studying with Dr. Helen Marlais at GVSU in the Piano Pedagogy Program and is also studying at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point in their Master of Music Program in Piano Pedagogy. Music is a second career for me. I have nearly two decades of experience in Family and Emergency Medicine and I'm board certified in both Family and Emergency Medicine as a Nurse Practitioner. I've been blessed to be able to practice both family and emergency medicine and teach at many different universities. Covid was without a doubt one of the hardest and most challenging times I've endured in my professional career. Throughout the pandemic I did a good deal of soul searching and made the decision to dedicate more time in my life to things that bring me joy! What sustained me throughout practicing medicine during that difficult time was music, my family, and my faith. I have played piano for many churches and previously held positions as Choir Director and Director of Worship Arts. I currently serve as a Church Pianist for St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Greenville, Michigan and am the Artistic Director at Forest Hills Piano Co. in Ada, Michigan.

Mijeong Lee is from South Korea and is currently studying at Grand Valley State University in Michigan with Dr. Marlais. She moved to the U.S. in 2023 after graduating from a respected arts high school in Korea, where she built a strong foundation in music. Deciding to continue her studies in the U.S. was a way for Mijeong to challenge herself and deepen her passion for the piano in a new environment.

In her music career, Mijeong has had several notable achievements. She won the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony Piano Concerto Competition in 2025 and performed Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 2 with the orchestra. In 2024 she placed second in a national competition hosted by the Musicians' Club of Women Awards in Chicago, in the Junior Nerenberg Division. Also in 2025, Mijeong won the Grand Prize and Brilliant Performance Award at the 21st Century Talents Music Competition in Toronto, Canada, third prize in the Artist Group at the American Virtuoso International Music Competition, and is on to the finals of the Grand Prix International music competition in NY, NY.

These successes reflect her dedication and ability to perform at a high level, constantly pushing herself to grow as an artist. She also received the prestigious Grand Rapids Musicians League Zeman Award in 2024, as well as earned an Honorable Mention in the Grand Valley State University Concerto Competition, and won an Upper Division Award at GVSU for performance excellence.

Members of Dr. Marlais' Studio and MTNA Collegiate Chapter:

Kaitlyn Besley, Morgan Braddock, Rhonda Clarke, Emma Cornish, John Foster, Ryan Holley-Mallo, and Mijeong Lee.

For updated information on Music, Theatre, and Dance events, please visit www.gvsu.edu/mtd.

The use of cameras, video cameras, or recording devices is strictly prohibited. Please remember to turn off your cell phones.