



**GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY®**

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

**Greg Secor and Friends
Percussion Collaborations**

**Ft. Dr. Olivia Keiffer, Judy Moonert, Alex Hamel,
and members of the GVSU Percussion Ensemble/Steel Drum Band**

4:00 P.M.
Sunday, March 15, 2026
Louis Armstrong Theatre
Grand Valley State University
Allendale Campus

Program

Nagoya Marimbas (1994) Steve Reich (1936 -)

Alex Hamel

The Fall of the Empire (2007) Frederic Rzewski (1938 -)

Act I: Prologue (text from Thomas Jefferson)

Act VI: Global Warming (text from Frederic Rzewski)

Act V: The Ground (text from Frederic Rzewski)

Mbira Music, Book 1 (1986) Alonzo Alexander (1956–2008)

Thomas Cordes, Zachary Haverkamp

Why Has the Hunter Not Returned? (2008) Joel Harrison (1957 -)

Judy Moonert

Queen of the Band (1970) Slinger Francisco 'The Mighty Sparrow' (1935 -)

GVSU Steel Band

Ramses Arispe, Thomas Cordes, Nate Gruner, Tony Houchens, Ash Martinez-Lopez,
Rainah Petersen, Sharon Secor

Lift Off (1966) Russel Peck (1945-2009)

Zachary Haverkamp, Olivia Keiffer

Program Notes

Nagoya Marimbas is somewhat similar to some of my earlier pieces which I wrote in the 1960s and '70s in that there are repeating patterns played on both marimbas, one or more beats out of phase, creating a series of two-part unison canons. However, these patterns are more melodically developed than my earlier work. They change frequently and each is usually repeated no more than three times, which is more similar to my more recent work. – Steve Reich

Rzewski's *The Fall of the Empire* was written for and premiered by Allen Otte at the Music 07 festival at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. The piece consists of a prologue and seven "acts." Each segment is a percussion solo with text spoken by the performer. The texts are from various and disparate sources including Dickens, Mark Twain, and the composer. Each are set to a single instrument or a small multiple-percussion arrangement; in the latter case the performer chooses the instruments. The work taken in total reflects the different symptoms present in empires (current and throughout history) that crumble and ultimately collapse. The composer has suggested the extracted movements presented this afternoon as a short suite from the hour-long work: Prologue, Global Warming, and The Ground.

Prologue:

Thomas Jefferson: I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that his justice cannot sleep forever.

Global Warming:

Global warming, I don't give a crap about global warming. I only care about my car. Am I getting what I paid for, or am I getting crap? You can't trust anybody, I'll take that back, you can trust some people sometimes, but you don't know who, or when. It happens sometimes, maybe even most of the time. But you can't count on it.

The Ground:

In the beginning there was nothing. Then there was something. Why something and not nothing? Something is work. Nothing is easy. We think we're something. We're nothing.

Everything is like that. When you start something, you never know what's going to happen. Where it's going to end. In whose back yard. The emperor doesn't care what you think. His sights are set lower. He cares about oil, and the ground that you are standing on.

The mbira is a musical instrument traditional to the Shona people of Zimbabwe. It consists of a wooden board or wooden resonator box with attached staggered metal tines. It is played by holding the instrument in both hands and plucking the tines with the thumbs, and sometimes the right and left forefingers. The lowest note is always in the center of the instrument, and the tines alternate, going higher in pitch on either side of the central lowest tone. Because of the use of mostly the thumb to play the mbira, it is

often referred to as a “thumb piano.” Traditional mbira music holds an important place in the culture of Eastern and Southern Africa, being central to many religious ceremonies, weddings, and other social gatherings.

The seed of *Why Has the Hunter Not Returned?* came from a cello solo I was working on. As I probed further, I realized I was working with rhythmic ideas that couldn't be conveyed by a string instrument, so I broadened my concept and began to work with two marimbas. There are two fundamental parts to the piece: the first is a propulsive 11 beat cycle that is shared back and forth between the two players in phrases of varying length. The other is an African-based 12 beat cycle that is more circular and grooving in a conventional sense. The overall form is roughly ABAB. The harmony is largely pentatonic, even bluesy, though there are some chromatic flights. The title is taken from a traditional West African song of the Ewe people, a haunting aeolian melody I learned when studying that music. The words speak of a villager who goes out to hunt for food and does not return. I have tried to summon the feeling of the song and its theme, its drama and excitement. – Joel Harrison

Premiered at the University of Michigan in 1966, Peck's *Lift-Off!* for three percussionists (or more, if added in multiples of three), each playing three drums, including one low bass drum, a medium drum, and a high drum, has earned the status of a “classic” in the percussion ensemble repertoire. The circa 8-minute work is cast in two sections. The first features rhythms with conflicting accent patterns and metric modulation; in the second section, the three percussionists play unison sixteenth notes, eventually beginning a general crescendo that drives the music to a finale.

Performer Biographies

A multi-instrumentalist based out of Grand Rapids, **Alex Hamel** works primarily in theatre—usually playing the role of drummer; he has found recent focus in the world of Actor-Musicianship (where the cast performs all the musical accompaniment.) He has a degree in music from GVSU, and over the years has studied classical percussion and jazz drum set, as well as piano, guitar, cello, music composition, middle eastern percussion and Balinese gamelan.

In addition to theater, Alex has performed in original rock bands, avant-garde improvisation, jazz combos, steel drum bands, and symphony orchestras. He appears on many recordings, notably a critically acclaimed and classical billboard-charting recording of Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* with the GVSU New Music Ensemble. As composer for film and stage, Alex garnered an award from the Kennedy Center's American College Theatre Festival for his incidental score to *A Single Numberless Death*, a play about military juntas in 1970's Argentina.

As bandleader, he produced a live-performance tribute to Miles Davis' jazz-fusion classic *Bitches Brew* with an 11-piece band. Alex toured the nation several times with Grand Rapids-based performance art troupe *Super Happy Funtime*, is a dance accompanist for GVSU and Western Michigan University and operates a recording studio business.

Judy Moonert is a member of the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra and has performed with the KSO since 1981. She is a Professor Emerita at Western Michigan University, serving as Professor of Percussion from 1981-2020. Moonert has performed as a solo and chamber musician throughout the United States and internationally, has performed in China, Honduras, and researched Afro-Cuban music in Cuba. As a member of Coalescence Percussion Duo, she has performed at the 2006 and 2008 Percussive Arts Society Conventions (PASIC), the Players Theatre in NYC, and at the 2011 Festival of Percussion at the National School of Music in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Her performances as percussionist with *Opus 21 - Music Without Boundaries* chamber ensemble include premiers of works by internationally renowned composers in concerts at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, the Knitting Factory, Symphony Space in NYC, and at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Her recordings include *Alternations* with Coalescence Percussion Duo and C. Curtis-Smith's *Gold Are My Flowers* on Albany Records. Moonert has presented a clinic at the 1999 PASIC and adjudicated the 1998 Percussive Arts Society (PAS) Composition Contest and the 2012 PAS High School Percussion Ensemble Competition. Under her direction, the Western Michigan University Percussion Ensemble won the Percussive Arts Society 1998 International Collegiate Ensemble Competition.

Olivia Kieffer is a composer, percussionist, and educator who creates energetic, life-affirming music that blends fantasy and reality. From adventures with toy pianos and slide whistles, to scores for traditional ensembles large and small, her work embraces the ecstatic, the silly, and the heartfelt—seeking to bring joy to uncertain places. Educated at the University of Miami (DMA in Composition), the University of Cincinnati

College-Conservatory of Music, Georgia State University, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, she has held faculty positions at Grand Valley State University and Reinhardt University. As a percussionist at home in both classical and rock worlds, Olivia is a member of smol ensemble, and was previously a member of the Chix with Stix Percussion Group and the bandleader/drummer for Clibber Jones Ensemble.

Greg Secor is currently an instructor at Grand Valley State University where he directs the Percussion Ensemble, the Steelband and teaches courses in music literature. Secor is a member of the percussion section of the Kalamazoo Symphony and performs regularly with the Grand Rapids Symphony. He is active as a steeldrum performer with the Grand Rapids-based Pangea Steelband.

Greg is half of the Coalescence Percussion Duo with Kalamazoo-based percussionist Judy Moonert. In addition, he performs with The Opus 21: Music Without Boundaries Group, The winner of the 2006 Chamber Music America/ASCAP Adventurous Programming Award. The ensemble has performed in Ann Arbor, New York (at Symphony Space, Merkin Hall and The Knitting Factory) and at the Library of Congress. He has performed at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in Austin Texas, Nashville, Tennessee and Columbus Ohio. Secor also keeps an active chamber music schedule with Ensemble Montage, The Saugatuck Chamber Music Festival and at the Michigan Festival of Sacred Music. He also performed and recorded with the GVSU New Music Ensemble on their acclaimed Reich: "Music for 18 Musicians" and Riley: "In C Remixed" recordings on Innova.

Commissions for solo works have been composed by Christopher Deane, Pieter Snapper and Rupert Kettle.

Ramses Arispe is in his third year as a music education major at GVSU. He has been teaching high school percussion for three years and has performed in many states across the country. When he's not making music, he's most likely making food and watching his favorite cartoons.

Thomas Cordes is a current GVSU student pursuing a Bachelor of Music in percussion performance. He especially loves playing the marimba. Additionally, he absolutely loves flamingos, and his wardrobe is full of flamingo related clothing.

Nate Gruner is a sophomore at GVSU and is a returning member in the steel band. He is majoring in Computer Science, and when he isn't studying for exams that may or may not be necessary, he can be found at work, supporting his girlfriend's business, or somewhere in the world rollerblading. Almost 24/7, Nate can always be seen listening to music. His current repetitive genres are Classic Rock, 2000-2010s Pop, Instrumental Coffee House Jazz, and Lofi.

Zachary Haverkamp is a current GVSU student majoring in Music Education. He is an avid bowler and watch collector as well as a heavy metal artist/multi-instrumentalist.

Anthony DeFlon Houchens is a junior at Grand Valley State University. He's composed for the jazz big band, works as a stagehand, and produces music outside of

school. Anthony lives in Washington, D.C. and enjoys travelling across the U.S. and Canada. He can be found living in the city or relaxing at the beach!

Ash Martinez-Lopez is a first-year GVSU student currently majoring in Music Education. He is a percussionist whose favorite instrument is the finger cymbals. Ash was a Mosaic Scholar through the Grand Rapids Symphony for two years and has three cats who are four and five years old. He loves smoothies and the color blue.

Rainah Petersen is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, Broadcasting, and Digital Media. Along with percussion, she also plays bassoon and tenor saxophone. Rainah loves chocolate milk and her golden retriever named Samson.