



MICHAEL ABELS VALERIE COLEMAN ANDRE MYERS PATRICE RUSHEN

CONVERGENCE

WISCONSIN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
ANDREW SEWELL CONDUCTOR

CONVERGENCE is the second year of the five-year, five-album *Musical Landscapes in Color* project for the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra (WCO) that aims to elevate the voices of living diverse composers who are creating music now — for today's audiences. The project was founded in 2023 by the WCO in collaboration with Dr. William Banfield and funded by lead sponsor American Family Insurance, this initiative has allowed the WCO to become part of our community and expand audiences in ways we would have not thought possible prior to this project.

Performed and recorded on October 9th, 2024 in the beautiful Capitol Theater within Overture Center for the Arts in downtown Madison, WI, CONVERGENCE encapsulates the spirit of *Musical Landscapes in Color*. How does music, written and presented today, reflect, inspire, and influence the cultural times we live in and move us to build a stronger, connected society?

At the WCO, we are relentless in our pursuit to break the mold for how orchestras invest in and engage communities, working to be an impactful community-based arts organization, and hoping to inspire audiences of the future — because we believe it's possible to inspire a better community through music.

So, what will orchestras be playing 10, 50, or 100 years from now? Our hope is that CONVERGENCE and all the *Musical Landscapes in Color* albums are part of it. Enjoy. — Joe Loehnis, CEO

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

American Family Insurance, Madison Community Foundation

COMPOSERS

MICHAEL ABELS

VALERIE COLEMAN

ANDRE MYERS

PATRICE RUSHEN

CONDUCTOR

ANDREW SEWELL

ORCHESTRA ROSTER

Violin I

Suzanne Beia+
Leanne Kelso++
Hillary Hempel
Sherri Zhang
Katherine Floriano
Kristian Brusubardis

Violin II

Gerald Loughney*
Timothy Kamps
Anna Carlson
Wes Luke
Xavier Pleindoux

Viola

Nora Frisk*
Diedre Buckley
Janse Vincent
Chris Dozoryst

Cello

Karl Lavine*
Timothy Archbold
Trace Johnson

Bass

Matthew Boothe*
Victor Stahoviak

Flute

Brandon LePage*
Dawn Lawler
Linda Nielsen
Korducki

Piccolo

Dawn Lawler
Linda Nielsen
Korducki

Oboe

Christine Kim*
Izumi Amemiya

English Horn

Andrea Gross Hixon

Clarinet

Bernard Parish*
Laura McLaughlin

Bass Clarinet

Bethany Schultz

Bassoon

Amanda Szczys*
Midori Samson

Horn

Michael Szczys*
Bill Muir
Dafydd Bevil
Sarah Gillespie
Emma Potter**

Trumpet

Matthew Onstad*
Robert Rohlfing
Dave Cooper

Trombone

Michael Dugan*
Jamie Kember
Brian Whitty

Tuba

Tom Curry*

Percussion

Lana Wordel*
Nick Bonaccio
Kevin Kosnik
Jamie Ryan

Timpani

Kent Barnhart*

Piano

Beth Wilson*

Harp

Johanna
Wienholts*

+ Concertmaster

++ Assistant

Concertmaster

* Principal

** Assistant

Composer Notes: Patrice Rushen

FANFARE AND FANTASIE

This piece offers the listener the opportunity to resonate with the emotions of triumph, excitement, and strength alongside the feelings of wonder, whimsy, and imagination. Sometimes for me, thoughts come in organized bursts and at other times in seemingly disconnected spurts. This piece intends to capture that energy, musically. It will be communicated by the colors, voices, and textures of the orchestra.

One of my dreams has always been to compose for orchestra. The richness and multi colors of the orchestra's sound have always been attractive to me. In 1999, I composed my first symphony, *SINFONIA*. I just wanted to experiment with using every part of the orchestra. Up to that point, most of the ensembles I'd written for were smaller. I enjoyed that challenge and learned a lot, but I never thought I'd have the chance to work with a large orchestra... but it was my goal then.

I still have much to learn about this "instrument," the orchestra, as the sounds and possibilities are as intriguing to me as ever. I wish to be as creative as possible with this wonderful "box of colors" to express the many sides of my musical interests. This, too, is part of my journey. It celebrates the love I have for what some would classify as "classical" music... and for me, it's part of a large bouquet of flowers which can be arranged in any number of ways.

"I still have much to learn about this 'instrument,' the orchestra, as the sounds and possibilities are as intriguing to me as ever. "

Composer Notes: Andre Myers

CHANGES

The first iteration of *Changes* was for clarinet quintet. Composed in the winter of December 2004 and January 2005, I wrote the piece to accompany an art gallery opening at the University of Michigan's central campus museum. Andrew Tholl and his new music ensemble, Warped Consort, premiered the piece at a concert celebrating the opening of an exhibition of minimalist art. We were all students back then just trying to make music and wade through the winter.

I was later commissioned to compose an orchestral arrangement of the piece by my friend Nan Washburn for the Michigan Philharmonic. That work, which is what you will hear tonight, was done in the waning months of 2011 and premiered in January 2012.

The best way I know how to describe the piece is to say it draws its energy from autumn and winter, not spring and summer; from soul, not spirit; from yin, not yang. Quiet and contemplative, *Changes* was born from what I love of the harmonic, rhythmic, and aesthetic properties of early process, or "minimalist" music. Folks often think Process Music celebrates repetition, but I believe this music celebrates change. It is a meditation on the beauty change. I hope you enjoy *Changes*.

"It draws its energy from autumn and winter, not spring and summer; from soul, not spirit; from yin, not yang."



Composer Notes: Valerie Coleman

Liner Notes: Dr. Bill Banfield

UMOJA: ANTHEM OF UNITY

In its original form, *Umoja*, the Swahili word for Unity and the first principle of the African Diaspora holiday Kwanzaa, was composed as a simple song for women's choir. It embodied a sense of "tribal unity," through the feel of a drum circle, the sharing of history through traditional "call and response" form and the repetition of a memorable sing-song melody. It was rearranged into woodwind quintet form during the genesis of my chamber music ensemble, Imani Winds, with the intent of providing an anthem that celebrated the diverse heritages of the ensemble itself. Almost two decades later from the original, the orchestral version brings an expansion and sophistication to the short and sweet melody, beginning with sustained ethereal passages that float and shift from a bowed vibraphone, supporting the introduction of the melody by solo violin. Here the melody is a sweetly singing in its simplest form with an earnest reminiscent of Appalachian style music. From there, the melody dances and weaves throughout the instrument families, interrupted by dissonant viewpoints led by the brass and percussion sections, which represent the clash of injustices, racism, and hate that threatens to gain a foothold in the world today. Spiky textures turn into an aggressive exchange between upper woodwinds and percussion before a return to the melody as a gentle reminder of kindness and humanity. Through the brass-led ensemble tutti, the journey ends with a bold call of unity that harkens back to the original anthem. "This version honors the simple melody that ever was, but is now a full exploration into the meaning of freedom and unity. Now more than ever, *Umoja* has to ring as a strong and beautiful anthem for the world we live in today."

"Now more than ever, Umoja has to ring as a strong and beautiful anthem for the world we live in today."

"How does the music contribute to the world in which we live today?"

When you begin to hear the music on this collection of dynamic composers — long-time colleagues and friends of mine — and ensemble, the one thing that clearly comes to mind is; this is arts convergence. That happens when wonderful things come together in music to form a new whole set. There is in fact a correlation, an intersection, and the results are a blending, coalescing, and a mingling mix that has meaning and that matter.

We begin our journey by reflecting on the gathering of composers live, mostly to talk about the overall project — *Musical Landscapes in Color* — and the value and importance of growing up in the culture of music and what it meant. How does the music contribute to the world in which we live today? The composers met to speak to the community before the live concert recording. They gave talks and seminar meetups at the University of Wisconsin — Madison, connecting with community groups like the UW Odyssey Project. On concert night, the composers hosted two pre-and-post-concert discussions with the audience. This level of community engagement with a concert and living composers is rarely done in this capacity, adding to the flavors of the musical feast.

CONVERGENCE gives us the full measure of great music that leaves you joy filled, wonderstruck, and artfully emerged in what we want to expect from the best of our musical journeys.

Dr. Bill Banfield

Composer Curator, Musical Landscapes in Color | 2024
WCO Composer in Residence | 2021–2024

Read more: wcoconcerts.org/convergence-banfield

Composer Notes: Michael Abels

NOPE FILM SUITE

Nope is Jordan Peele's most ambitious film to date. It focuses on humanity's fascination with spectacle, even when that fascination threatens our common sense and personal safety. The story is set in Hollywood — that American shrine to spectacle — where a brother and sister from a family of horse trainers for media productions attempt to capture evidence of aliens using techniques they've learned in the business. The result is a work that is part family drama, part science fiction adventure, part horror film, and part Western. The score touches on all these genres and provides some connection between them.

"The Run" captures the excitement of riding a horse at full gallop through a scenic valley, while being chased by a giant flying alien that intends to swallow you whole. "A Hero Falls" begins with a solemn moment between two siblings before one of them turns to face death to save the other's life. "Pursuit" is another chase, this time on a motorcycle, leading to an exciting climax. And the final movement, "Nope," is an homage to classic Westerns, as the dust on the horizon lifts to reveal the hero, still on horseback.

GLOBAL WARMING

Global Warming was written in 1990, at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Cold War was ending, and there was a warming of relations between east and west. I was very interested in folk music of other cultures, and was noticing similarities between music of certain cultures from different corners of the world. I had also become aware of a phenomenon called "global warming" which at the time was considered a scientific observation rather than a political talking point. I decided to write a piece that explored musical cultural similarities and used the title "Global Warming" as a play on words to represent that.

The majority of the piece is quite joyful. It bursts with melodies, rhythms, and harmonies derived from folk music. But this joy is preceded by a more stark, somber depiction of a desert scene, a true global warming tableau as predicted by climatologists. And rather than ending joyfully, the piece suddenly returns to the desert scene at its conclusion. My thought at the time was to ask the question, "Which kind of global warming do we want to see in our world?" 30 years later, the question remains.

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ANDREW SEWELL, MUSIC DIRECTOR

In 2024, Andrew Sewell entered his 25th season as Music Director for the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra and 8th season with the San Luis Obispo Symphony on California's central coast. A conductor in demand, he has successfully built the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra into a regional and nationally known ensemble. In California, he has inspired the central coast community with exhilarating performances at CalPoly's Performing Arts Center in San Luis Obispo.

During his tenure with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Maestro Sewell has raised the orchestra to new artistic heights, expanded the repertoire, and provided new experiences for the audiences through innovative and adventuresome programming. In March 2024, the WCO released *HARMONY IN BLACK*, the first album of a five-year recording project, *Musical Landscapes in Color*.

Maestro Sewell has served previously as Music Director of the Wichita Symphony (2000–2010), Mansfield (OH) Symphony (1997–2002), Resident Conductor of the Toledo Symphony (1995–2000), and Assistant Conductor of the Memphis Symphony (1994–1995). As a guest conductor, he has led the Toronto, Detroit, Milwaukee, Florida, Columbus, Toledo, Syracuse, Illinois, Monterey, Gulf Coast, and Eugene Symphony Orchestras as well as the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia, Christchurch Symphony, Dunedin Symphony, National Symphony of Mexico, Kyushu Symphony (Japan), City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong, OK Mozart Festival, Peninsula Music Festival (WI), and Masterworks Festival, Spartanburg (SC).

A native of New Zealand, Maestro Sewell received his music training on the violin, piano, and cornet, and began conducting at age 16. Six years later, he made his professional opera debut with the Mercury Opera and the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra. Winning the Australian Guarantee Corporation's Young Achievers Award allowed him to further his studies abroad. Sewell holds a Master of Music degree with Honors in Conducting from the University of Michigan.

In 2017, he was awarded the Service to Music Award from the Association of Wisconsin Symphony Orchestras and in 2013, the Rabin Youth Arts Award for Individual Achievement by the Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestra, for his services to youth and education. He and his wife, Mary, live in Madison, WI.



WE CREATE SOMETHING SPECIAL.

Founded in 1960, the orchestra is built on a foundation of quality musicianship with top-tier musicians. As a smaller ensemble, we're able to showcase music at an intimate level, providing attendees with a unique experience. Under the direction of Maestro Andrew Sewell, we make classical music accessible to our community from concert halls to Madison's Capitol Square, reaching over 250,000 music lovers annually.

We are driven in our mission to strengthen communities through innovative, high-quality artistic experiences that entertain, inspire, and unite diverse audiences, and we strive to create a vibrant and inclusive space where music creates a sense of togetherness and connection. No other arts organization in Wisconsin performs free for more people each year.

Why? Because we believe you can inspire a better community through music.

To learn more visit wcoconcerts.org.



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Session Engineers **Buzz Kemper & Audrey Martinovich**

Editing/Mixing **Buzz Kemper & Audrey Martinovich**

Mastering **Audrey Martinovich**

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