



College of Music
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

MSU Concert Orchestra

Spotlight and Spirit

Katherine Kilburn, conductor
Daniel Jaggars, guest conductor
Zongheng Zhang, guest conductor

Concert Orchestra Concerto Competition Winner
Nolan Livingston, flute

Thursday, February 26, 2026
Cobb Great Hall, Wharton Center, 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

- Vitality Gala Flagello
(b. 1994)
Zongheng Zhang, conductor
- Adoration Florence Price
(1887-1953)
arr. Thomas Taylor Dickey
Daniel Jaggars, conductor
- Fantaisie pastorale Hongroise, Op. 26 Franz Doppler
(1821-1883)
Nolan Livingston, flute
Katherine Kilburn, conductor
- Symphony No. 1, "Afro-American Symphony" William Grant Still
(1895-1978)
Moderato assai - Longing
Adagio - Sorrow
Animato - Humor
Lento, con risoluzione - Sincerity
Katherine Kilburn, conductor

PROGRAM NOTES

Vitality (2022) was written for the Aspen Conducting Academy 2022 orchestral readings and was inspired by a quote by Martha Graham: “There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening, that is translated through you into action and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and will be lost.” Graham begins in celebration of discovery and hope (the what), then reflects upon the process (the how), and closes with a warning (the why). The piece loosely follows this structure, musically exploring the prickly and potent glimmers of one’s life force alongside the uncertainty of self-expression and vulnerability.

Adoration – The rediscovery of Florence Price’s music in 2009 stands as one of the most extraordinary musical recoveries of the 21st century. While renovating an abandoned home in Illinois, a family uncovered more than 200 of Price’s manuscripts—scores and papers that had remained untouched for over fifty years. This remarkable find renewed interest in a pioneering American composer whose legacy had nearly slipped into obscurity.

Born in 1887 in Little Rock, Arkansas, Price demonstrated exceptional musical ability from a young age. Despite facing the harsh racial and gender barriers of the Jim Crow South, she excelled at her studies and later attended the New England Conservatory, majoring in organ and piano pedagogy. Although she once dreamed of becoming a doctor, Price later wrote that the limitations imposed on her because of her race and sex pushed her toward devoting herself fully to music. After her marriage in 1912, she returned to Little Rock, but increasing racial violence—including a lynching in 1927—prompted her family to relocate to Chicago.

Chicago became the center of her artistic life. Immersed in the thriving Black Renaissance, Price flourished as a composer, organist, and teacher. After divorcing in 1931, she supported her two daughters while continuing to compose prolifically. Her major breakthrough came in 1933 when the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performed her *Symphony No. 1 in E minor*, making her the first African American woman to have a symphonic work performed by a major U.S. orchestra.

Among the works rediscovered in 2009 was *Adoration*, composed in 1951 for organ. While little is known about its original purpose, the piece reflects Price’s characteristic fusion of Romantic lyricism

PROGRAM NOTES

with the warmth and expressive sincerity of African American spirituals. Its three-part structure unfolds with gentle, hymn-like serenity, suggesting quiet devotion. Since its rediscovery, *Adoration* has been arranged for numerous ensembles—including the string-orchestra setting by Thomas Taylor Dickey—allowing audiences once again to experience the graceful voice of a composer whose contributions continue to resonate.

Fantaisie pastorale Hongroise – Albert Franz Doppler was born in 1821 in Lemberg, Austrian Empire, which is now recognized today as Lviv, Ukraine. He was trained as a flautist by his father, and by age 13, he and his brother, Karl Doppler, formed a flute duo together. The duo gained orchestra membership to the German Theater, Budapest, in 1838, and the Hungarian National Theater in 1841. Franz Doppler grew to success in his lifetime, becoming the first flautist in the opera in Budapest, and later became the chief conductor of the Vienna Court Opera. From 1864–1867, he was a Professor of Flute in the Vienna Conservatorie. He died in 1883. Throughout his life, Doppler composed pieces mostly for the flute, such as operas, ballets, concertos, solos, and duets. During his lifetime, his music was incredibly popular, and he was a very successful orchestrator. Much of his music was inspired by Russian and Hungarian folk music.

The context of some of Doppler's works have been lost to time. Such is the case with *Fantaisie pastorale hongroise*. Originally written for solo flute and piano, the concerto has been arranged for an orchestral accompaniment. Translated from French, the title means "Hungarian Pastoral Fantasy". It incorporates some of the Hungarian sounds Doppler enjoyed working with, as well as a rather operatic performance style, which is not surprising given his history of composing operas. The solo flute demonstrates complexity, drama, and skill through the piece. *Fantaisie pastorale hongroise* is noted to be for advanced flautists, and is often regarded as a standard in flute repertoire.

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

When the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra premiered William Grant Still's *Symphony No. 1, "Afro-American"* in 1931, it marked a historic milestone: the first symphony by an African American composer to be performed by a major U.S. orchestra. It quickly became one of the most frequently performed American symphonies of its time. Scored for full orchestra with the evocative colors of celeste, harp, and banjo, the work weaves blues progressions, jazz-inflected rhythms, and African American spiritual traditions into a classical four-movement form, creating a sound world uniquely its own.

The opening movement, *Moderato assai*, which Still labeled "Longing", introduces the symphony's principal themes with gentle lyricism and expressive surges. Its blues-tinged melody suggests both contemplation and emotional yearning. Each movement of the symphony is linked to verse by poet Paul Laurence Dunbar; for this movement, Still referenced Dunbar's poem "Twell de Night Is Pas", underscoring the atmosphere of quiet anticipation.

The second movement, *Adagio*, titled "Sorrow", transforms earlier thematic material into a more spiritual, introspective mood. Its slow, hymn-like lines reflect a deep melancholy. Dunbar's "W'en I Gits Home" accompanies this movement, reinforcing its sense of reflection and longing for peace.

With the third movement, *Animato*, Still shifts into vibrant motion. Nicknamed "Humor", it bursts with rhythmic vitality and bright orchestral color, prominently featuring the banjo. A playful, dance-like energy propels the movement, and some listeners hear a nod to the popular jazz idioms of the early 1930s. The accompanying Dunbar text, from "An Ante-Bellum Sermon", evokes spirited celebration and resilience.

The finale, *Lento, con risoluzione*—"Aspiration"—opens in a reverent, hymn-like atmosphere, revisiting earlier motifs with renewed purpose. After passages of solemnity, the music surges into a powerful, uplifting conclusion. Still pairs the movement with lines from Dunbar's "Ode to Ethiopia", an anthem of pride and triumph. In this final gesture, the symphony rises from reflection to radiant affirmation, embodying Still's vision of hope and cultural dignity.

ARTIST-FACULTY BIO

Award-winning conductor **Katherine Kilburn** has conducted in music halls all over the U.S. and in Europe. She has served as Assistant Conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra, the El Paso Opera, the Hot Springs Music Festival, the Bowling Green State University Philharmonia, and the St. Louis Symphony Chorus. She was Conductor of the Interlochen Arts Academy Wind Ensemble, Music Director and Conductor of the Greater New Haven Youth and Chamber Orchestras, and Conductor of the Rhode Island Philharmonic Youth Repertory Orchestra. She has guest-conducted the Mansfield Symphony Orchestra, the Lawrence University Symphony Orchestra and Opera Theater, the Green Bay Symphony, Ensemble X, Cleveland Opera Theater, and the Baldwin Wallace Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Kilburn assisted Sir Simon Rattle for performances of *Peter Grimes* at the Salzburg Easter Festival and toured with world-renowned clarinetists David Shifrin and Alexander Fiterstein. She has conducted numerous world and U.S.A. premieres and has conducted in the Cabrillo Music Festival, the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music Festival, the Philadelphia International Music Festival, and the Sewanee Summer Music Festival. Ms. Kilburn has been on the faculty of Cornell University, Kent State University, and Baldwin Wallace Conservatory, and is now Assistant Director of Orchestras at Michigan State University.

STUDENT BIOS

Zongheng Zhang is a first-year Doctoral student in Orchestral Conducting at Michigan State University, studying under Professors Octavio Mas-Arocas and Kathrine Kilburn. He holds a Master degree in Orchestral Conducting from UT Austin, where he served as Assistant Conductor for the UT Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the UT University Orchestra. Zhang has worked with Austin Opera, Butler Opera Center, and Berlin Opera Academy. He has conducted operas such as *La bohème* and *Carmen*, and premiered *Le falcon* by Dmitry Bortniansky in 2024. From 2016 to 2021, Zhang was Concertmaster for The Orchestra Now and Bard Conservatory, collaborating with renowned conductors.

Daniel Jaggars is a Master student in Orchestral Conducting at Michigan State University. A student of Professors Octavio Mas-Arocas and Katherine Kilburn, Daniel serves as Assistant Conductor for the MSU Symphony Orchestra and MSU Concert Orchestra. He holds a Bachelor degree in music from the University of Nebraska, Omaha, where he studied conducting with Miguel Harth-Bedoya. Additionally, Daniel studied clarinet at Ithaca College with Dr. Richard Faria. He has attended several workshops with renowned conductors and performers, studying symphonic, operatic, and chamber repertoire. He is immensely grateful for the numerous people who have made his journey in music possible.

Nolan Livingston is a sophomore from Monroe, MI, majoring in chemical engineering and minoring in music. He is a tour guide for MSU as well as a member of the MSU Solar Racing Team and Triangle Fraternity. Nolan has been playing music all his life, since his dad started playing piano with him at age 4. When not practicing or doing homework, he is either walking somewhere to do one of those two things, or playing with his microscope. Nolan thinks playing this piece with the orchestra is a dream come true, and it is one of his very favorites. He loves how expressive and imaginative the piece is, and hopes anybody listening likes it even more.

PERSONNEL

Violin I

**Jessica Yang, Nursing
Leah Tantengco, Human
Resources Management
Michael Salem, Psychology
Sarah Saado, Computer Science
Joseph Findley, Psychology
Sarah Pecis, Integrative Biology
Sherry Hu
Kai Jeong, Mechanical
Engineering
Samantha Lang, Human Biology
Kate Carson, Microbiology
Madelyn Corgan, English
Maya Stackable, Social Work
Sofia Lamerato, Integrative
Biology

Violin II

*Jennifer Choe, Business
Ana Ivanov, Biochemistry
Drake Johnson, Electrical
Engineering
Kiersten Crosby, Psychology
Madelyn Corgan, English
Michael Barger, Computer
Engineering
Noah Walter, Music Performance
Wren Thomas, Political Theory
and Constitutional Democracy
Olivia Husek, Exploratory business
Josie Fillman, Chemistry
Bre Vermeulen, Biomedical Lab
Science
Lara Rassam, Biochemistry

Viola

*Mio Hogan, Environmental
Biology/Microbiology
Devyn Yang, Packaging
Corryn Bottenfield, Mathematics
Josh Hamilton, Chemical
Engineering
Drake Howard, Linguistics
Ife Ayoola, Digital Storytelling

Viola (cont.)

Anna Schneider, Neuroscience
Ryan Peoples, Chemical
Engineering
Michael Nardi, Zoology
Alicea Sommerville, Human
Biology
Gerik Wolak, Actuarial Science

Cello

*Griffin Siersma, Physics
Tristen Olsson, Physics
Ruby Ricker, Music Education
Zach Bickell, Biochemistry/
Molecular Biology
Abigail Krent, Horticulture &
Molecular Plant Sciences
Alex Cross, Physics
Katherine Ganazer,
JJ Bird, Entomology
Madeline Benson, Chemical
Engineering
Emma Riggs

Bass

*Melody Broski-Laing, Community
Psychology
Colette Walraven, Veterinary
Nursing
Adam Albanese, Biochemistry
Will Sutton, Physics
Faith Thomson, Computer
Engineering
Eva Roos,
Tierra Durham
Robin Bernard

Flute

Sophie Aguas, Supply Chain Mgmt
Adam Josef, Music Composition
Nolan Livingston
Tiffany Rennells, Neuroscience/
Data Science

PERSONNEL (cont.)

Oboe

Theising Davis, Mechanical Engineering
Calvin DeJong, Data Science
Jackie Russell, Political Theory & Constitutional Democracy
Cameron Storey, Music Theory

Clarinet

Chris Dhespollari, Accounting
Solomon Makonnen, Neuroscience
Rylan McCurdy, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology

Bassoon

Evan Dietrich, Finance
Eric Hall

Horn

James Ayerst
Owen Bostater, Secondary Education-Math
Piper Ryan, Music Performance
Jonah Weber, Music Composition

Trumpet

Christopher Bertulfo, Business
Nathan Emeott, Computer Science
Taylor Robison, Psychology
Charisse Ujlaky, Music Performance
Matthew Gagea, Biochemistry,

Trombone

Evan Casto
Brody Keeley, Urban and Regional Planning
Nicholas Simonelli, Comparative Cultures and Politics
Olivia VanHouten Computer Science

Tuba

Josh Pope, Game & Interactive Media

Percussion

Jack Briggs, Business Exploring
Nathan Chou, Exploratory
Tristan Gras, Computer Science
Sasha Headley
Jared Reilly
Michael Schlosser, Zoology
Alex Walters, Social Relations and Policy
Catherine Lee, Section Coach

Harp

Ryan Johnston, Music Composition

Piano

Yingyi Xu

Banjo

Evan Gedert

Librarians

Aaron Longuski, Music Perf.
Tadan Baartz-Bowman, Music Perf

Assistant Conductor

Daniel Jaggars
Zongheng Zhang

Concert Orchestra Student Association (COSA)

Matthew Gagea, President, Poster Chair
Tiffany Rennels, Vice President
Theising Davis, Treasurer
Solomon Makonnen, Media and Design Officer
Sophie Aguas, Social Events Officer
Zach Bickell, Outreach Officer, Live Stream Chair
Josie Fillman, Program Notes Chair
Lara Rassam, Social Media Chair, Live Stream Chair

** Denotes Concert Master

* Denotes Principal

TEXT

Symphony No. 1 “Afro-American Symphony”

Longing

All de night long twell de moon goes down,
Lovin' I set at huh feet,
Den fu' de long jou'ney back f'om de town,
Ha'd, but de dreams mek it sweet.
All my life long twell de night has pas'
Let de wo'k come ez it will,
So dat I fin' you, my honey, at las',
Somewhah des ovah de hill.

Sorrow

It's moughty tiahsome layin' roun'
Dis sorrer-ladden earfly groun',
An' oftentimes I thinks, thinks I,
'T would be a sweet t'ing des to die,
An' go 'long home.

Humor

An' we'll shout ouah halleluyahs,
On dat mighty reck'nin' day.

Sincerity

Be proud, my Race, in mind and soul,
Thy name is writ on Glory's scroll
In characters of fire.
High 'mid the clouds of Fame's bright sky,
Thy banner's blazoned folds now fly,
And truth shall lift them higher.

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