

Lights in an Empty Room

Student Recital

Chris Wells, Percussion

Friday, April 24, 2026

7:00 PM

Kirmser Hall, Kansas State University

PROGRAM

Lavender Fields (2020).....Gary William Griffith

Kids These Days... (2022).....Brian Blume
(b.1985)

a cricket sang and set the sun (2006).....Blake Tyson
(b.1969)

Southern Gothic (2023).....Jason Baker
(b.1976)

Nalu (2015).....Francisco Perez
(b.1990)

Chris Wells, Devon Autry, Jessi Solorzano, Jessie Whelan, marimbas

Mehrân (2015).....Mark Berry
(b.1972)

The Ghosts of Bonneville (2016).....Benjamin Finley

Strive to be Happy (2014).....Ivan Trevino
(b.1983)

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Lavender Fields

Lavender Fields is an atmospheric solo piece for marimba, composed by Gary William Griffith. The piece is made up of an approximation of improved rhythms and variations. The inspiration that Griffith had for this piece was to express what it's like to have a feeling toward a very special person.

“In a few words, *Lavender Fields* is what my heart sounds like. This is the only real voice that can give it.” - Gary William Griffith

Lavender Fields is about several things, but most importantly it is about one very special person. It is larger about the following nature of what it is like to have someone deep in your heart. This entire piece of music ebbs and flows through every measure like the graze running over a field.

Kids These Days...

Kids These Days... is a rudimental snare solo with an electronic backing track. While the piece may sound very chaotic, it showcases the nature of how children will jump from one thing to another without reason, transitions, or warnings while also leaving a trail of destruction behind. Though the title of the piece sounds like the typical phrase to lament the younger generation, Blume flips it and uses it as a playful take on the phrase.

Whether as a performer, composer, or educator, it is Brian Blume’s passion to connect with audiences and students through the art of percussion. In 2020, Blume won a position with the United States Army Band “Pershing’s Own” in Washington, D.C. In his role with the Ceremonial Band, he serves his country through supporting high-profile ceremonies and events in the national capital region. He has performed for multiple U.S. presidents, as well as other American and foreign dignitaries. Blume also performs regularly as a soloist, chamber musician, orchestral player, and studio percussionist, and has performed with groups such as the Orlando Philharmonic, Imperial Symphony Orchestra, Carmel Symphony Orchestra, Terre Haute Symphony Orchestra, BluHill Percussion Duo, the Indianapolis Colts Drumline, and Glassmen Drum and Bugle Corps.

a cricket sang and set the sun

a cricket sang and set the sun is a marimba piece written by composer Blake Tyson. Tyson's origin of the title is from an Emily Dickinson that starts with the same phrase. *a cricket sang and set the sun* is a beautiful, lyrical piece for solo marimba. The opening passages of the piece ebb and flow and create a very reflective mood.

“This work takes its title from an Emily Dickinson poem that begins, ‘The cricket sang, and set the sun.’ When I read these words, I was moved by the powerful ideas they evoked. It was not just the image of a beautiful and slowly shifting sunset that struck me, but the idea that something so small could affect something so large, that a cricket's song could transform day into night. Although the piece is not directly based on the poem, I have tried to capture the sense of fascination, inspiration and beauty that these opening lines create.” ~Blake Tyson

Southern Gothic

Southern Gothic is a multi-percussion piece written by Dr. Jason Baker in 2022. Baker's piece was influenced by the literary tradition of the American South among various authors such as Thomas Wolfe and Michael Farris Scott. This piece involves a mix of both traditional percussive instruments along with “found” implements. While the piece creates a haunting, troubled and disturbed tone, I selected this piece because when I would travel with my drumline, back in high school, I felt the same way when I traveled through certain areas in my home state of Kansas. The eerie feeling of traveling through a small town in Kansas could be interpreted greatly through this piece.

Jason Baker serves as Professor of Music and Percussion Area Coordinator at Mississippi State University. He holds degrees from the University of North Texas, New England Conservatory of Music, and University of Connecticut. His current performance interests focus on commissioning solo percussion music by emerging composers from the American South. Jason has commercially released four solo albums, three etude books, and over 30 arrangements and compositions - many of which are included on solo and ensemble music lists throughout the United States. His works have been performed at the Modern Snare Drum Competition, Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, Kaohsiung Band Festival in Taiwan, and the Percussive Arts Society International Convention.

Nalu

Nalu is a marimba quartet written for four players on two marimbas. In the Hawaiian language, the word “nalu” stands for wave, in reference to those in the waters surrounding the islands of Hawaii. By counterpoint, syncopation, hocket, and hints of minimalist techniques, *Nalu* emulates the varying moods and textures of these ever-changing waves in the Pacific. Though this work’s contrasting sections intend to portray the many states of the ocean’s waters, one notable memory from his trip in 2013 and his fascination for the beauty of nature shaped the beginning and ending of *Nalu*.

As an active composer, Francisco is privileged to have a wide variety of published works with several ensemble commissions from the University of Kentucky, Texas Christian University, Northwestern State University, University of Texas at Arlington, as well as solo commissions for a variety of artists throughout the US. His works have been performed at The Midwest Clinic, the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, the Texas Music Educators Association convention, and are published by Tapspace Publications and C. Alan Publications.

Mehterân

Mehterân (Māte’rân) by Mark Berry explores the history of the Janissary Corps. The “Janissaries” were infantry soldiers of the Ottoman Empire. Their music is considered to be the oldest form of marching military music in the world. Their bands were known as mehterân.

This piece draws influence from both the music of the Janissaries and their life experience in a historical context. The ominous sounds of their percussion—the *kös*, the *nakkares*, the *davul*, and the *çevgen*—are all evoked from the timpanist. Loosely programmatic, the seven movements of this work portray musically the historic military conflicts fought by the Janissaries, exploring both victory and defeat. The music of the mehterân influenced European composers such as Ludwig van Beethoven, Josef Haydn, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The modern timpani used in Western music today are descended from instruments used by the Janissary Corps’ mehterân.

The Ghosts of Bonneville

Written by Benjamin Finley, and dedicated to a good friend, *The Ghosts of Bonneville* was inspired by the Great Salt Lake and the surrounding basin in northern Utah. The area was once part of a prehistoric inland area called Lake Bonneville. Until the lake overflowed and evaporated, the Lake was once known to have stretched from parts of Nevada and Idaho. This piece has been an experience to learn as it calls for a very strong use of octave accuracy and additional attention to the dynamic shading.

Originally from Searcy, Arkansas, Benjamin Finley earned the Doctorate of Musical Arts in Percussion Performance from the University of Texas at Austin, studying with Thomas Burritt, Tony Edwards, and Brannen Temple. Prior to his appointment at East Central University, he served on the faculty of Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas. In addition, Benjamin was the director of the marching percussion program at the University of Texas from 2003 to 2005, coordinating and teaching the drum line of the Longhorn Band.

Dr. Finley served as percussion caption head of the Delta Brigade Drum and Bugle Corps in 2000 and competed at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention Snare Drum Individuals from 1999 to 2001. As an adjudicator/clinician/arranger, Benjamin has worked with several schools in the Austin/San Antonio area, as well as Texas State University, and has given clinics in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Idaho, and Missouri. Benjamin also holds a Master's of Music from the University of Central Arkansas, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Music Education from Arkansas Tech University. His additional teachers include Blake Tyson, Phil Parker, and Gilbert Baker.

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Strive to be happy

Written as a dedicated solo to a friend, Ivan Trevino wrote this piece as a response to the prose poem “Desiderata” written by American writer Max Ehrmann.

And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy. (Max Ehrmann)

As written in his bio, Ivan Trevino is a Mexican-American composer, percussionist, teacher, and arts advocate. Recognized around the world for his contributions to percussion literature, Ivan’s music has been performed across five continents in 25 countries. His music distinctly threads indie-pop sounds with a contemporary classical aesthetic, and his body of work spans storytelling, singing marimba players, cello rockers, and an ever-present social consciousness. His newly commissioned works include music for The San Diego Symphony Orchestra, The Juilliard School, and Grammy-winning quartet, Third Coast Percussion. He is a multi-award recipient of the Percussive Arts Society’s International Composition Contest and has been the featured composer and performer on NPR’s *Performance Today*.

An active educator, Ivan serves on the faculty of the Butler School of Music at The University of Texas at Austin, where he joyfully teaches a studio of undergraduate and graduate percussionists and music creators. Ivan received the 2024-2025 Teaching Excellence Award from Butler School of Music for his contributions to student learning and teaching innovation. In 2025, he was appointed Fellow to the Florence Thelma Hall Centennial Chair in Music, an honor recognizing creative excellence in the field of contemporary classical music.

I chose to program this piece because it has been a piece that has stayed with me since high school and has accumulated some sentimentality. It has always been a piece that resonates with me both musically and emotionally. Whether I feel like the world is caving in on me, or when I feel as if my skills aren’t up to my standard, I can always turn to this piece to bring me back to a place of comfort and to continue to strive to be happy.

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