

Senior Recital  
**Chase Keesling, Tuba**

**December 14, 2025**

**3:00pm**

**All Faiths Chapel, Kansas State University**

PROGRAM

*Suite no.1 (Effie's Suite)*.....Alec Wilder  
(1907-1980)

- III. Effie Takes a Dancing Lesson
- II. Effie Falls in Love
- V. Effie Goes Folk Dancing
- VI. Effie Sings a Lullaby

Amanda Arrington, piano

*Songs of the Wayfarer*.....Gustav Mahler  
(1860-1911)

- I. On My Sweetheart's Wedding Day
- II. This Morning in the Fields
- III. I Have a Burning Knife
- IV. My Sweetheart's Blue Eyes

Amanda Arrington, piano

**Intermission**

*Heavy Metal Tuba Concerto* ..... Evan Zegiel  
(b.1994)

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## PROGRAM NOTES

**Suite No.1 “Effie’s Suite) by Alec Wilder:** This suite was commissioned and written for close friend of the composer and famous tuba player, Harvey Phillips. In his book *Program Notes for the Solo Tuba*, Gary Bird writes that this work was written for tubist Harvey Phillips at the request of Clark Galehouse of Crest Records for a children’s album. According to Mr. Bird, the titles are self-explanatory with a few humorous touches such Effie taking on dancing lessons out of sync with the piano as the piano part takes on the role of the dance instructor, reprimanding Effie when misplacing a few notes in “Effie Takes a Dancing Lesson.” This piece follows a day in the life of our titular elephant (Effie) as she sings, dances and falls in love. The tuba represents Effie and the piano takes on the roles of other supporting members of the story. You may have noticed the odd order of movements present on the program; performers will often mix and match the order of the movements to make their own storyline. I encourage the audience to imagine Effie and what she might be doing as they listen to this wonderfully crafted piece.

**Alec Wilder:** Alec Wilder is a mostly self-taught composer. He studied privately with the composers Herman Inch and Edward Royce, who taught at the Eastman School of Music in the 1920s, but never registered for classes and never received his degree. He was respected by many of his friends for his innovative compositional style and artistic integrity, which was unaffected by popular musical trends. He was good friends with Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, Tony Bennett and many performing studio musicians in the area. Throughout his career he wrote in many different forms including sonatas, suites, concertos, operas, ballets, art songs, woodwind quintets, brass quintets, jazz suites, and hundreds of popular songs. He also composed several commercials and film scores. Additionally, Wilder enjoyed writing music for children and produced hundreds of easy study pieces for children, children’s songs for television productions and records, and an album titled *A Child’s Introduction to the Orchestra*; 6 he also wrote the children’s songs included in the book *Lullabies and Night Songs* illustrated by Maurice Sendak. Aside from composing, Wilder also wrote hundreds of poems and dozens of short stories.

Despite the efforts of his friends, Wilder detested celebrity and said he wrote music because it was the only thing that could content his spirit. He declared, “I didn’t do well in terms of financial reward or recognition. But that was never the point.”

### **Songs of the Wayfarer by Gustav Mahler:**

In 1883, Mahler was in his early twenties gathering experience as a conductor in the opera houses of Central Europe. That year he arrived in Kassel, Northern Germany, where he had become an assistant to the aging Kapellmeister, Wilhelm Treiber. Kassel is famous as one of the major centers of the German fairy-tale cult. It was where the Grimm brothers published two volumes of their famous legends. However, despite its literary reputation, the city’s opera company was rather mediocre, and so Mahler was eager to raise standards there, applying himself with his customary fanatical energy. But his ambition soon gained him a reputation as an upstart who irritated both Treiber and his aristocratic employers. Mahler made matters worse by falling in love with Johanna Richter; an attractive, blue-eyed soprano lodging in Treiber’s house. The affair caused Mahler’s relationship with his superior to deteriorate beyond rescue, and the

young apprentice conductor soon realized he no longer had a future in Kassel. He began searching for a new job, throwing his relationship with Johanna into crisis. On New Year's Eve 1884, the couple, knowing their fate was sealed, parted in tears. Mahler walked into the dark streets at midnight, writing later to his friend Fritz Löhr from the Pernerstorfer group with a tortured account of his feelings: "When I came out of the door, the bells were ringing, and the solemn chorale rang out from the tower. Ah dear Fritz, it was just as if the great stage-manager had wanted to make it all artistically perfect. I wept all through the night in my dreams." It is typical of Mahler to sense the creative potential of his broken heart. But the theatrical scene he describes was perhaps more colorful than the mundane reality. Things turned out somewhat less dramatically than suggested by his letter. The doomed couple continued to work together for a further six months before Mahler finally left Kassel to take up a new post in Prague. Creatively the high emotion of the relationship had already born fruit. During the previous year, Mahler had written six poems for Johanna, expressing his elation and sadness. The poems mimicked the vernacular style associated with Kassel, and in 1885, Mahler set four of them for voice and piano. He called the work, *Geschichte von einem fahrenden Gesellen* which later became *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* or *Songs of a Wayfarer*.

Irony abounds in the first song, "*Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht*" ("When My Sweetheart is Married"): Chipper piano flourishes alternate with slow, drooping phrases from the soloist as the narrator expresses anguish at his beloved marrying someone else. Mahler realizes the poem's nature imagery in the second half, with birdsong evoked through trills, but the slow, mournful wedding song returns.

The melody of the second song, "*Ging heut' Morgen über's Feld*" ("This Morning I Went Over the Field"), became the opening theme of Mahler's first symphony, and his treatment of the theme in the symphony informed his instrumentation choices when later setting the songs with orchestra. The song is relentlessly cheerful and the accompaniment bustling with layers of activity as the surrounding nature repeatedly asks the narrator, "Is it not a beautiful world?" But for the final refrain, the tempo slows as he responds that his happiness can never bloom.

The third song, "*Ich hab' ein glühend Messer*" ("I Have a Gleaming Knife"), opens with a tumultuous introduction before the narrator courses through waves of agony. The storm retreats as Mahler thins out the texture to accompany the singer as the narrator reflects on the pain of constant reminders of lost love. But the forces of the accompaniment cannot be held back for long, overwhelming the narrator once more.

The final song, "*Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz*" ("The Two Blue Eyes of my Beloved"), begins with a funeral march, similar to the third movement of Mahler's first symphony, both works share his penchant for juxtaposing major and minor instances of the same musical gesture. As the song continues, it incorporates gently rocking lullaby tropes to represent the narrator resting beneath the linden tree. It seems that the wandering has come to an end, yet the song ends inconclusively, with flutes and harp unable to find resolution.

This edition of the Mahler Wayfarer songs is based on the final orchestral versions of the songs. This edition is transposed down a perfect fifth from the original and the tuba part is for the most part the same as a vocal score with several additional clarifying marks. The translated poems are included below:

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### 1. **My Sweetheart's Wedding Day**

My sweetheart's wedding day is a sad day for me!  
I go into my dark little room and weep for my dear sweetheart.  
Little blue flower! Do not fade!  
Little sweet bird! You sing on the green heath  
Oh! how beautiful is the world!  
Do not sing! Do not bloom!  
Spring has gone, all the singing is over.  
In the evening when I go to sleep, I think of my sorrow!

### 2. **This Morning in the Fields**

This morning I went through the fields,  
Dew still clung to the grass,  
The gay finch said to me:  
"How is it? Good morning! How goes it?  
Isn't it a beautiful world?  
How I love the world!"  
The bluebell by the field with its little bells,  
has also gayly, sprightly, rung out its morning greeting:  
"Isn't it a beautiful world?  
A beautiful thing!  
How I love the world!"  
The world began to sparkle in the sunshine!  
Everything gained sound and color!  
In the sunshine!  
Flower & bird, large and small!  
Good Day!  
Isn't it a beautiful world?  
Isn't it? Isn't it?  
Now won't my happiness begin too?  
No! No!  
That which I seek can nevermore blossom for me!

### 3. **I Have a Burning Knife**

I have a burning knife in my breast,  
Oh woe! Oh woe!  
It cuts so deep into every joy & bliss,  
So deep! So deep!  
Oh, what an evil guest this is.  
It never gives peace, never allows rest.  
Not by day, not even in sleep!  
Oh woe! Oh woe!  
When I look into the sky, I see two blue eyes.  
When I walk in the fields, I see her blond hair.  
Oh woe! Oh woe!



When I awake from dreaming, I hear her silver laughter.

Oh woe! Oh woe!

I wish that I lay on the black bier,  
And could nevermore open my eyes!

#### 4. **My Sweetheart's Blue Eyes**

My sweetheart's two blue eyes  
have sent me away into the wide world.  
I had to leave my most beloved place.  
Oh blue eyes why did you ever gaze at me?  
Now I am forever in pain and sorrow.  
I've gone out into the silent night.  
No one bid me farewell.  
My only comrades were love and sorrow.  
A linden tree stands by the road.  
Under it, for the first time I rested in sleep.  
It snowed blossoms over me.  
Then I forgot how life can hurt.  
Everything was well again.  
Everything..... Love and sorrow,  
world, and dream.

### **Heavy Metal Tuba Concerto by Evan Zegiel: (Notes provided by composer)**

Heavy Metal Concerto was composed beginning in the late winter of 2020, shortly after the rapid global spread of COVID-19 forced governments to lock down in an effort to prevent the transmission of the disease. The enforced solitude, along with my doctoral music theory course on Tonal Forms that semester, led me to the idea of composing a concerto in the style of the great classical composers. I was also practicing guitar and bass more often during this period. Thus, the idea for a classical-style concerto backed by a heavy metal band was born.

The first movement, "Fire in the Sky," references the wildfires that have continued to rage year after year in the northwest region of North America, altering weather patterns across the continent and emitting tons of pollutants into the atmosphere. The form of that movement is based on the standard first-movement structure of a classical concerto, with alternating ritornello sections and solo features, but it breaks many rules of key area progressions in order for it to fit more comfortably into the form of metal songs, songs which do not often modulate. Many of the 7-string, drop-tuned guitar riffs and styles of playing (heavy, chugging power chords and sparkly clean tones) are styled after modern progressive metal blended with hardcore, imitating bands like Periphery and Knocked Loose. The tuba solo part in this movement is heavily inspired by John Williams's famous concerto for tuba.

The second movement, "The Story of More," takes its title from the book of the same name by Hope Jahren. The book traces the history of human overproduction and overconsumption, activities which have led to our current state of affairs regarding climate change.

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This movement is freely structured and makes use of various electronic samples in the recorded version. Played in drop D tuning (with a capo used to bring it up to Eb for the first half of the movement) on 6-string guitars, the styles of riffs closely imitate that of the progressive metal band Tool. Many of the drum grooves are infectious and complex, and the guitar riffs carry a dark and foreboding quality while remaining intense and active. The tuba solo part for this movement mirrors these qualities and contains the most expressive and soft moments of the entire piece.

It is my hope that this concerto brings further light and reflection to the issues of climate change. I also hope that it inspires young players to find creative new ways to play the tuba. When I was a teenager, I wanted a piece like this to exist. I grew up loving heavy metal, and I always wanted to play the tuba in the same way that my guitar-shredding idols did. I hope that you enjoy performing this piece as much as I have enjoyed creating it.

— Evan Zegiel  
2021