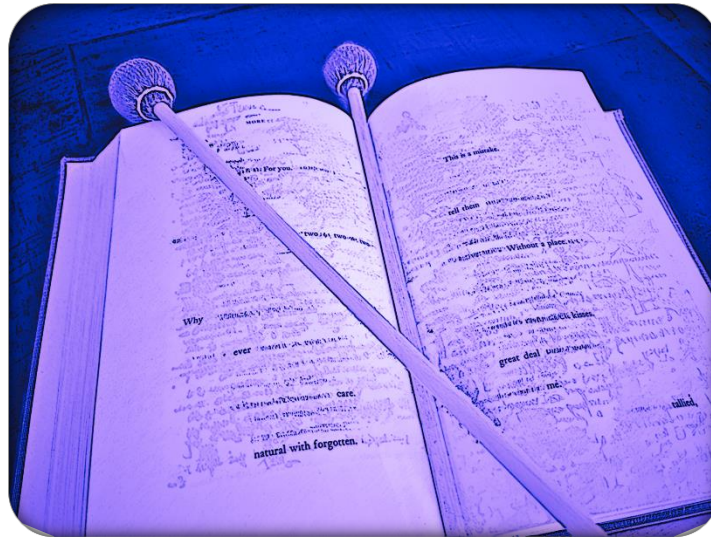




Among the words are the ones that stick out to us.

Chapters

a recital of compositions by **Connor Gibbs**,
featuring musicians from:

Augustana University, University of South Dakota, and beyond

March 29, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.
Hamre Recital Hall, Augustana University
2120 S Grange Ave, Sioux Falls, SD 57197

***Special thanks to the Augustana University School of Music for hosting and supporting this event.
This concert is funded in part by the Sioux Falls Arts Council.***

PROGRAM

† Union (2024) *for percussion ensemble*

Augustana University Percussion Ensemble

† Distant Reflections (2024) *for clarinet and piano*

I. Fantasy

II. Song

III. Scherzo

Irina Chang, clarinet

Eun-Hee Park, piano

† Winter (2023) *for string orchestra*

String Orchestra

Chun-Ming Chen, conductor

► Intermission (10 minutes) ◀

† Daybreak (2018/2024) *for solo bassoon*

John Tomkins, bassoon

† Believe (2025) *for solo flute, solo piccolo, and flute choir*

William Cedeño Torres, flute

Stephanie Kocher, piccolo

and Flute Choir

Chun-Ming Chen, conductor

Vanish (2020) *for solo piano*

Eun-Hee Park, piano

† In A Yellow Wood (2024) *for Wagner tuba and string orchestra*

Daniel Kitchens, Wagner tuba

and String Orchestra

Chun-Ming Chen, conductor

† Premiere Performance

ENSEMBLE MEMBERS

Augustana University Percussion Ensemble

Owen Bell, Aidan Christensen, Sydney Hansen, Sammie Kross,
Gentry Owen, Ollie Peterson, Alex Poitra, Gabe Prairie
Daniel Sailer, director

String Orchestra Personnel

Violin I: Marjorie Garry, Giyun Seo, Kyra Gurath

Violin II: Natalie Sterba, Amy Carlisle, Christine Egan

Viola: Sue Sidoti, Alena Bunkers, Amy Quiroga, Mauricio Flores Gomez

Cello: Sonja Kraus, Carolina Rodriguez de Armas

Bass: Andrew Reinartz, Kelly Coslet

Flute Choir Personnel

University of South Dakota:

Tessa DeWitt^A, Sofia Hegstrom, Christian Houchin^A, Ande Petersen^P, Mia Pinkerman,
Eva Reyes, Shelsy Santos Segovia, Nicholas Schran, Kaitlynn Wellman
Stephanie Kocher, director

Augustana University:

Gabbi Oaks, Morgan Eckert, Emily Gulbrandson, Darlene Fick^A, Annalesia Machado^B
Emily Anderson, director

Additional Flutes:

Shannon Abels

^A – Alto Flute | ^B – Bass Flute | ^P – Piccolo

PROGRAM NOTES

► *Chapters* ◀ *the concert program*

This concert program is a collection of works by composer **Connor Gibbs**, centered around collaborating with friends and colleagues made during his time in South Dakota. Each piece has a tangential link to Connor's world, although the program was not designed to tell a life story. But along this thread, these works are chapters out of a larger story, albeit *out of order*. This is a nonlinear story, ending with ***In A Yellow Wood***, a work inspired by a poem about choosing one's path forward at a fork in the road. We do not know which path is chosen at the end of this program, or if this moment is at the "end" of the story or not. We ultimately do not know what the story *is*. But you are encouraged to imagine this story, whatever it is, or to take each musical moment as its own individual moment in time, much like a chapter of a book, and consider the characters and events that happen within.

Union, for percussion ensemble

"The title ***Union*** refers to a few different aspects of this piece for percussion ensemble, which is structured in ternary form. The opening of the work features the sounds of harmonics being produced out of marimba bars, something that [comfortably] requires 2 players. The second section is repurposed from an incomplete work for solo timpani written in 2021. This section requires pairs of players to work together to capture the gliding sound of changing the tuning on roto-toms. In merging the new and the old and in emphasizing teamwork to capture special musical colors, the title ***Union*** felt appropriate. (The third section is a recapitulation of the opening section with marimba harmonics.)

This work did not originally have a specific, programmatic interpretation in mind, but in working on the piece images of nature emerged. This prompted the inclusion of wind chimes in one section, and was inspired by the sound of marimba overtones reminding me of leaves falling from a tree. This work was already set to include roto-toms, but another perspective of the work has been influenced by Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, where Berlioz used combinations of timpani to create a sonic image of thunder."

— Connor Gibbs, November 9, 2024

Distant Reflections, for clarinet and piano

Distant Reflections is a set of three short works for clarinet and piano which explore a range of musical characters and qualities. The work is structured reminiscently of a sonata, opening with an agile and luscious ***Fantasy***, followed by a romantic and elegant ***Song***, and closing with an off-kilter dance with the spirit of a ***Scherzo***.

Winter, for string orchestra

Winter is intended to be ambiguous in its “definitive” meaning, comparable to the reduction in visibility experienced when in a thick snowstorm. This work includes theatrical elements, several indications of contrasting timbre, and moments of aleatoricism and intonation outside of Western classical music. What thoughts come to mind as you experience this music?

► (Intermission) ◀

Daybreak, for solo bassoon

Daybreak imagines the world as it is when sunlight begins to emerge, cutting through the darkness of night. As the creatures of the world begin to wake, the bassoon alternates between melodic lullabies and rhythmic dances. These contrasts are decorated with contrasts in register and color.

Believe, for solo flute, solo piccolo, and flute choir

Believe imagines the journey and motion of the soul. This work features two soloists, one whose lines transcend the soundscape from afar, and one who personifies this soulful journey. This work is built around a flute choir that helps to create a contemplative and sometimes hazy scene with familiar melodies and unfamiliar sounds alike. Sometimes, all it takes is for one to believe as we traverse the land of the living.

Vanish, for solo piano

Inspired by the composer’s move to the Midwest in 2020 and leaving behind many friends, family, and students, **Vanish** aims to capture the sense of “letting go.” The beginning introduces a main theme set to a tonally ambiguous accompaniment. The key center then shifts back and forth from unclear modes to clear, diatonic key centers, illustrating the continuous mental struggle endured through saying goodbye to many meaningful people and memories. In the end, the main theme vanishes into nothing as the journey [thus far] has come to an end.

In A Yellow Wood, for solo Wagner Tuba and string orchestra

“ The title of **In A Yellow Wood** is lifted from the first line of the famous poem “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost. The poem is often interpreted to be about the reflection of taking the “[road] less traveled by,” a reason for celebration, as that choice affects the rest of one’s life. This interpretation is inspiring, but there are other interpretations that center on the choice being one to regret, as the speaker recounts this experience in life “with a sigh.”

(continued...) →

It is alleged that the poem is Frost lightly teasing a friend for their tendency to be frozen with indecision. If the paths both “equally lay,” did choosing one really “[make] all the difference?”

A close friend once shared with me a feeling they had been conflicted with: “I don't want to leave, but I don't know if I can stay.” This dilemma reminded me of Frost's poem: to be **in a yellow wood** filled with indecision over choosing the right path, not knowing if one would result in a better future or not. In that moment, it's impossible to know what will result from one choice. Presumably, once this piece ends, the speaker will choose the road less traveled by, and depending on our interpretation, that will make all the difference. Perhaps the path *will* be wildly different, but the result will be the same: a life [hopefully] well traveled, regardless of the details along the way.

I do not intend to musically portray two different paths, but instead some of the inner chaos that eventually results in making a choice. This work is all encapsulated in just one moment, followed by the decision of which path to choose. Even coming up with a title for this piece was like being **in a yellow wood**, so regardless of how I forecast my future, I at least want to poke a little fun at myself. In the end, did the selection of this title make all the difference? probably not. But we'll see. ”

— Connor Gibbs, October 25, 2024

BIOGRAPHIES



Connor Gibbs

Composer

Connor (b. 1995) is a composer, singer, and music educator originally from Western Massachusetts. He currently works for the South Dakota Symphony as their Concert Operations and Youth Orchestra Manager.

Connor's music has been described as modal and motivic, shifting through different colors to achieve surprising and occasionally programmatic effects. Much of his work is inspired by interpersonal relationships and the mysticism of the universe beyond Earth.

His work has been performed across the United States and Europe at festivals and workshops including the Dartington International Music Festival, soundSCAPE Festival, highSCORE Festival, New Music on the Bayou, Nief-Norf Summer Festival, Flute New Music Consortium's New Music Festival, National Flute Association Convention, and more. In South Dakota, Connor's music has been performed at Augustana University and the University of South Dakota (South Dakota New Music), and has been performed by the South Dakota Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Outside of composition, Connor frequently organizes concerts for smaller communities and audiences to discover music that may be very new and/or rarely performed. Additionally, Connor has researched the highest notes of various instruments which has led to the creation of new versions of instruments, including retuned toy pianos and the Piccolo Glockenspiel.

Connor graduated with a Master's in Music Composition from Bowling Green State University (2022) and a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Wagner College (2017). Between his degrees, he briefly taught choral music in Western Massachusetts.

For more information about Connor's composition and concert work, please visit his website at <https://www.connorgibbs.com!>



William Cedeño Torres

• *Believe (solo flute)*

Principal Flutist of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, William Cedeño Torres, was born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela. He started his musical career at the age of 9 in the world-renown Venezuelan program, “El Sistema.” In 2003, William was accepted into the Simon Bolivar Conservatory of Music and entered the studio of Miguel Pineda for flute and piccolo. A few months after that, he won the principal position at the Francisco de Miranda Orchestra.

After moving to the United States, William attended Idyllwild Arts Academy as a post-graduate high school student under a full scholarship and joined the studio of Sara Andon. Since he moved to the US, he has participated in masterclasses with teachers such as Carol Wincenc, James Galway, Emmanuel Pahud, Robert Dick, and Jean Ferrandis. In 2011, he was accepted into the San Francisco Conservatory of Music where he finished his undergraduate studies in the studio of Timothy Day. His most recent accomplishments include winning the Berkeley Piano Club Competition, the Miami Summer Music Festival Concerto Competition, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concerto Competition. William recently finished his first year of a master’s degree program in Flute Performance at the Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music, studying with Leone Buyse.



Irina Chang

• *Distant Reflections (clarinet)*

Irina Chang joined the South Dakota Symphony as Principal Clarinet beginning in the 2024-25 season. Chang relocated to Sioux Falls from Chicago where she has been performing with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. She holds a master’s degree in music from Northwestern University and a bachelor’s degree in music from Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester. Her primary teachers include Mark Nuccio, Steven Cohen, Jon Manasse, Kenneth Grant, and Adam Ebert.

In addition to her principal clarinet position in the SDSO, she will be the newest member of the Dakota Wind Quintet.



Chun-Ming Chen

- *Winter (conductor)*
- *Believe (conductor)*
- *In A Yellow Wood (conductor)*

Taiwanese conductor and educator Dr. Chun-Ming Chen is currently the Director of Orchestral Activities/Assistant Professor at the University of South Dakota Music Department and the Cover Conductor of the Sioux City Symphony Orchestra, Sioux City, IA. Chen's conducting experience bridges the professional and academic worlds.

Over his career, he has worked with orchestras ranging from high school orchestras to college orchestras and youth orchestras to professional orchestras. He has performed with musicians such as the Grammy-winning vocal ensemble New York Voices, pianists André Watts and Ching-Yun Hu, and violinist Rachel Barton Pine. Musicians credited Chen's rehearsal as highly efficient and the audience described his performance as extremely passionate.

Previously, Dr. Chen has served as Director of Orchestral Activities at the University of Evansville Music Conservatory, Conductor of the Evansville Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, Music Director of the Heartland Symphony Orchestra in Little Falls, MN, and Interim Conductor of the Grinnell College Symphony Orchestra in Grinnell, IA, and Coe College Symphony Orchestra in Cedar Rapids, IA. He has appeared as a guest conductor with the Hsinchu Philharmonic Orchestra, Miaoli Wind Ensemble in Taiwan, Indiana ASTA All-Region Honor Orchestra, and South Dakota J. Laiten Weed Honors Orchestra.

Dr. Chen received his bachelor's degree in saxophone performance from Tunghai University, master's degrees in orchestral conducting from both The Boston Conservatory and Ithaca College, and a doctorate in orchestral conducting from the University of Iowa. His primary teachers include Dr. Annie Chung, Bruce Hangen, Dr. Jeffery Meyer, and Dr. William LaRue Jones.



Daniel Kitchens

• *In A Yellow Wood (Wagner tuba)*

Daniel Kitchens, a native of Dallas, Texas, joined the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra in 2016 as Principal Horn. He has earned degrees from Texas Christian University and the Royal College of Music in London. In addition to attending various summer festivals, Daniel has performed with orchestras across the world, including the Philharmonia Orchestra in London and as Guest Principal Horn with the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional of the Dominican Republic. Prior to his appointment in South Dakota, Daniel was pursuing postgraduate studies at Southern Methodist University. His primary teachers are Greg Hustis, Tim Jones, Alton Adkins, and Jason DeWater.



Stephanie Kocher

• *Believe (solo piccolo)*

Stephanie Kocher is the Flute Instructor and Fine Arts Outreach Coordinator for The University of South Dakota, and is active as a private teacher, adjudicator, clinician, and performer. She holds Bachelor of Music degrees in Music Education and Flute Performance from Washburn University and a Masters of Music in Flute Performance from Wichita State University. Private teachers include Peter Verhoyen, Dr. Frances Shelley, Elizabeth Singleton, and Ronn and Sylvia Boyd. In addition, she has performed in masterclasses with Lois Bliss Herbine, Nicola Mazzanti, Jan Gippo, James Walker, Gary Schocker, and Michel Debost. Kocher plays piccolo for the Sioux City Symphony Orchestra and the SCSO Wind Quintet. She also regularly performs with the USD South Dakota Chamber Winds, and with the Kocher Duo, with husband C.J. Kocher on saxophone. She resides in Vermillion, SD with her husband C.J., and children Ivy and Lars.



Eun-Hee Park

- *Distant Reflections* (clarinet and piano)
- *Vanish* (solo piano)

Praised by *The New York Concert Review* for “a solid foundation of fluent pianism” after her debut at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Korean pianist **Eun-Hee Park** enjoys a diverse career as soloist, chamber musician, and educator. She has given numerous concerts throughout the United States, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Brazil, and Costa Rica. As a recording artist, she has released albums on the Naxos, Emeritus, MSR Classics, Navona Records, and Capstone labels. Two albums titled “Korean Tapestry [Naxos, 8.579129]” and “Child’s Play [MSR Classics, MS 1788]” received Global Music Award’s Silver Medal in the Classical Music and the Chamber Music categories in

2023 and 2022 respectively. The Naxos album *Gulfstream* was selected as *BBC Music Magazine*’s Music US Choice, *MusicWeb International*’s "CD of the Month," and Naxos Critics’ Choice. Concerning this particular album, *Gramophone* stated, “[p]ianist Eun-Hee Park’s fast, light-fingered touch...provides numerous moments of purely physical delight.”

Dr. Park is the newly appointed pianist of the Rawlins Piano Trio (www.rawlinstrio.com) and Assistant Professor and Director of Collaborative Piano Studies at the University of South Dakota starting from the Fall of 2024. Her previous appointments include serving as Associate Professor of Music and Head of the Keyboard Area at the University of Montevallo, the Hartt School, Music in the Mountains Conservatory, University of Southern Mississippi, Southern Mississippi Piano Institute, Westport School of Music, the Chapel Hill Chamber Music Workshop, Interlochen Arts Camp, Oklahoma City

University, and Principal Pianist for the Albany Symphony Orchestra. Park holds degrees from Florida State University (D.M.), Oklahoma City University (M.M.), and Colorado Mesa University (B.A.). Her teachers include Carolyn Bridger, Amy I-Lin Cheng, Ernestine Scott, Michael Baron, Timothy Olsen (Organ), and Karyl Louwenaar (Harpsichord).



John Tomkins

• *Daybreak (bassoon)*

John Tomkins was appointed Principal Bassoon of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra and Dakota Wind Quintet in 2002. Tomkins holds a Bachelor's degree from The Ohio State University and a Masters degree from The Cleveland Institute of Music. He has attended many music festivals, including the Festival-Institute at Round Top, the National Orchestra Institute, Kent/Blossom Music, and Tanglewood Music Center. His primary teachers include Joseph Hesseman, Christopher Weait, Ronald Phillips, and John Clouser.

Tomkins has also served as the Principal Bassoonist for the Sioux City Symphony Orchestra, and has performed with many area ensembles, including the Omaha Symphony. Tomkins has premiered bassoon concertos written by Jeffrey Paul and Benjamin Tomkins with the SDSO, and arranges music professionally for the Dakota Wind Quintet. In addition to maintaining a private teaching studio, he serves as an adjunct bassoon instructor and chamber music coach on the staff of Augustana University and South Dakota State University.