



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS®

Rudi E. Scheidt
School of Music

Presents

CLASSICS

featuring

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

Symphonic Band

William Plenk, conductor

With guest performances from:

Magnolia Woodwind Quintet
Graduate Brass Quintet

Wednesday, April 20, 2022

7:30PM

Harris Concert Hall

Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music
Kevin Sanders, Director

College of Communication and Fine Arts
Anne Hogan, Dean

PROGRAM

Chester – Overture for Band

William Schuman
(1910-1992)

Sleepers Awake

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Wind Quintet, Op. 43

1. Allegro ben moderato
2. Menuet

Carl Nielsen
(1865-1931)

Magnolia Woodwind Quintet
Melanie Rodríguez Díaz, flute
Jalen Gales, oboe
Evan Erickson, clarinet
Geoffrey Sims, horn
Jacob Bridges, bassoon

Frost Fire

1. Bright and Fast
2. Gentle and Mysterious

Eric Ewazen
(b. 1954)

Graduate Brass Quintet
Tyler Helms, trumpet
Yiming Zhang, trumpet
Therese Giordano, horn
Tom Mortenson, trombone
Juan Valdez, tuba

Lauds (Praise High Day)

Ron Nelson
(b. 1929)

Intermission

Sea Songs

Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872-1958)

Of Sailors and Whales

1. Ishmael
2. Queequeg
3. Father Mapple
4. Ahab
5. The White Whale

William Francis McBeth
(1933-2012)

University of Memphis Symphonic Band

William Plenk, Conductor

Flute

Matthew Hammons
Mari Kamikura*
Isabella Bianca Reano
Timothy Sausser
Micayla Scott

Oboe

Jalen Gales

Bassoon

Morgan Dorsey
Julian Rice*

Clarinet

Justin James*
Deaven Knowles
Summer Moates
Genice Moore
Desmon Taylor
Thaddeus Wilson

Bass Clarinet

Mellodee Hooker

Alto Saxophone

Josh Laughlin
Matthew Meyers*
Chris Scott

Tenor Saxophone

Amanda Roesch

Baritone Saxophone

Jacob Happy

Horn

Cobe Beck*
Dean Blish
Steven Groff
Madeline Miller
Nathan Olusemire
Breanne Tompkins
Drew Wolfe

Trumpet

Dallas Banks
Colin Bogdahn
Aaron Givhan
Sam Mitchell
Benjamin Shaffer*
Logan Pack
Hunter Underwood

Trombone

Evan Green
Val Huggins
Colin Woods*

Euphonium

Ayden Bran*
Terrion Freeman
Shawn Younkin

Tuba

Chad Coontz*
Christopher Gilchrist

Percussion

Kate Bingham*
Daniel Padron Hoopp
David Koger
Mario Shaw
Daniel Young

*denotes principal player

About the program

Chester – Overture for Band

William Schuman (1910-1992)

Chester Overture is a version for wind band of the third movement of Schuman's orchestral composition *New England Triptych*. The composition was written in 1956 in three movements (*Be Glad Then, America, When Jesus Wept, and Chester*) based on a book of songs composed in 1778 by William Billings (1746-1800). The *Chester Overture* served as an inspiration for colonies from Vermont to South Carolina becoming a popular hymn during the American Revolution. The lyrics below carry an expression of desire for freedom through the difficult years lived by the colonists.

*Let tyrants shake their iron rod,
And Slav'ry clank her galling chains,
We fear them not, We trust in God,
New England's God forever reigns.*

*The Foe comes on with haughty stride
Our Troops advance with martial noise
Their Vet'rans flee, before our Youth
And Gen'ral's yield to beardless Boys.*

The *Chester Overture* is composed in an arch form with an introduction, five different variations, and a coda. The composer uses the original hymn as an opening statement of the piece, and fragments of the hymn pass through the ensemble during each variation, with many contrasting dynamics, articulations, and compositional techniques.

William Schuman was born in New York City in 1910, and learned to play the violin and banjo when he was a child. He started his college life pursuing a business degree at New York University's School of Commerce in 1928, but transitioned to studying music after attending a New York Philharmonic concert under the baton of Arturo Toscanini. Schuman studied composition at the Malkin Conservatory and graduated in 1935 from Columbia University with a degree in music education. In 1943, Schuman won the inaugural Pulitzer Prize for Music for his Cantata No. 2 "A Free Song." In 1985, he received the National Medal of Arts for his contribution to the American culture as a composer and educational leader. He died in New York City in 1992 at the age of 81.

Sleepers Awake
"Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme"

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Arranged by Alfred Reed

As music director of the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, Bach had to prepare a complete cantata for each church service and all special church holidays. *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* ("Awake, calls the voice of the watchman"), BWV 140, also known as *Sleepers Awake*, is one of Bach's compositions most frequently performed. Bach composed the chorale cantata in Leipzig for the 27th Sunday after Trinity and was performed for the first time on November 25, 1731.

The cantata is based on the hymn in three stanzas by Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608), inspired by the Gospel of the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Mathew 25:1-13). Bach develops a contrapuntal texture between the countermelody and Nicolai's choral melody, creating a two-dimensional effect with the embedding of the hymn melody, phrase by phrase, into another musical organism that has its own logic but different phraseology. It is a bustling portrait in sound of the city of Jerusalem, waiting at midnight, with watchers posted on the battlements for the arrival of the "bridegroom". The urgent dotted chords are tossed back and forth between the instrumental sections, relating the restless nature of the crowd. They relay the watchmen's cries in imitative counterpoint. The chorale is heard in the long notes of the treble instruments, but it never breaks the energy of the work. Below is one of the three stanzas for the hymn in the Nicolai's *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*:

*Zion hears the watchmen sing,
her heart leaps for joy,
she awakes and gets up in haste.
Her friend comes from heaven in his splendour,
strong in mercy, mighty in truth.
Her light becomes bright, her star rises.
Now come, you worthy crown,
Lord Jesus, God's son!
Hosanna!
We all follow
to the hall of joy
and share in the Lord's supper.*

Bach scholar Alfred Dürr notes that the cantata is, "an expression of Christian mysticism in art," while William G. Whittaker calls it, "a cantata without weakness, without a dull bar, technically, emotionally and spiritually of the highest order."

The American composer Alfred Reed skillfully arranged this work for winds in 1984 along with several other chorale preludes by Bach.

Wind Quintet, Op. 43

1. *Allegro ben moderato*
2. *Menuet*

Carl Nielsen (1865-1931)

Carl Nielsen had a great deal in common with Jean Sibelius, born in the same year. As Sibelius became the unofficial composer laureate of Finland, Nielsen occupied a similar position in his native Denmark. Like Sibelius, too, he developed a strong, highly individual musical style. Both men became famous as composers of symphonies, but unlike Sibelius, Nielsen wrote a quantity of chamber music and two operas.

It was not until after Nielsen's death in 1931 that his music, long loved and respected in Denmark, came to be known in other parts of the world. Musically conservative, he played no role in the many technical upheavals and innovations of avant-garde composition that seemed to dominate European music in the first half of the twentieth century. Nielsen is never mentioned with Stravinsky and Schoenberg, the two musical giants of the twentieth century, as a composer who explored the limits of musical language. His works are permeated with a sense of psychological struggle - at times quite dramatic - that is very much of the twentieth century. In the United States, there was an initial flurry of interest in Nielsen's work during the 1950's, but it subsided after a few years, to be revived with more vigor and permanence in the following decades.

The Quintet for Winds, Op 43, was Nielsen's only composition for this instrumental combination, and it was his last chamber music work. Completed in 1922, it was inspired by the playing of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet, which Nielsen first heard rehearsing Mozart. All these musicians became his friends, and the Quintet is written with the quirks of their personalities and their interrelationships in mind. Nielsen intended to write a concerto for each of his friends but unfortunately, only completed the ones for flute and clarinet.

Frost Fire

1. *Bright and Fast*
2. *Gentle and Mysterious*

Eric Ewazen (b. 1954)

Eric Ewazen is an American composer trained at the Eastman School of Music and Juilliard, who has studied under composers such as Milton Babbitt, Samuel Adler, and Gunther Schuller. *Frost Fire* was commissioned by the pioneering American Brass Band during the year of their 30th season. Since its commission, it has become an enormously popular piece in the brass quintet repertoire. The piece is split into three movements, two of which are included on this program, with a large-scale sonata form being used as the layout for the piece. The first movement, "Bright and Fast," is a fast-paced movement with all of the highlights of Ewazen's writing. Ewazen describes it as, "a joyous celebration of sonorous chords, playful motives and rhythmic gestures." The music then transitions to a much slower pace for the second movement, "Gentle and Mysterious." This movement begins with simple, muted melodies that develop up until the presentation of a fugue halfway through the movement. An echo of the original theme of the movement, brings it to a gentle resolution. This piece is filled with asymmetrical meters and interesting harmonies that provide a great performance for the listener.

Lauds (Praise High Day)

Ron Nelson (b.1929)

Dr. Ron Nelson received his Bachelor of Music degree in 1952, Master's degree in 1953, and Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1956, all from the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester. He also studied in France at the Ecole Normale de Musique and at the Paris Conservatory under a Fulbright Grant in 1955. Dr. Nelson joined the Brown University faculty the following year and taught there until his retirement in 1993. He has composed two operas, a mass, music for films and television, 90 choral works, and over 40 instrumental works.

Composing for wind band has become a major focus for Nelson. In 1993, his *Passacaglia (Homage on B-A-C-H)* made history by winning three major prizes – the National Association Prize, the American Bandmasters Association Ostwald Prize, and the Sudler International Prize. He was awarded the Medal of Honor of the John Philip Sousa Foundation in Washington, D.C., in 1994, and in 2006, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Oklahoma City University.

Lauds (Praise High Day) is an exuberant, colorful work intended to express feelings of praise and glorification. Lauds is one of the seven canonical hours that were selected by St. Benedict as the times the monks would observe the daily offices. Three (terce, sext, and none) were the times of the changing of the Roman guards and four (matins, lauds, vespers, and compline) were tied to nature. Lauds, subtitled Praise High Day, honors the sunrise; it is filled with the glory and excitement of a new day.

- Program Note by composer

Sea Songs

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Sea Songs was written in 1923 as the original second movement of the *English Folk Song Suite*. It was later split from the *Suite* and received its premiere as a stand-alone work at the 1924 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley. Throughout its typical da capo march form, it uses three sea shanties: "Princess Royal," "Admiral Benbow," and "Portsmouth." Vaughan Williams created an orchestral version in 1942, which later became the theme music for the British television show *Billy Bunter* and the startup music for Anglia Television.

Ralph Vaughan Williams was an English composer of symphonies, chamber music, opera, choral music, and film scores. He was also a collector of English folk music and song. This activity both influenced his editorial approach to the *English Hymnal*, beginning in 1904, in which he included many folk song arrangements set as hymn tunes, and influenced several of his own original compositions.

Vaughan Williams spent most of his life in London. He studied the viola, piano, and organ, and while he wanted to compose, his family discouraged him from an orchestral career. He graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge and studied composition at the Royal College of Music, as well as organ and piano with several teachers. Although he also studied abroad with Max Bruch and Maurice Ravel, his style remained individual and English. He was appointed organist at Lambeth, and his interest in English folk music dates from his stay there. He became good friends with Gustav Holst, and they often shared their works in progress with each other. His work on the *English Hymnal* greatly influenced his musical career.

Vaughan Williams joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in France during World War I. From the 1920s onward, he was in increasing demand as a composer and conductor. He composed simple pieces and grand orchestral works and is considered the outstanding composer of his generation in England. According to Hubert J. Foss in *The Heritage of Music*, "In Vaughan Williams we hear the historic speech of the English people. What he gives us in music is the language of the breakfast table. It is also the language that Shakespeare wrote."

Of Sailors and Whales

William Francis McBeth (1933-2012)

I. Ishmael

II. Queequeg

III. Father Mapple

IV. Ahab

V. The White Whale

Of Sailors and Whales is a five-movement work based on scenes from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. It was commissioned by and is dedicated to the California Band Directors Association. The work is sub-dedicated to Lanon White, Commander USN (Ret.), who went to sea as a simple sailor. The composer provided these notes for each movement:

I. Ishmael – “I go to sea as a simple sailor.”

II. Queequeg – “It was quite plain that he must be some abominable savage, but Queequeg was a creature in the transitory state – neither caterpillar nor butterfly.”

III. Father Mapple – “This ended, in prolonged solemn tones, like the continual tolling of a bell in a ship that is foundering at sea in a fog – in such tones he commenced reading the following hymn, but changing his manner towards the concluding stanzas, burst forth with a pealing exultation and joy.”

*The ribs and terrors in the whale arched over me a dismal gloom
While all God's sunlit waves rolled by and lift me lower down to doom.
In black distress I called my God when I could scarce believe Him mine,
He bowed His ear to my complaint, no more the whale did me confine.
My songs forever shall record that terrible, that joyful hour,
I give the glory to my God, His all the mercy and the power.*

IV. Ahab – “So powerfully did the whole grim aspect of Ahab affect me that for the first few moments I hardly noted the barbaric white leg upon which he partly stood.”

V. The White Whale – “Moby Dick seemed combinedly possessed by all the angels that fell from heaven. The birds! – the birds! They mark the spot. The whale, the whale! Up helm, up helm! Oh, all ye sweet powers of air, now hug me close... He turns to meet us ... My God, stand by me now!”

- Program notes from the score.

W. Francis McBeth (1933–2012) studied at Hardin-Simmons University, the University of Texas, and the Eastman School of Music. He was Professor of Music at Ouachita University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, and a past president of the American Bandmasters Association. McBeth's interest in the wind symphony was a shaping force in its literature.

