



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS

Rudi E. Scheidt
School of Music

presents

Tribute

featuring

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

Symphonic Band

William Plenk, conductor
Wilker Augusto, guest conductor
William M. Whitt, guest conductor

Thursday, February 17, 2022
7:30 p.m.
Harris Concert Hall

Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music
Kevin Sanders, Director

College of Communication and Fine Arts
Anne Hogan, Dean

PROGRAM

A Mother of A Revolution

Omar Thomas
(b.1984)

William M. Whitt, guest conductor*

Australian Up-Country Tune

Percy Grainger
(1882-1961)

English Folk Song Suite

Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872-1958)

- I. March - "Seventeen Come Sunday"
- II. Intermezzo - "My Bonny Boy"
- III. March - "Folk Songs from Somerset"

Homage to Leonin (from Medieval Suite)

Ron Nelson
(b.1929)

Wilker Augusto, guest conductor*

Elixir

Michael Markowski
(b.1986)

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS SYMPHONIC BAND

Dr. William Plenk, Conductor

Flute

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

Oboe

Jalen Gales*
Rachel Zaloudek

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 Hoepp
David Koger
Mario Shaw
Daniel

Piano

Diego Parra

*denotes principal player

A Mother of A Revolution

Omar Thomas (b.1984)

In the words of the composer-

"This piece is a celebration of the bravery of trans women, and in particular, Marsha "Pay It No Mind" Johnson. Marsha is credited with being one of the instigators of the famous Stonewall uprising of June 28, 1969 – one of the pivotal events of the LGBTQ liberation movement of the 20th century – which is commemorated annually during the worldwide Gay Pride celebrations. Existing as a trans woman, especially a trans woman of color, and daring to live authentically, creating space for oneself in a transphobic world is one of the bravest acts I can imagine. Over 20 trans women were murdered in the United States in 2018 alone. There is no demographic more deserving, and frankly, long overdue for highlighted heroism and bravery. The disco vibe in the latter half of the piece is meant to honor club culture, a sacred space held amongst LGBTQ persons in which to love, live, mourn, heal, strategize, connect, disconnect, and dance in defiance of those outside forces who would seek to do LGBTQ persons harm simply for daring to exist and take up space. We pump our fists to honor the life, heroism, activism, and bravery of Marsha P. Johnson, to honor the legacy of the Stonewall revolution, to honor the memory of the trans lives violently ended due to fear and hatred, and in honor of trans women worldwide who continue to exist unapologetically and who demand to be seen."

A Mother of A Revolution was commissioned by the Desert Winds Freedom Band, under the direction of Dean McDowell, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising. Described as "elegant, beautiful, sophisticated, intense, and crystal clear in emotional intent," the music of Omar Thomas continues to move listeners everywhere it is performed. Born to Guyanese parents in Brooklyn, New York in 1984, Omar moved to Boston in 2006 to pursue a Master of Music in Jazz Composition at the New England Conservatory of Music after studying Music Education at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He is the protégé of lauded composers and educators Ken Schaphorst and Frank Carlberg, and has studied under multiple Grammy-winning composer and bandleader Maria Schneider.

Omar's music has been performed in concert halls the world over. He has been commissioned to create works in both jazz and classical styles. His work has been performed by such diverse groups as the Eastman New Jazz Ensemble, the San Francisco and Boston Gay Mens' Choruses, and the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, in addition to a number of the country's top collegiate music ensembles. Omar has had a number of celebrated singers perform over his arrangements, including Stephanie Mills, Yolanda Adams, Nona Hendryx, BeBe Winans, Kenny Lattimore, Marsha Ambrosius, Sheila E., Raul Midon, Leela James, Dionne Warwick, and Chaka Khan. His work is featured on Dianne Reeves's Grammy Award-winning album, "Beautiful Life."

Australian Up-Country Tune

Percy Grainger (1882-1961)

George Percy Grainger was an Australian-born composer, pianist and champion of the saxophone and the concert band, who worked under the stage name of Percy Aldridge Grainger. He was an innovative musician who anticipated many forms of twentieth century music well before they became established by other composers.

In 1932, he became Dean of Music at New York University, and underscored his reputation as an experimenter by putting jazz on the syllabus and inviting Duke Ellington as a guest lecturer. Twice he was offered honorary doctorates of music, but turned them down, explaining, "I feel that my music must be regarded as a product of non-education."

In the words of the composer:

"This piece (written for chorus in May, 1928) is based on a tune that I wrote in 1905, called '*Up-country Song*'. In that tune I had wished to voice Australian up-country feeling as Stephen Foster had voiced American country-side feelings in his songs. I have used this same melody in my Austrian *Colonial Song* and in my Australian *The Gumsucker's' March*.

This choral version was first sung at my wedding to Ella Viola Ström at the Hollywood Bowl (California), August 9, 1928, by the exquisite Smallman a Cappella Choir."

- *Program Note by Percy Aldridge Grainger*

English Folk Song Suite

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

- I. March - "*Seventeen Come Sunday*"
- II. Intermezzo - "*My Bonny Boy*"
- III. March - "*Folk Songs from Somerset*"

English Folk Song Suite is considered a cornerstone composition for wind band and remains one of the most frequently performed band works by the composer. Vaughan Williams devoted his life to folk song research and publication and was considered England's leading composer after the death of Sir Edward Elgar in 1934. This suite was written in 1924 for "military band" (a full complement of winds, brass, and percussion, as opposed to a brass band), and features the composer's distinctive style employing modal harmonies and rhythms derived from elements found in traditional folk songs of Norfolk and Somerset. The suite was originally written for band and later transcribed for orchestra, a welcome change from the common practice of writing for orchestra first.

The first movement is set as an English march, and is made up of three folk songs, *I'm Seventeen Come Sunday*, *Pretty Caroline*, and *Dives and Lazarus*. The first two folk songs deal with similar subject matter of military men falling in love with, and marrying, beautiful women. The styles of the two songs offset each other, the first is bouncy and jovial, the second legato and cantabile. The third folk song included in movement one is *Dives and Lazarus*. Lazarus repeatedly begs Dives, a rich man, for food but is denied. To portray the antagonism of the event, Vaughan Williams has set a firm duple meter melody in the low brass against a rigorous triple meter accompaniment in upper winds.

Both folk songs used in the Intermezzo deal with love betrayed, and Vaughan Williams's keen sense of orchestration is on full display throughout this movement. *My Bonny Boy* begins the movement in a lonely F dorian with sparse accompaniment. The mood shifts slightly to the folk song *Green Bushes* set as a somewhat playful scherzando. The pace of this folk song belies the fact that the tonal center has remained F dorian, and thus never really feels happy or jovial.

The third movement, *Folk Songs From Somerset*, uses four different folk songs dealing loosely with unattainable love. *Blow Away the Morning Dew*, describes a country boy attempting to seduce a girl who quickly outwits him. The second folk song, *High Germany*, is about a young English woman's lover and her three brothers being called off to war in Germany. Thirdly, Vaughan Williams modified a version of *The Trees They Do Grow High* which deals with a young woman who has been wed by her father to a much younger boy. The final folk song is *John Barleycorn* which is an allegory representing the harvesting of barley, and the imbibing of its final form (beer and whisky). accompaniment in upper winds.

Homage to Leonin (from Medieval Suite)

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.

Medieval Suite was written in homage to three great masters of the Middle Ages: Leonin (middle 12th century), Perotin (c.1155-1200), and Machaut (c.1300-1377). These are neither transcriptions of their works nor attempts at emulating their respective styles. Rather, the music served as a sort of launching pad for three pieces which draw on some of the stylistic characteristics of music from that period, e.g., repetition of rhythmic patterns or modes, modules of sound, proportions that produce octaves, fourths and fifths, use of Gregorian chant, syncopation, long pedal points where a sustained tone regulates melodic progression.

Homage to Leonin evokes his sinuous melodic style and use of Gregorian chant. It is a "mood piece" in which a chant on the Dorian mode is gradually transformed into a perfectly symmetrical eight-tone scale. The movement follows the form of an arch with a large climax, after which it closes as it began. *The piece first performed March 18, 1983, at the National Conference of the College Band Directors National Association* by the Western Michigan University Symphonic Band, Richard J. Suddendorf, conductor.

- Program Note by the Composer

In the words of the composer:

“So many of us spend our entire lives working tirelessly at what we love to do, striving to become experts in our field, passionately in search of something to be remembered for, something we can change the world with, something that gives us purpose.

It’s a bold idea—the thought that a small part of us might, in some way, live forever—but it seems that the bold idea, itself, has had an inexhaustible life of its own. Across the span of history, folklore has given mankind a way to find this meaning, be it through a quest for the Holy Grail, the Fountain of Youth, or even the legendary sword Excalibur. The mythology behind Elixir is a brother to these legends, probably most associated with Elixir Vitae, or as it’s better known, the Elixir of Life—a special potion with magical properties said to extend a person’s life indefinitely, allowing him or her to become immortal, to be forever young. By drinking the potion, man is enabled to overcome his inherent limitations and achieve the greatness that he has always longed for.

Elixir is dedicated to Scott Coulson, a man who has passionately devoted his life to others through music. Above all, the piece is a musical “toast”—a “cheers” to a continued journey and to a long, healthy life not only to Mr. Coulson, but also to the students at Poteet High School, whose amazing journeys are just beginning.”

Although he holds a B.A. in film, Michael Markowski’s life is centered around music and his compositions are actively performed around the world. His work can also be heard in short films like *Conan: The Musical*, which aired in a bit on NBC’s *Late Night with Conan O’Brien*, in oddball techno/pop songs, one of which featured Canadian actor John Dunsworth from *Trailer Park Boys* fame, in the independent stage musical *From Gumm to Garland: Judy the Musical*, which starred Disney Legend Paige O’Hara, in short jingles, various muzak, and comedic songs for the Phoenix-based sketch comedy troupe, *Bully Mammoth*, and also in the sci-fi comedic web series, *Voyage Trekkers*. Markowski is a member of ASCAP and currently lives in Astoria, New York.