



Rudi E. Scheidt  
School of Music

# THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS Symphonic Band

*presents,*

## **HOMAGE**

Will Plenk, conductor  
Jean-Pierre Mora, guest conductor

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OCTOBER 10 | 7:00 PM

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PLOUGH CONCERT HALL

Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music  
Albert Nguyen, Interim Director  
College of Communication and Fine Arts  
Debra Burns, Dean

## **PROGRAM**

***Medieval Suite***

*II. Homage to Perotin*

Ron Nelson (1929-2023)

***À la Machaut***

Andrew Boss (b. 1988)

***Forward/Still***

Omar Thomas (b. 1984)

***Fantasia in G***

Timothy Mahr (b. 1956)

Jean-Pierre Mora, guest conductor\*

***Sleep***

Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)

***Sketches on a Tudor Psalm***

Fisher Tull (1934-1994)

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

# UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

## SYMPHONIC BAND

Dr. William Plenk, Conductor

### Flute

Miley Jaimez  
Samuel Jesuyemi\*  
Ivy Le  
Ellie Pappas

### Oboe

Antoinette Conway  
Mikayla LeDuff\*  
McKenna Milne

### Bassoon

Connor Lorino\*  
Joseph Rogers

### Clarinet

Chandler Golden  
Onyinye Igboanugo  
Des Taylor\*  
Emily Ward  
Jaylon Williams

### Bass Clarinet

Jordan Kyles

### Alto Saxophone

Alan Blair  
Mateo Navarro\*

### Tenor Saxophone

Conor Knaup

### Baritone Saxophone

West McElhany

### Trumpet

Dylan Hewing  
Charles Langston  
Logan Pack\*  
Marshall Rambin  
Jacob Turner  
Jackson Webster

### French Horn

Wilker Augusto\*\*  
Elijah Evans  
Juan Garay  
Rhys Roberts\*

### Trombone

Mason Creekmore  
Terrion Freeman  
Bilal Muhaimin  
Constance Robinson  
Jacob Sanchez\*  
Maverick Zheng

### Bass Trombone

Thaddeus Oliver

### Euphonium

Neola Bice  
Alexander Chan  
Jacob Lovejoy  
Sebastian Santos\*

### Tuba

Juan Garcia  
Reagan Nunley  
Gabrielle Ramsey\*  
Benjamin Shedd  
Lyle Stephens  
Ryan Winans

### Piano

Isabella Santos

### Percussion

Tyler Dailey  
Spencer Morrow  
Mia Perez  
Jesse Wickman  
Elijah Wynne  
Daniel Young\*

\*denotes principal  
player

\*\*denotes guest  
musician

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Medieval Suite**

**Ron Nelson (1929-2023)**

#### *II. Homage to Perotin*

*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 an attempt 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 Perotin* springs from his *Viderunt*, with its driving rhythmic intensity, repetition, and pedal points. The opening section features insistent dissonances in alternation with brass fanfare-like passages. A second theme played by unison brass is written in the Aeolian mode.

This complete work was first performed March 18, 1983, at the National Conference of the College Band Directors National Association by the Western Michigan University Symphonic Band, under the direction of conductor Richard J. Suddendorf.

*- Program Note by composer*

## **À La Machaut**

**Andrew Boss (b. 1988)**

Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300 – April 1377) was a medieval French poet and composer. According to Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, Machaut was "the last great poet who was also a composer." Well into the 15th century, Machaut's poetry was greatly admired and imitated by other poets, including Geoffrey Chaucer.

*À La Machaut* integrates thematic material from three works of the great Medieval composer Guillaume de Machaut and adds a colorfully modern touch. The piece opens with a slow introduction using melodic and harmonic material from his polyphonic chanson *Puis qu'en oubli* (Since I am forgotten). The upbeat percussion transitions the piece to the main material, quoting the melody of his secular virelai [form of medieval French verse], *Douce jame jolie* ("Sweet lovely lady"). This piece also uses material from the Kyrie to Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame*. A reflective middle section brings back the slow material from the introduction while maintaining the upbeat rhythms introduced earlier in the percussion. A short recapitulation revisits the virelai in several contrasting textures, leading to a climactic variation with shimmering winds, blasting percussion and low brass. A final tutti variation harmonizes the virelai and closes the piece.

- Program Note from publisher

## ***Forward/Still***

**Omar Thomas (b. 1984)**

There is an inherent dichotomy built into the title of this work. The first word, “forward,” implying motion while the second word, “still,” implies non-motion. Equally dichotomous is the notion that while we move forward in time, there are conflicts, prejudices, tribalist tendencies, and antiquated, non-inclusive ideas that prevent us from truly moving forward — that hold us still.

The first half of this work presents a hymn that is saturated with weight and burden, reflecting a level of soul weariness that sleep simply cannot fix. Realizing that the only option we have is hope-made-action, the hymn gives way to a soaring effort, seeking to resume the fight towards progress, safety, and collective humanity. The piece eases into an ending with unsettling echoes of the original hymn and a return to the very first chord which should bring comfort and resolution yet leaves us with a feeling of uncertainty. This uncertainty is analogous to our current moment in time --one that humanity has faced at many inflection points throughout our story. If there is any lesson to be gleaned from our cyclical history of struggle and progress, however, it is that regardless how heavy, burdened, and hopeless we feel, we must move forward, still.

*- Program Note by composer*

## ***Fantasia in G***

**Timothy Mahr (b. 1956)**

Timothy Mahr is an American composer, conductor, and clinician. He studied music composition and music education at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, graduating in 1977 and 1978 (B.M. theory/composition and B.A. music education). He later earned the Master of Arts degree in trombone performance from the University of Iowa in 1983 and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in instrumental conducting in 1995.

Writing over 100 works, Mahr has become a well-known and sought-after composer for band and orchestra. He is the recipient of several composition awards; his works have been performed by ensembles around the world and broadcast on several labels including Sony, Crest, Mark and St. Olaf. Mahr is currently Professor of Music at St. Olaf College, where he conducts the St. Olaf Band and teaches classes in conducting, composition, and music education.

As one of Mahr's first pieces for wind band, *Fantasia in G* was composed in 1982. The work was originally conceived as an organ prelude for a wedding but later expanded to the full wind ensemble version. The completed version was first performed in January of 1983 by the St. Olaf College Band. The work is largely inspired by both the opening line of Johann Schiller's poem *Ode to Joy*: "Freude, Schoener Goetterfunken" (Joy, Bright Spark of Divinity) and the music later used by Ludwig van Beethoven in his monumental *Symphony No. 9*.

- *Program Note by composer*

## ***Sleep***

**Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)**

The commission for this piece began in 1999, when Ms. Julia Armstrong, a lawyer and professional mezzo-soprano living in Austin, Texas, contacted me. She wanted to commission a choral work from me to be premiered by the Austin Pro Chorus (Kinley Lange, conductor).

The motivation behind Armstrong's commission was to compose the piece in memory of her parents, who had died within weeks of each other after more than fifty years of marriage; she wanted me to set her favorite poem, Robert Frost's immortal "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."

The poem is perfect, and my general approach was to try to get out of the way of the words. We premiered the work in Austin, October 2000, and it was well received. Rene Clausen (professor at Concordia college) gave *Stopping By Woods* (original name of the piece) a glorious performance at the ACDA National Convention in the spring of 2001, which was followed by hundreds of letters, emails and phone calls from conductors trying to get ahold of the work soon after.

Unfortunately, I never secured permission to use the poem. Robert Frost's poetry has been under tight control from his estate since his death. In 1997, the estate released several titles, and at least twenty composers set and published *Stopping by Woods* for chorus. When I noticed this upsurge in choral settings, I assumed that it was open to anyone. However, just months before, the Robert Frost Estate had taken the decision to deny any use of the poem, ostensibly because of this plethora of new settings. The Estate of Robert Frost and their publisher formally forbade me to use the poem for publication or performance until the poem would become public domain in 2038.

Program note continued on next page



Program note for *Sleep*, continued

After many discussions with my wife, I decided that I would ask my friend and brilliant poet, Charles Anthony Silvestri (*Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine, Lux Aurumque*), to set new words to the music I had already written. This was an enormous task, because I was asking him to not only write a poem that had the exact structure of the Frost poem, but that it would even incorporate key words from *Stopping by Woods*, like 'sleep'. He wrote an exquisite poem, finding a different (but equally beautiful) message in the music I had already written.

The choral-like nature and warm harmonies in *Sleep* seemed to call out for the simple and plaintive sound of the winds, and I thought that it might make a gorgeous addition to the wind symphony repertoire. *Sleep* can be performed as a work for band, or band and mixed chorus.

- Program Note by composer

## ***Sketches on a Tudor Psalm***

**Fisher Tull (1934-1994)**

*Sketches on a Tudor Psalm*, composed in 1971, is based on a sixteenth century setting of the *Second Psalm* by Thomas Tallis. Encouraged by the acceptance of *Toccata* (the 1970 A.B.A. Oswald winner), I was motivated to try my hand at another band work in theme-and-variation form similar to *Variations on an Advent Hymn*. I considered using several tunes found in the Episcopal Hymnal but always seemed to gravitate to Thomas Tallis's setting of the second psalm. My reluctance to finalize this choice was caused by the awareness that Ralph Vaughan Williams had used the same material for his *Fantasia for Double String Orchestra* (1910), a work with which I was quite familiar. Nonetheless, against the advice of some of my colleagues, I decided to take the plunge. The original version was in the Phrygian mode with the melody in the tenor voice. A modern adaptation is still used today in Anglican services.

The introduction sets the harmonic character by emphasizing the juxtaposition of major and minor triads. The theme is first presented by solo alto saxophone, continued by horns, and followed by a fully harmonized version from the brass. The variations begin to unfold in an Allegro section with a melody in the clarinets which was constructed from the retrograde of the theme. Subsequently, fragments of the theme are selected for rhythmic and melodic transformation. Finally, the opening harmonic sequence returns in highly punctuated rhythms to herald the recapitulation of the theme beginning in the low woodwinds and culminating in a fully scored setting of the climactic measures. A coda continues the development as the music builds to a triumphal close on a major chord.

- Program Note from composer

# MUSIC BIOGRAPHIES

## **DR. WILLIAM PLENK, Director**

William Plenk has been on the faculty of the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music at the University of Memphis since Fall 2017. Serving as Associate Director of Bands and Director of Athletic Bands, Dr. Plenk oversees the Mighty Sound of the South, University of Memphis Pep Band, Symphonic Band, and teaches other courses within the School of Music.

Outside of the University of Memphis, Dr. Plenk is highly active as a clinician and adjudicator. He has worked with concert bands and marching bands from across the United States, Singapore, and Japan, including a three-season tenure with the Tenrikyo Aimachi Marching Band from Nagoya, Japan, the eight-time All Japan National Champion. He has served on the staff of several drum and bugle corps including The Academy, The Cadets, Boston Crusaders, and Phantom Regiment.

Dr. Plenk previously served for six years as Associate Director of Bands and Director of Athletic Bands at the University of Nevada, Reno, developing the athletic band program into one of the most respected in the region. He received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting from the University of California, Los Angeles, where he was Conductor of the UCLA Symphonic Band, Associate Conductor of the UCLA Wind Ensemble, and Associate Conductor of the UCLA Brass Ensemble. He also received a Master of Music degree in tuba performance from UCLA, and a Bachelor of Music degree in tuba performance from Ithaca College.

Dr. Plenk holds memberships in the College Band Directors National Association, College Music Society, National Association for Music Education, and is an honorary member of Phi Mu Alpha, and the national band fraternity Kappa Kappa Psi.