



Rudi E. Scheidt
School of Music

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS Symphonic Band

presents,

MUSIC UNITES US

Will Plenk, conductor
Wilker Augusto, guest conductor
Jean-Pierre Mora, guest conductor

DECEMBER 4 | 7:00 PM

PLOUGH CONCERT HALL

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

PROGRAM

Astra

Katahj Copley (b. 1998)

Hymn for US

James Stephenson (b. 1969)

Dr. José Wilker Augusto, guest conductor

Café 512

Ryan George (b. 1978)

Luminescence

David Biedenbender (b. 1984)

Jean-Pierre Mora, guest conductor*

Shared Spaces

Viet Cuong (b. 1990)

Alleluia! Laudamus Te

Alfred Reed (1912-2005)

*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
Jean-Pierre Mora
Des Taylor*
Emily Ward
Jaylon Williams

Bass Clarinet

Jordan Kyles

Alto Saxophone

Alan Blair
Mateo Navarro*

Tenor Saxophone

Conor Knaup

Baritone Saxophone

Alan Blair

Trumpet

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

Astra

Katahj Copley (b. 1998)

Astra is a fanfare for wind band that explores the concept of freedom and adventure through the lens of star trail photography. Star trails are created by using long exposure times to capture the apparent motion of stars in the night sky due to Earth's rotation, resulting in streaks of light that form arcs across the image. *Astra* captures the energy and wonder of this natural phenomenon through its vibrant melodies, driving rhythms, and colorful textures. This work is a celebration of the beauty and mystery of the cosmos, and an invitation to embark on a journey of discovery and exploration. *Astra* invites listeners to join in the adventure and explore the infinite possibilities of the night sky.

- *Program Note by composer*

Hymn for US

James Stephenson (b. 1969)

On July 4, 2022, like many other Americans, I was standing on a parade route enjoying one of America's most enduring traditions. Ten minutes into our parade, news begin to disseminate throughout the crowd that just down the road – merely 6 miles – there had been (yet another) public and tragic mass-shooting. As the day unfolded, it became known that seven individuals had lost their lives during what is normally supposed to be a day to celebrate the United States' freedom.

I didn't expect that this tragedy would lead to my being asked to create a piece for the Highland Park High School Band. The HPHS band was marching in that parade and were literally right at the spot where everything took place. When Adam Gohr (Libertyville High School) contacted me on behalf of Joshua Chodoroff and the HSHB, I was both humbled and troubled. I was humbled to be given the trust to create a piece that might honor and represent those who lost their lives, as well as those who were witness to the day's horror. I was troubled with the weight of such a request, as well as troubled by the United States in general. It goes without saying that these types of things have happened way too often, with little hope in sight for any change.

After giving a lot of thought as to how I might pay homage to the victims, I decided that most importantly, I wanted to keep things "simple", and let the emotion of the performers come through, rather than try to impress with player technique or harmonic invention. The entire introduction eventually gives way to what I have called "Hymn for US". The double-entendre is very much on purpose, as it is meant to invoke a hymn both for the community ("us") as well as the United States ("US") in general.

- Program Note by the composer

Café 512

Ryan George (b. 1978)

Inspired by the famous work by Astor Piazzolla, *Café 1930*, from the larger work *Historie du Tango for Flute and Guitar*, *Café 512* seamlessly blends the classic tango with a modern feel. Piazzolla's work, *Historie du Tango*, aimed to bring the tango out of the dance halls and into the concert halls of Europe and America. Ryan George's *Café 512* does much of the same, again modernizing and reworking the tango for an audience different than the ones it was originally performed for.

The composer writes:

“As I was beginning to brainstorm ideas for this piece, I stumbled across the title of a piece by famed Argentinean composer Astor Piazzolla called "Café 1930." I found the title immediately intriguing and in wanting to write a piece that tipped the hat heavily towards a specific style, the mood and intensity found within tango seemed to be the right fit. The similarities between Piazzolla's work and the one I was looking to write pretty much end at the title. Whereas Piazzolla's work is intimate, slow, and melancholy (as well as being a true tango), I wanted to write something more dance-like and energetic.”

Luminescence

David Biedenbender (b. 1984)

Based on the popular hymn Break Forth, *O Beauteous Heavenly Light*, David Biedenbender's *Luminescence* is an intense and uplifting work that is the essence of brightness. Throughout the work there is a foreboding nature that tolls on, but all the while there is a hope that prevails. The hymn, popularized by famous composer Johann Sebastian Bach was originally written by Johann Schop as a German carol for Christmas in 1641, and known then as *Rouse Thyself, My Weak Spirit*.

Break forth, O beauteous heav'nly light,
and usher in the morning.
O shepherds, shrink not with affright,
but hear the angel's warning:
this child, now weak in infancy,
our confidence and joy shall be,
the pow'r of Satan breaking,
our peace eternal making.

Break forth, O beauteous heav'nly light,
to herald our salvation.
He stoops to earth, the God of might,
our hope and expectation.
He comes in human flesh to dwell,
our God with us, Immanuel,
the night of darkness ending,
our fallen race befriending.

Shared Spaces

Viet Cuong (b. 1990)

My goal in writing this piece was to convey some part of my own experience with loss in such a way that might resonate with others. A couple of years ago I lost my father. The focus of all of my music the past few years have been healing and dealing with peace. This piece is a chorale that has been broken apart into pieces and brought back together. The piece is demanding because it asks people to come together, perhaps as an antidote to the loneliness that accompanies loss. The performers are asked to crossfade on almost every note, essentially handing off their sounds to each another in brief shared moments. These notes coalesce in simple, overlapping harmonies, creating further shared spaces within a piece that I humbly offer as a sanctuary for collective healing. It was inspired by the poem *I Want to Write Something So Simply* by Mary Oliver.

- Program Note by the composer

Alleluia! Laudamus Te

Alfred Reed (1912-2005)

Alleluia! Laudamus Te is meant to be a hymn of praise without words, with the band serving as a single massive choir and, at times, broken down into individual sections, each performing as a separate choir. The music is based on three themes: a chorale, a flowing line, and a fanfare. Reed described the piece as ending with “joyous triumph.”

A native of New York City, Alfred Reed is one of the twentieth century's most prolific composers of music for wind band. Along with his nearly two-hundred works for wind band, Reed was both a composer and arranger for NBC and ABC for their radio broadcasts in the early 1950's. His composing career brought him into the world of education, and as such, he guest conducted in forty-nine U.S. states, Europe, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Australia, and South America. He was a frequent guest conductor of the world-renowned Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra and remains the most frequently performed foreign composer in Japan.

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.