

# BLUE VALLEY NORTH WIND ENSEMBLE & KU SYMPHONIC BAND PROGRAM NOTES

APRIL 24, 2024 7:30PM

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## BLUE VALLEY NORTH WIND ENSEMBLE

*Illumination* ..... David Maslanka (1943-2017)

"Illumination" – lighting up, bringing light. I am especially interested in composing music for young people that allows them a vibrant experience of their own creative energy. A powerful experience of this sort stays in the heart and mind as a channel for creative energy, no matter what the life path. Music shared in community brings this vital force to everyone. *Illumination* is an open and cheerful piece in a quick tempo, with a very direct A-B-A song form.

- Program note by composer

*The Seal Lullaby* ..... Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)

The Seal Lullaby is a musical setting of a poem by Rudyard Kipling, first published in 1893. Originally composed to accompany an animated feature which was never produced, the work found new life in a choral setting. The concert band version was scored in 2011.

*Blue Shades* ..... Frank Ticheli (b. 1958)

In 1992 I composed a concerto for traditional jazz band and orchestra for the Jim Cullum Jazz Band and the San Antonio Symphony. I experienced tremendous joy during the creation of *Playing with Fire*, and my love for early jazz is expressed in every bar of the concerto. However, after completing it, I knew that the traditional jazz influences dominated the work, leaving little room for my own musical voice to come through. I felt a strong need to compose another work, one that would combine my love of early jazz with my own musical style. Four years, and several compositions later, I finally took the opportunity to realize that need by composing *Blue Shades*. As its title suggests, the work alludes to the blues, and a jazz feeling is prevalent -- however, it is not literally a blues piece. The work, however, is heavily influenced by the blues: "Blue notes" (flatted 3rds, 5ths, and 7ths) are used constantly; blues harmonies, rhythms, and melodic idioms pervade the work; and many "shades of blue" are depicted, from bright blue, to dark, to dirty, to hot blue.

- Program notes by composer.

## KU SYMPHONIC BAND

*Florentiner, Grande Marcia Italiana* ..... Julius Fučík (1872 – 1916), ed. Frederick Fennell (1914 – 2004)

The *Florentiner* was written in 1907 by the prolific Bohemian (Czech) composer and bandmaster Julius Fučík, in Budapest, the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This seemingly incongruous set of particulars can be explained by the musical trends of the time – many European composers were writing in styles that implied the exoticism of other lands, including Russia, Spain, and in this case, Italy. The *Florentiner* bears the subtitle *Grande Marcia Italiana*, with the main title giving homage to Florence, Italy; Fučík's original title for the march was, in fact, "La Rosa di Toscana."

*Villa de la Esperanza* ..... Juan Carlos Marulanda (b. 1970)

*Villa de la Esperanza* is an original bambuco for symphonic band. It is framed within the trends in band writing in Colombia during recent decades. The melodic construction preserves traditional and characteristic elements of the bambuco genre, within a three-part structure. Juan Marulanda is a second-year doctoral student in music composition in the KU School of Music.

*Scenes from "The Louvre"* ..... Norman Dello Joio (1913-2008)

*Scenes from "The Louvre"* is adapted from the 1965 Emmy Award winning original film score. The five movements of this suite pay tribute to the development of the museum and feature thematic material from the Renaissance time period. The *Portals* begins with a low brass choir and evokes notions of the grandeur of the Louvre. The light, delicate staccato playing of the clarinets conveys the gaiety of children at play in the *Children's Gallery*. Visions of state occasions and courtly dances evolve from the brass's contrapuntal parts in *The Kings of France*. The religious theme *In Dulci Jubilo* appears in *Nativity*

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*Paintings* and features the solo clarinet and oboe. The *Finale* is introduced by a royal fanfare and bears the pomp and elegance of the era as the ensemble brings the work to a noble conclusion.

## *Imperial March* ..... *Karl King (1891-1971)*

*Imperial March* was one of Karl King's earliest compositions, published in 1911, when he was only 20 years old. It was dedicated to a friend from his hometown of Canton, Ohio, where King got his first band experience playing in the Thayer Military Band. At the time *Imperial March* was written, King was playing baritone in the Yankee Robinson Circus Band. He joined the circus world at a time when the acts were in great need of special music. King was a master at writing music to match the rhythm of the acts and quickly rose to leadership positions in some of the most famous circus bands in the country, including Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Barnum and Bailey's.

## *The Ragtime Dance* ..... *Scott Joplin (1868-1917), arr. John R. Bourgeois (b. 1934)*

This delightful stop-time two-step dance was first published in 1902, and its appeal is as widespread today as it was then. A new sense of vibrancy and optimism is reflected in this early 20th century dance that features the wild "new" rhythms of ragtime which substantially changed the nature of dance. Lively and rhythmic, this work displays all the features that made the style so popular and shows the composer to be a true master of the genre, earning him the title "The King of Ragtime."

## *Angels in the Architecture* ..... *Frank Ticheli (b. 1958)*

*Angels in the Architecture* received its premiere performance at the Sydney Opera House on July 6, 2008, by a massed band of young musicians from Australia and the United States. The work unfolds as a dramatic conflict between the two extremes of human existence – one divine, the other evil. The work's title is inspired by the Sydney Opera House itself, with its halo-shaped acoustical ornaments hanging directly above the performance stage. *Angels in the Architecture* begins with a single voice singing a 19th-century Shaker song:

*I am an angel of Light  
I have soared from above  
I am cloth'd with Mother's love. I have come, I have come,  
To protect my chosen band  
And lead them to the promised land.*

This "angel" – represented by the singer

- frames the work, surrounding it with a protective wall of light and establishing the divine. Other representations of light
- played by instruments rather than sung – include a traditional Hebrew song of peace ("Hevenu Shalom Aleicham") and the well-known 16th-century Genevan Psalter tune "Old Hundredth." These three borrowed songs, despite their varied religious origins, are meant to transcend any one religion, representing the more universal human ideals of peace, hope, and love. An original chorale, appearing twice in the work, represents my own personal expression of these aspirations.

In opposition, turbulent, fast-paced music appears as a symbol of darkness, death, and spiritual doubt. Twice during the musical drama, these shadows sneak in almost unnoticeably, slowly obscuring, and eventually obliterating the light altogether. The darkness prevails for long stretches of time, but the light always returns, inextinguishable, more powerful than before. The alternation of these opposing forces creates, in effect, a kind of five-part rondo form (light–darkness–light–darkness–light). Just as Charles Ives did more than century ago, *Angels in the Architecture* poses the unanswered question of existence. It ends as it began: the angel reappears singing the same comforting words. But deep below, a final shadow reappears – distantly, ominously.

- Program Note by composer