KU University Band Program Notes  
March 21, 2023

**Foxfire Overture (James Barnes)**
James Barnes is no stranger to the KU Band program, having served as the Staff Arranger, Assistant, and later, Associate Director of Bands for twenty-seven years, and served on the faculty for forty years. *Foxfire*, an overture for symphonic band, was completed in August 2000, only a month after the completion of the first draft of his *Fifth Symphony*. Foxfire was commissioned by the band directors of Region II of the Texas Music Educators Association.

**Corsican Litany (Vaclav Nelhybel)**
In many parts of the world, it was once common practice during burial ceremonies to have professional mourners dramatize the grief of the bereaved by means of loud and emotional lamentations, repeated endlessly like a chant. In some places, notably the Mediterranean countries, these laments were sung, usually by women who were skilled in this macabre art and could command pay for their services.

Corsican laments, like Corsican deaths, were divided into two types: the ordinary lamento for death from natural causes, and the vocero if the mourned had been murdered. The latter then became a song of grief so intense, so filled with pain, that it could only be assuaged by an act of direst vengeance. The murderer was accused and identified by name, and the singer solemnly swore to see to it that he who had murdered would pay for it with his life.

*Corsican Litany* is based on a vocero first known to have been sung in 1775 at the funeral of a country doctor named Matju who had been murdered by his own patient, one Natale. The melody is introduced mournfully but grows steadily in passionate intensity until an astonishing climax is reached in the final menacing oath of vengeance.

*Program Notes from score*

**Quicksilver (William Owens)**
Reminiscent of the classic circus march, *Quicksilver* takes us back to the wild, unbridled early twentieth century circus times. This traditionally styled work in quite rollicking in nature, offering straightforward melodic content and sweeping technical passages from all sections of the ensemble.

The piece immediately demands attention with its audacious introduction and continues with great boldness. Becoming softer at the trio section, the music still maintains drive and intensity before once again assuming its original intrepid style and driving to a dashing finish.

*Program Note from score*

**Journey Through Orion (Julie Giroux)**
*Journey Through Orion* was commissioned by the Association of Concert Bands (ACB) and premiered at their national conference in 2006 in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. The piece was inspired by images from the Hubble Space Telescope. Giroux elaborates in this excerpt from her program notes:

> Photographs from the Orion Molecular Cloud Complex, simply put, are out of this world. Pictures of the Great Orion Nebula, Barnard’s Loop, M78, M43, the Molecular Clouds 1 & 2 (OMC-1, OMC-2) and The Horsehead Nebula never cease to capture my imagination. I have journeyed there many times in my mind, so I decided to sketch that journey with notes. Travel with the music 1,500 light years away into the constellation Orion the Hunter, into the Molecular Cloud Complex and through the Great Orion Nebula where Stars and Ideas are born.
Early Light (Carolyn Bremer)
Originally written for the Oklahoma City Philharmonic, Early Light premiered in July 1995. According to the score notes:

The material is largely derived from The Star-Spangled Banner. One need not attribute an excess of patriotic fervor in the composer as a source for this optimistic homage to our national anthem; Carolyn Bremer, a passionate baseball fan since childhood, drew upon her feelings of happy anticipation at hearing the anthem played before ball games when writing her piece. The slapstick heard near the end echoes the crack of the bat on a long home run.

- Program Note from University of California, Los Angeles, Wind Ensemble

Nocturne (David Dzubay)
In Wind Says Good Night, a work I composed for narrator, soloists and orchestra for the Minnesota Orchestra, a lullaby ties the piece together, serving as introduction, occasional transition, and conclusion. A while back I extracted and arranged a version of the lullaby for solo guitar and now have written a new and extended version for wind ensemble called Nocturne. The form of the lullaby is AABA. Nocturne presents an introduction, exposition, development, and recapitulation.

- Program Note by composer

Taking the Fifth (Peter Meechan)
Written during the Covid-19 pandemic, originally as an adaptable chart, Taking the Fifth takes its title from both the primary interval of the work as well as from a general British expression that when something is outrageous, remarkable, or the worse of its kind that it “takes the biscuit”. Given that the piece was written during the Covid-19, and that even more unpredictable news that followed every day during the pandemic, it seemed an apt title!

Upbeat, occasionally dark, but always with drive and a sense of fun, Taking the Fifth was the piece that got my creative juices flowing again, having initially found myself pretty lost for inspiration during the early stages of pandemic.

- Program Note by composer

Firefly (Ryan George)
I'm amazed at how children use their imaginations to transform the ordinary and normal into the extraordinary and fantastic. Just about anything they come across can be used to spark their fantasies and usher their minds into unseen worlds. A stick on the ground becomes a wand with magical powers or a sword to fight off bad guys. A collection of rocks turns into buried treasure, and a blanket stretched over two chairs becomes a cave to hide in. And things found in nature -- birds, waterfalls, flowers, and even insects -- can take on mythic identities when viewed through the eyes of a child.

The idea for Firefly was born one night as I watched my four-year-old become mesmerized by a firefly that had wandered into our front yard. When I asked her what she thought of the "firefly" she looked at me with a puzzled look and said with a corrective tone, "Dad, that is not a firefly... that's Tinkerbell, and she's come to take me with her on an adventure!"

- Program Note by composer

Enigma Variations (Edward Elgar, arr. Earl Slocum)
The Enigma Variations were written for orchestra in 1899 and bore the dedication “To My Friends Pictured Within.” The theme and fourteen variations catapulted Elgar to international acclaim. The story is told of how Elgar, returning home after a long day of giving violin lessons, sat down to unwind at the piano and tinkered by improvising. His wife commented on one of the melodies that emerged, and out of that exchange was born the concept of fashioning the original melody ... as it might be played by some of their friends in their own style. In all, fourteen people and a dog are featured in the Variations. This transcription was realised by Earl Slocum and contains the theme and six of the fourteen variations.

- Program Note by Nikk Pilato