



**GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY**[®]

**DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC,
THEATRE, AND DANCE**

Wind Symphony Concert

Dr. Dan Graser, conductor

Dr. Joel Schut, conductor

7:30 P.M. Friday,
February 27, 2025
Louis Armstrong Theatre
Haas Center for Performing
Arts

Program

Selections from The Art of the Fugue BWV 1080 Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) (posth.) Arr. Graser

 Contrapunctus I

 Contrapunctus IV

 Contrapunctus IX

Earth Song (2006) Frank Ticheli (b. 1958)

Laker Saxophone Ensemble

Second Suite for Military Band Op. 28 in F (1911) Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

I. March

II. Song without Words

III. Song of the Blacksmith

IV. Fantasia on the 'Dargason'

Soprano Sax Concerto (2007) John Mackey (b.1973)

 I. Prelude

 IV. Wood

 V. Finale

Seth Kane, soprano saxophone

***Winner, 2025 GVSU Concerto Competition**

Sleep (2002) Eric Whitacre (b.1970)

Masks and Machines (2015) Paul Dooley (b. 1983)

Personnel Roster

Piccolo/Flute	Saxophone	Tuba
Brittlyn Keller	Jeremy Cleary* (soprano/ alto)	Julia Droscha ø
Flute	David Grimard ø (alto)	Jorge Gonzalez*
Vivian Lundskow	Caleb Peckham (alto)	Lanie LaPointe
Heavyn Musgrave*	Zane Stoner (alto)	Jack Stoneman
Jillaena Weesies	Isaac Wright (alto)	Percussion
Oboe	Connor Brendel (tenor)	Ramses Arispe
Kayla Hieb*	Seth Kane ø (tenor)	Dyami Campos
Elisa Skinner*	John LaRue (tenor)	Thomas Cordes
English Horn	Hailey Petersen	Zachary Haverkamp* ø
Kayla Hieb	(baritone)	Ash Martinez-Lopez
Elisa Skinner	Trumpet	Brayden VanderWall
Bassoon	Madison Cornelius	Keyboard
Tanner Reynolds*	Jack DeHaan	Brendan Hollins †
Ruth Wilson†	Kaylee Hebert	
Eb Clarinet	Seth Miller*	* Principal or co-
Lilly Childers	Blake Sutherland	principal
Clarinet	Alejandro Zorrilla	† Guest Artist ø
Lilly Childers	Horn	Graduating or
Sophia Janiga	Gray Ballard	pre-service
Maddox Lewis*	Eli Gibson	teaching next
Mariana Escobar	Brendan Reed*	semester
Elyse Riter	Elizabeth Slabaugh*	
	Trombone	
	Erik Courtney	
	Matt Keith*	
	Elizabeth Phillips	

Names are listed in alphabetical order to emphasize the contribution of each player

Program Notes

Bach – Art of the Fugue

Written over the course of a decade, and unfinished at the time of Bach's death, *The Art of the Fugue* is not only an enormously expressive work, but one that also displays the possibilities of counterpoint with a single principal subject. This principal subject is heard at the start of the first Contrapunctus, and over the course of 14 fugues and 4 canons, is treated to several manipulations of rhythm, counterpoint, and secondary subjects. The work is for an unspecified instrumentation, written on four clefs with no other indication, and has been performed by large ensembles, chamber ensembles, and solo keyboard instruments as well. This version for saxophone ensemble highlights the independence of each saxophone voice as well as a homogenous, organ-like quality across the entire ensemble. The first fugue or *Contrapunctus*, states the subject for the entire work at the very start, followed by all four voices joining in on the theme and counterpoint. In the fourth fugue, we hear this theme inverted with all of its previous intervals going the opposite direction and varied in all four voices. The famous ninth fugue is in fact a double-fugue, overlaying the principal subject, halfway through, on a faster, vibrant second subject.

Ticheli – Earth Song

Earth Song was written in 2006 for choir, and later adapted by the composer for Concert Band in 2012. However, the band connection to the piece was already extant, as *Earth Song* takes its material from Ticheli's earlier band piece, *Sanctuary*. Refined down to a 5-minute work, the musical material was adapted to Ticheli's own text, which is a hushed call for peace in a time of war:

Sing, Be, Live, See...

This dark stormy hour, the wind, it stirs.

The scorched earth cries out in vain...

*But music and singing have been my refuge,
and music and singing shall be my light.*

Holst – Second Suite

The *Second Suite* consists of four movements, all based on specific English folk songs.

Movement I: March: Morris Dance, Swansea Town, Claudy Banks. "The "March" of the *Second Suite* begins with a simple-five note motif between the low and high instruments of the band. The first folk tune is heard in the form of a traditional British brass band march using the Morris-dance tune "Glorishears". After a brief climax, the second strain begins with a euphonium solo playing the second folk tune in the suite, *Swansea Town*. The theme is repeated by the full band before the trio. For the trio, Holst modulates to the unconventional sub-dominant minor of B-flat minor and changes the time signature to 6/8, thereby changing the meter. (Usually one would modulate to sub-dominant major in traditional march form. While Sousa, reputedly the "king of marches", would sometimes change time signatures for the trio (most notably in *El Capitan*), it was not commonplace.) The third theme, called *Claudy Banks*, is heard in a low woodwind soli, as is standard march orchestration. Then the first strain is repeated da capo.

Movement II: Song Without Words, 'I'll Love My Love'. Holst places the fourth folk song, *I'll Love My Love*, in stark contrast to the first movement. The movement begins with a chord from French horns and moves into a solo of clarinet with oboe over a flowing accompaniment in F Dorian. The solo is then repeated by the trumpet, forming an arc of intensity. The climax of the piece is a fermata in measure 32, followed by a trumpet pickup into the final measures of the piece.

Movement III: Song of the Blacksmith. Again, Holst contrasts the slow second movement to the rather upbeat third movement which features the folk song *A Blacksmith Courted Me*. The brass section plays in a pointillistic style depicting a later Holst style. There are many time signature changes (4/4 to 3/4) making the movement increasingly difficult because the brass section has all of their accompaniment on the up-beats of each measure. The upper-woodwinds and horns join on the melody around the body of the piece, and are accompanied with the sound of a blacksmith tempering metal with an anvil called for in the score. The final D major chord has a glorious, heavenly sound, which opens the way to the final movement. This chord works so effectively perhaps because it is unexpected: the entire movement is in F major when the music suddenly moves to the major of the relative minor.

Movement IV: Fantasia on the Dargason. This movement is not based on any folk songs, but rather has two tunes from Playford's *Dancing Master* of 1651. The finale of the suite opens with an alto saxophone solo based on the folk tune *Dargason*, a 16th century English dance tune included in the first edition of *The Dancing Master*. The fantasia continues through several variations encompassing the full capabilities of the band. The final folk tune, *Greensleeves*, is cleverly woven into the fantasia by the use of hemiolas, with *Dargason* being in 6/8 and *Greensleeves* being in 3/4. At the climax of the movement, the two competing themes are placed in competing sections. As the movement dies down, a tuba and piccolo duet forms a call back to the beginning of the suite with the competition of low and high registers.

The name 'dargason' may perhaps come from an Irish legend that tells of a monster resembling a large bear (although much of the description of the creature has been lost over time). The dargason tormented the Irish country side. During the Irish uprising of the late 18th Century, the dargason is supposed to have attacked a British camp, killing many soldiers. This tale aside, 'dargason' is more likely derived from an Anglo-Saxon word for dwarf or fairy, and the tune has been considered English (or Welsh) since at least the 16th century. It is also known as 'Sedony' (or Sedany) or 'Welsh Sedony'.

Holst later rewrote and re-scored this movement for string orchestra, as the final movement of his *St Paul's Suite* (1912), which he wrote for his music students at St Paul's Girls' School.

- Program Note by Imogen Holst

Mackey – Soprano Saxophone Concerto

Please note, the full program notes are here, but tonight's performance is of movements 1, 4, and 5.

To me, the saxophone is a kind of hybrid instrument; it's essentially a brass instrument with a woodwind reed on it. Instead of valves like a brass instrument has, the sax has keys like a woodwind. (Many sax players even switch effortlessly from sax to a woodwind like a clarinet, and back again in the same concert.) So, I had an instrument made of three materials: felt (the pads of the keys), metal (the body), and wood (the reed). In fact, every instrument in the band can be placed into one (or more) of those "categories." The brass section is made of metal, the harp is made of metal and wood, the wind section has keys, and so on. This realization gave me the central idea for the piece: a multi-movement work with the inner movements called *Felt*, *Metal*, and *Wood*, and with instrumentation chosen to essentially

match those materials for each movement. The outer movements would be scored for the entire ensemble.

The piece starts with *Prelude*, a very brief overture to the concerto, with material that foreshadows each of the movements to come. If you hear something you like in the *Prelude*, you'll probably hear it more developed in the following movements. (Conversely, if you hear absolutely nothing you like in the *Prelude*, you may be in for a long night.)

Movement two is *Felt*. This movement is a study of the keys of the instrument, so it includes lots of runs (requiring quick fingers), lots of pitch bending (to show what different pitches the sax can produce with minimal movement of the fingers), and a bit of alternate fingering. On the saxophone, the player can play the same pitch by using different combinations of keys, and each fingering combination results in a slightly different color. In this movement, you'll hear repeated notes that are accomplished with changing fingerings, so the color will shift from note to note, even as the pitch stays the same. The other question -- besides "what is a sax made of" -- that I wanted to consider when writing the concerto was, "what does a sax do?" Movement 2, *Felt*, answers that question with, "well, the sax can play some weird sounds." With that pitch bending and crazy fingering, it's a peculiar five minutes.

Movement three, *Metal*, answers that same question with, "the sax can play high and pretty." This movement, scored primarily for metal percussion and brass, is a calm, lyrical contrast to the weirdness that preceded it.

It seemed silly to write a sax concerto and not deal with the fact that the sax is often heard simply playing a song in an intimate setting -- say, at a jazz club. Movement four, *Wood*, is really just that: a simple song. The scoring here is, as you'd expect, woodwinds (including flutes, which aren't technically made of wood anymore), double bass, harp, piano, marimba, and -- as in every movement -- the sax section. The piece of mine that led to the commission of the sax concerto was a piece called [Redline Tango](#), and specifically, the soprano sax solo that anchors that work. To acknowledge that, this movement, yes, is a tango.

Finally we reach the *Finale*. First, just a little background. My teacher in college was a composer named [John Corigliano](#). Before I ever studied with him, one of my favorite pieces was his *Clarinet Concerto*. It's not just a spectacular piece, but it's easily (to me, at least) one of the greatest wind concertos ever written. When I got this commission, Corigliano's concerto cast a pretty intense shadow over me. How could I possibly write a concerto anywhere near the quality of that work?

Well, I couldn't -- so I stole his. *Finale* starts with a nearly direct quote of John Corigliano's *Clarinet Concerto*. In order to make it as meta as possible, my quote is in fact a quote of a quote. I'm quoting the Corigliano, which was, in these six bars, quoting a work by 16th century composer [Giovanni Gabrieli](#), *Sonata Pian'e Forte*. After my little tribute to my teacher, the solo part takes off for roughly four minutes of non-stop virtuosity. Here my answer to the question "what does a sax do?" was simply, "well, the sax can play some monster-difficult stuff."

Concerto for Soprano Sax was commissioned by The Dallas Wind Symphony, University of Texas at Austin, The United States Navy Band, Cleveland State University, Illinois State University, Boston College, University of Illinois, University of Arizona, Texas A&M Kingsville, Riverside Community College, University of Georgia, University of North Florida, University of South Florida, Kansas State University, University of Kansas Bands, Ridgewood Concert Band, Louisiana State University, Azusa Pacific University, Arizona State University, California State University Los Angeles, Peabody Conservatory of Music, University of Toledo, Texas Tech University, University of Washington, Baylor University, University of Regina, University of Oregon, and Florida State University.

The work received its premiere October 23, 2007, The Dallas Wind Symphony, conducted by Jerry Junkin. Don Fabian, soloist. Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas, Texas.

- Program Note by composer

Whitacre - Sleep

In the winter of 1999, 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), a terrific chorus with whom she regularly performed.

The circumstances around the commission were amazing. She wanted to commission the piece in memory of her parents, who had died within weeks of each other after more than fifty years of marriage; and she wanted me to set her favorite poem, Robert Frost's immortal "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". I was deeply moved by the spirit and her request, and agreed to take on the commission.

I took my time with the piece, crafting it note by note until I felt that it was exactly the way I wanted it. The poem is perfect, truly a gem, and my general approach was to try to get out of the way of the words, and let them work their magic. We premiered the work in Austin, October 2000, and it was well

received. Rene Clausen gave *Stopping By Woods* a glorious performance at the ACDA National Convention in the spring of 2001, and soon after I began receiving hundreds of letters, emails and phone calls from conductors trying to get ahold of the work.

And here was my tragic mistake: I never secured permission to use the poem. Robert Frost's poetry has been under tight control from his estate since his death, and until a few years ago only Randall Thompson (*Frostiana*) had been given permission to set his poetry. In 1997, out of the blue, the estate released a number of titles, and at least twenty composers set and published *Stopping by Woods* for chorus. When I looked on line and saw all of these new and different settings, I naturally (and naively) assumed that it was open to anyone. Little did I know that, 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.

After a LONG battle of legalities back and forth, the Estate of Robert Frost and their publisher, Henry Holt Inc., sternly and formally forbade me to use the poem for publication or performance until the poem would become public domain in 2038.

I was crushed. The piece was dead, and would sit under my bed for the next 37 years as a result of rulings by heirs and lawyers. After many discussion 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'. Tony wrote an absolutely exquisite poem, finding a completely different (but equally beautiful) message in the music I had already written.

And there it is. My setting of Robert Frost's *Stopping By Woods* no longer exists. I am supremely proud of this new work, and my only regret in all of this was that I was way too innocent in my assumption that lawyers and heirs would understand something as simple and delicate as the choral art.

- Program Notes by composer

Dooley – Masks and Machines

Masks and Machines (2015) was commissioned by a consortium of wind bands organized by Timothy Shade in honor of Gary Green's retirement from the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami.

Masks and Machines is inspired by the early twentieth century works of Bauhaus artist Oskar Schlemmer, and the Neoclassical music of [Igor Stravinsky](#). I admire the simplicity of shapes and color in Schlemmer's works such as the *Bauhaus Stairway* and *Triadic Ballet* as well as the renaissance and baroque musical influences in Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*.

Masks and Machines contains three contrasting character pieces featuring renaissance brass music, Baroque fortspinnung in virtuosic mallet percussion, lush oboe, clarinet and bassoon solos, and machine-like flute rips.

- Program Note by composer