

Mid-Century Modern

Poinsett Wind Symphony

June 13, 2024

Tonight's Program

The Star Spangled Banner.....Francis Scott Key
arr. Jay Bocook

Sweet Georgia..... Michael Brown
(2024)

Catch Me If You Can..... John Williams
(2002) arr. Jay Bocook

Chester..... William Schuman
(1956)

Symphonic Suite from "On the Waterfront"Leonard Bernstein
(1954)

Blue Shades..... Frank Ticheli
(1997)

Bugler's Holiday..... Leroy Anderson
(1954)

Adoration.....Florence Price
(1951) trans. Cheldon
Williams

Commando March.....Samuel Barber
(1943)

Big Band Signatures.....arr. John Higgins
(1995)

Program Notes

Sweet Georgia.....Michael Brown
(2024)

“Sweet Georgia” was written in 2024 by Michael Brown and commissioned by Peachtree Symphonic Winds in Atlanta to commemorate their 20th anniversary. Michael is a graduate of Furman University and retired from the US Army Band “Pershing’s Own” as a staff arranger.

The music in the work comes from Georgia roots. It is jazz-based with the basis coming from the song, “Sweet Georgia Brown” by Ben Bernie and Maceo Pinkard. Hints of other Georgia artists and music add colors throughout. With the drum set driving the beat, various instruments from the piccolo to the tuba are featured with a dramatic climax of the main tune at the end by everyone. “Sweet Georgia” is a “Romp” that will have you tapping your feet and humming all the way through!

Catch Me If You Can.....John Williams
(2002) arr. Jay Bocook

Jay Bocook’s masterful arrangement of John Williams’ captivating score from the film *Catch Me If You Can* brings to life the exhilarating and playful essence of the movie. The film, directed by Steven Spielberg, tells the true story of Frank Abagnale Jr., a master of deception who successfully performed cons worth millions of dollars before his 19th birthday. Williams’ music, renowned for its jazz-influenced melodies and intricate rhythms, perfectly complements the cat-and-mouse chase between Abagnale and the FBI agent pursuing him. Bocook’s arrangement skillfully translates this dynamic score for concert band, highlighting its vibrant energy and sophisticated style. The piece promises an engaging and memorable experience, capturing the spirit of one of Williams’ most unique and entertaining scores.

Chester.....William Schuman
(1956)

The music of William Billings, an early American composer, provides the basic material for Schuman's *New England Triptych*, which was originally written for orchestra in 1956. In the following years, he transcribed this music for band, greatly expanding on much of the original score. The original tune was born during the American Revolution, first appearing in 1778 in a book titled *The Singing Master's Assistant*. *Chester*, part of the triptych, was so popular that it was regularly sung throughout the colonies, all the way down to South Carolina. It became the song of the American Revolution, sung around campfires of the Continental Army, and played by fifers on the march. The music and words, both composed by Billings, expressed perfectly the burning desire for freedom which sustained the colonists through the American Revolution.

*Let tyrants shake their iron rod,
And Slav'ry clank her galling chains,
We fear them not, we trust in God,
New England's God forever reigns.*

Blue Shades..... Frank Ticheli
(1997)

Blue Shades opens with a quick minor third — a critical interval that appears throughout the work and threads together its various tunes and melodies. After a brief swung moment led by the clarinets, strict time resumes and the listener is taken through a series of melodic episodes. As the music progresses, the minor third appears in countless iterations, from harmonic support in the low winds to persistent ostinatos passed between the woodwind and percussion sections. The first half of the work is laden with colorful techniques and percussion instruments, from fluttering flutes to vibraslaps and a rowdy cowbell.

A slow and quiet middle section recalls the atmosphere of a dark, smokey blues haunt beginning with a series of solos in the flute, oboe, clarinet, and bass clarinet. Additional instruments gradually join in, leading to the section's high point, marked "Dirty" in the score.

The music then regains its momentum, accelerating into a driving walking bass in the marimba — derived from a melody heard much earlier in the piece — which accompanies an extended clarinet solo reminiscent of Benny Goodman's iconic playing style. The work's final section recapitulates many of themes heard earlier in the work, layering in wailing chords in the brass, horn rips, and virtuosic runs in the upper woodwinds. The piece ends with a serene chord played by the flute and piccolo, humorously interrupted by the splash of a cymbal.

Symphonic Suite from “On the Waterfront”Leonard Bernstein
(1954)

The iconic American conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein wrote music in an astounding range of genres during his prolific professional career. He achieved great success in blurring the lines between classical and popular styles with works not only for the conventional orchestras of the concert hall and ballet theater, but also for the pit bands of Broadway and the big bands at the heart of jazz culture in the middle of the twentieth century. In the early 1950s, Bernstein’s star was on a meteoric rise. He had already composed two substantial symphonies along with the popular ballet *Fancy Free* and musical *On the Town*, and he was on the cusp of his historic appointment as music director of the New York Philharmonic in 1957.

In addition to the attention he was receiving for his own music, Bernstein’s profile had been raised considerably by a series of nationally broadcast lectures for the CBS arts program called Omnibus. Started in 1954, these programs showcased Bernstein’s unmatched skills as an orator, teacher, conductor, and pianist through a remarkable variety of musical topics. This series eventually evolved into his famous televised “Young People’s Concerts” with the New York Philharmonic. By 1954, the thirty-six-year-old Bernstein had composed music for virtually every major genre, but unlike many of his prominent American counterparts—including his good friend and mentor Aaron Copland—Bernstein had not yet fully ventured into the world of film scoring. He received what seemed like the opportunity of a lifetime when he was chosen for the prestigious assignment of composing the score to director Elia Kazan’s widely anticipated movie *On the Waterfront*.

Starring a young Marlon Brando as a longshoreman battling the rampant racketeering on the New York City docks, Kazan’s film poignantly captured the gritty elements of corruption and violence in the city and the deep emotional struggle of Brando’s complex character. Bernstein poured himself into the project and composed an inventive and moving score that proved equal to the compelling performances on screen and was perfectly designed to illuminate the rich emotional palette of the film. Therefore, no one was more surprised than Bernstein when he discovered that much of the work over which he had so intensely labored was either “turned down” in the final sound edit, or simply ended up on the cutting room floor.

Although he was honored with an Academy Award nomination for best film score of the year in 1955, Bernstein was completely soured by the callous process of

film score editing and never again composed for movies. The following year, Bernstein salvaged much of the music that was lost or miscast in the film and created a concert suite. The suite is crafted in six continuous movements and paints a vivid sound portrait of the film's central emotional themes as Bernstein first envisioned them. Because his music was symphonically conceived from the start, one doesn't need to have seen the film to appreciate the music on its own terms. The suite opens with a stark and haunting theme for a solo French horn that could easily conjure up images of a melancholy dawn over the Hudson River dockyards.

The tranquility is shattered by a brutal "Presto barbaro" led by an aggressive, jazz-infused saxophone solo and punctuated by the relentless interjections of the percussion section. An uncredited description included with the composer's first recording of the suite provides a transcendental perspective: "The final impression, after the Suite uncoils to its end, never reaching the same plateau of joy again, is not one of turmoil on the waterfront, though the music did serve that assigned purpose in the movie. What remains is a larger portrait of urban life—its pace, its dangers, its solitude, and its hope."

Bugler's Holiday..... Leroy Anderson
(1954)

Leroy Anderson, born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1908, was a master of band literature. You may recognize him for his Christmas signature *Sleigh Ride*. In 1931 Anderson became Director of Bands at Harvard, where he composed several pieces that were eventually performed by the Boston Pops. In 1945, the Pops' principal trumpet player Roger Voisin asked Anderson to compose an original piece for trumpet, which resulted in *Trumpeter's Lullaby*.

In 1954 Anderson composed his second piece for trumpet, *Bugler's Holiday*, for three trumpets and a symphonic band. At that time, Anderson had his own band that was regularly recording for Decca Records, and he hoped that his new piece would help propel the band to success. The solo trumpet parts in *Bugler's Holiday* are written to imitate the sounds of a bugle, a brass instrument similar to a trumpet but without valves, commonly used for military purposes such as *Taps*. Since the premiere of *Bugler's Holiday* 60 years ago, the piece has remained a favorite among crowds and trumpet enthusiasts alike.

Adoration.....Florence Price
(1951) trans. Cheldon Williams

Florence Price was a prolific American composer whose race and gender made it difficult for her contributions to join the widely accepted musical canon in the decades following her life. She is considered the first Black woman recognized as a symphonic composer and was the first to have her music performed by a major American orchestra when the Chicago Symphony gave the world premiere of her *Symphony No. 1* in 1933. *Adoration* in its original form is one of Price's compositions for organ than hearkens back to her early work as an organist accompanying silent films. As critic and author Alex Ross writes, despite an impressive output of over 300 works, Price "is mentioned more often than she is heard," a fact which is only now beginning to be remedied.

Commando March.....Samuel Barber
(1943)

Samuel Barber, born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, has been acknowledged as a pioneer of the American musical dialect. During the Second World War, Barber served in the U.S. Army Air Corps at the Technical Training Command Center in Atlantic City, New Jersey. While stationed here, Barber was asked to compose a march for the unit's band. In 1943, he completed *Commando March*, which represented "a new kind of soldier, one who did not march in straight lines...but struck in stealth with speed, disappearing as quickly as he came." It was premiered by the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command Band in Atlantic City in May of 1943, and was admired by Sergei Koussevitzky so much that he commissioned Barber to arrange an orchestral version, which was premiered by the Boston Symphony later that same year.

Big Band Signatures.....arr. John Higgins

This delightful medley features some of the most memorable tunes of the Big Band era. Those songs are trademarks of the legendary artists of that era. This arrangement includes: Peanut Vendor (Stan Kenton); Caravan (Duke Ellington); April In Paris (Count Basie); In The Mood (Glen Miller); Woodchopper's Ball (Woody Herman) and Leap Frog (Les Brown).