

Lowcountry Wind Symphony and Beaufort High School Band Partner for 'An American Portrait'

The Lowcountry Wind Symphony Winter Concerts will be given at two different venues in Beaufort County, South and North of the Broad River. The first is Wednesday, 7 pm February 12 at The Lowcountry Community Church, 801 Buckwalter Parkway, Bluffton. The second is Thursday, February 13, 7 pm at Beaufort High School Performing Arts Auditorium, 84 Sea Island Parkway on Lady's Island. Both concerts are FREE and open to the public.

According to LWS Music Director, Donald F. Jemella, the concerts will have slightly different configurations. The Bluffton concert will be a stand alone performance by the Lowcountry Wind Symphony. For the Beaufort concert, LWS will partner with the Beaufort High School Band. Maestro Jemella will share the podium with BHS Band Director, Payden Nichols as each group plays several selections alone, then combines for *Toccata for Band* and *Shenandoah*.

Both concerts will welcome guest soloists, Andre Rakus, Piano, for Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, and Melvin Benjamin on Soprano Saxophone for composer Stephen Melillo's *I Shall Hear in Heaven*.

Melvin Benjamin is a current member of LWS, and is a versatile musician playing several members of the woodwind. The Soprano Saxophone is the smallest and perhaps the least familiar 'cousin' in the group, which includes alto, tenor and baritone. It produces the highest sounds in the saxophone family. Melvin is a busy musician who can be found playing in jazz ensembles and in pit orchestras for Broadway musicals throughout the area.

Andre Rakus is a former LWS band member and returns as soloist on Gershwin's landmark '*Rhapsody in Blue*'.

He is originally from Toronto, Canada and now makes his home on Pawley's island, SC. Although Mr. Rakus will be at the piano keyboard for the LWS concert, he has also given numerous organ recitals in the Beaufort Country area.

A Musical Portrait of America

Written by Editor

Tuesday, 04 February 2020 14:48 - Last Updated Wednesday, 05 February 2020 07:36

LWS is pleased to welcome the Beaufort High School Band, known as the Sea Island Sound Honor Band to our program, 'An American Portrait' at Beaufort High School Performing Arts Auditorium. According to Director Payden Nichols, this is the premier instrumental ensemble at Beaufort High School. It is an audition only group, playing at high levels of musical intricacy. They travel to Charleston each year and compete in the South Carolina Band Concert Performance Assessment. For the LWS concert they will perform 'Cedar Valley March,' 'Ammerland' and 'As Winds Dance.'

According to Maestro Jemella, this is the third time Lowcountry Wind Symphony and Beaufort High School Band have worked together. The first was in 2015 and the second in 2017. LWS strongly supports the efforts of young musicians, and talented high school students are welcomed to play with the adult group. At the present time Lowcountry Wind Symphony counts four high school students among its members.

An American Portrait invites the audience on a tour of music by great American Composers. It will include a special arrangement of George Gershwin's beloved *Rhapsody in Blue* and include music by John Philip Sousa, Aaron Copland, Julie Giroux and others.

Included in the music selections by LWS are both well-known and less familiar works.

'*Excerpts from Appalachian Spring*' – Aaron Copland is considered one of the great American composers. A native New Yorker, he went to France at age 21 and became the first American to study with the legendary Nadia Boulanger. He is best known for his idiomatic treatment of Americana, composing 'Billy the Kid,' 'Rodeo,' and 'Appalachian Spring.' In 1942 he was asked by Martha Graham to write a ballet with an American theme. The 19th

century story tells of a spring celebration of American pioneers after building a new Pennsylvania farmhouse. The ballet had its premiere in 1944 with Graham dancing the lead role. Later the ballet was rearranged into an orchestral suite, which is frequently heard on concert programs. It contains the familiar Shaker melody, 'Tis the Gift to Be Simple.'

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‘Gliding Girl Tango’— John Philip Sousa, born in Washington, D.C. in 1854, grew up playing violin and studying music theory and composition. In 1868 his father enlisted him in the United States Marine Band as an apprentice to keep him from joining a circus band! After leaving the band in 1875 Sousa learned to conduct. From 1880 until his death in 1932 he focused on conducting and writing music. He standardized the march form as it is known today. This lesser known composition has the feel of a two-step, a musical idea which was very popular at the time it was written.

‘Journey Through Orion’—Julie Giroux has established herself as an outstanding American composer. She has over 100 film and television credits. Among her awards is an Emmy; she was the first woman and youngest person ever to win that award. She has arranged for Celine Dion, Paula Abdul, Liza Minelli, Michael Jackson and many others. Julie’s non-film works include compositions for symphony orchestra, wind ensemble and small ensembles. She has been composing for concert band since 1963, writing for wind ensembles, military band, colleges and public high schools. *‘Journey Through Orion’* was commissioned by The Association of Concert Bands and premiered at their national conference in 20016 in Williamsport, PA. It is inspired by images from the Hubble Space Telescope.

‘Rhapsody in Blue’ — is a composition for ‘piano and jazz band’ incorporating elements of European symphonic music and American jazz. It premiered, with Gershwin as soloist, in front of a packed house on February on 1924. Having been greatly rushed to complete the score, Gershwin had not yet written much of the piano part. He improvised his own piano solo, and his manuscript of the music contained blank pages in the place of his piano parts. The three curtain calls signaled that Gershwin had scored a triumphant success with the work which today is hailed as a landmark in American music.

‘I Shall Hear in Heaven’— is an emotional rendering written for Soprano Saxophone soloist accompanied by full band. The composition is one of three movements from the broader *‘Once More Unto the Breach’*.

’ Composer Stephen Melillo sets to music a tribute to Ludwig van Beethoven, who lost his hearing but not his amazing ability ‘hear’ the music he composed. While he lost his hearing in life, Melillo senses that Beethoven can – and will – hear in the next life.

Please join us for these exciting concerts, as together we are ‘Exploring What’s Musically Possible.’ Brass, wind, or percussion players are welcome to join LWS, depending on the needs of the section. If interested, please contact donjemella@outlook.com.

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We also invite anyone to visit our website at www.lowcountrywindsymphony.com .