

It's All American!

Written by Chris Raskind
Tuesday, 18 April 2017 12:43

The Lowcountry Wind Symphony celebrates America's greatest composers.



There's something for everyone in our spring concert as LWS rounds out its 2016-2017 season. Music Director Donald F. Jemella has chosen music that will be familiar to many, as the band performs compositions of American icon, John Williams and excerpts from Aaron Copland's 'Appalachian Spring'.

There are popular tunes by Henry Mancini, a medley of Benny Goodman's best loved melodies, and the instantly recognizable tunes of George Gershwin. Of course there will be a march or two by John Philip Sousa. You won't want to miss this exciting music!

Frank Sinatra once crooned, "I like a Gershwin tune – how about you?" We are betting you do, too. Gershwin's all too short life ended when he was 42, but he left us with an incredible variety of music which has definitely stood the test of time. It is still possible to hear Gershwin's wonderful playing on remastered player piano rolls! His compositions have been considered standard repertoire for vocal and instrumental performers for generations. His compositions were some of the first to cross over from strictly popular music to the classical concert stage when 'An American in Paris' and 'Rhapsody in Blue' were invited into New York City's revered bastion of serious music, Carnegie Hall.

Henry Mancini gave us movie and TV themes that are among the best popular American music ever written. In 1958 we settled in around our (small screen) television sets to hear those

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unmistakably dramatic opening bars of the series, Peter Gunn. Each week it told us something special was about to happen! Baby Elephant Walk hit the top of the charts in 1962. We fell in love with Audrey Hepburn as Holly Golightly in the film, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, but it's Mancini's signature tune, Moon River, that we couldn't forget. Dum, ta dum, ta dum, ta dum, ta dum..... yep, here comes that crafty Pink Panther creeping up on us once again!

Our assistant conductor, Deborah Hamner takes the podium for 'Benny Goodman, King of Swing.' There's plenty of sass in the brass section – they've captured that 'big band sound' of the 20's and 30's. Here they're joined by the sweet solo sounds of the clarinet, on which Goodman was a master.

Among Aaron Copland's best known compositions is 'Appalachian Spring' written for choreographer Martha Graham's ballet company. Copland made use of many American folk melodies in his music. Instrumentals groups, such as LWS, frequently perform it as a concert piece.

John Williams led the Boston Pops Orchestra for many years, but he is perhaps best known for his wonderful movie scores. For this concert, Maestro Jemella has included one of his most haunting pieces, the quiet and stirring 'Dartmoor,' from the recent film, *War Horse*.

The answer to the question, "Where are America's great composers working now?" is - all around us! In Hollywood, on the Broadway stage, and on TV. Usually, it's the incredible music score that sticks in our memories and guarantees a great show. We salute them at the Grammy's, the Oscar's, the Golden Globes, the Emmy's and The Kennedy Center Honors. When we hear those tunes, they trigger a special time and place in our minds!

Lowcountry Wind Symphony players love bringing our audiences these wonderful tunes. Here are a few stories highlighting three of our more than 50 members.

Jim Colwell, in our tuba section, first got involved in music in junior high school. He started on baritone horn but switched to tuba in high school. Following graduation he joined the marines and left his playing days behind for quite a few years. He was honorably discharged after four years and pursued a career as a firefighter. There he served our community for 30 years and retired after rising to the position of Assistant Fire Chief.

When St. John's Lutheran Church started a brass choir in 2010, Jim noticed they had no tuba – and found he was again ready for some music in his life! Coincidentally, the Lowcountry Wind Symphony formed soon after, and Jim became a founding member. He rarely misses a rehearsal and is on the LWS board. But his loyalty to the band doesn't stop when the music does. On performance days he can be found loading and driving the truck which hauls our equipment to the concert site. LWS is a family affair, as his wife, Brenda organizes our ushering team.

Band and clarinet have been front and center for Sherry Iaffaldano's whole life. Being a shy ten year old, her mother encouraged her to begin music lessons in order to build self-confidence. She recalls being intrigued by the fact that in Dixieland jazz music the clarinet was known as the 'licorice stick'. Along with her growing music skills, her academic proficiency blossomed as well. She's been glad of that choice ever since and has filled her life with the joy of making music!

Her hometown of Kenosha, Wisconsin was rich in opportunities for music, both at school and in the community. One summer she participated in a traveling band which toured the Midwest, requiring five buses to transport the large number of band members. Sherry also became adept at playing the recorder in a renaissance music group.

Following graduation from college and marriage, Sherry continued to find music opportunities at churches, local productions of Broadway musicals, concert bands, and a European tour of seven countries. Sherry, her husband, and two daughters arrived in Beaufort County in 2010. Her passion to play made her ready to jump on board as a founding member of the Lowcountry Wind Symphony in 2014, where she served as treasurer.

Now, her oldest girl has joined the family's woodwind tradition, beginning the study of – you guessed it – clarinet. In LWS Sherry plays both the familiar Bb clarinet and its smaller cousin, the Eb clarinet. She is a supportive and committed member of the woodwind section. You can hear her swingin' solos in our Benny Goodman number!

Anton Ross grew up in a household where the strains of jazz were always present – Brubeck, Ellington, Miles Davis and John Coltrane. It is no surprise then that jazz is his preferred musical genre. On most weekends he can be found gigging around the Lowcountry with his musical partner, Lee Tyler Post. He describes their music as Rock 'n Blues, with a Gypsy/Jazz soul! But

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on Wednesday nights he is at LWS rehearsals where he heads up the saxophone section on alto sax.

A self-described 'military brat', he spent his teenage years traveling the world with his family, following his father, a USAF fighter pilot. This afforded him significant opportunities to play all over Europe, touring with the Forest Sherman High school Concert Band based in Naples, Italy. Among his most memorable concerts was an audience with Pope John Paul II.

Returning stateside he graduated from high school in California, then headed to college in Florida where he continued to hone his musical craft playing in quartets, jazz ensembles, and big bands. In addition to alto, he is proficient on soprano, tenor, and baritone saxophone. Anton is a founding member of LWS, where his digital skills, expertise in marketing, and sheer enthusiasm for playing have proved invaluable as the group continues its rapid growth.

Together, our LWS members 'Explore what's Musically Possible!' If you have a sincere interest in playing with us and a willingness to attend rehearsals we invite you to contact Bobbi Logan 843-705-3289 or Don Jemella 843-705-6411. You may also visit our website at lowcountrywindsymphony.com

The Lowcountry Wind Symphony will perform "It's All America" on Sunday, April 23rd at 4 pm at St. John's Lutheran Church, 157 Lady's Island, Beaufort (open to the public) and again on Sunday, April 30th

at 7 pm in Magnolia Hall, Sun City (open only to Sun City residents). The concerts are free, but donations are gratefully accepted.