9.29.26 Illinois State Symphonic Winds and Band Program Notes

Kirkpatrick Fanfare

Duration – 2.75’

Kirkpatrick Fanfare was commissioned by Central Missouri State University for the dedication of the James C. Kirkpatrick Library in March 1999. This work has a definite Irish flavor, including a strain of *Danny Boy*. The "fanfare" features driving rhythms and exciting brass figures, making this dramatic work sure to please both performers and audiences alike.

- Program Note by composer

Autumn

Duration – 3.2’

Autumn was originally composed for SATB choir, and was later transcribed for wind band by the composer. The choral version features original text inspired by seasonal scenic imagery. The setting for wind band stays true to the pacing and character of the original, with added instrumental texture and colour.

The sun hides
low in the sky
igniting the forest
with rays of light.
The air lies motionless
until a gentle wind whispers,
disrupting this peace.
With this wind
dances a colourful melancholy, painting the seasons
with brushstrokes of time.
Memories swirl
in this cool breeze,
though warmth lingers
in the arms of trees
holding on
until the last single leaf falls.

- Program Note by composer

Diamond Tide

Duration – 7.5’

A 2010 article published in *Nature Physics* details an experiment in which scientists were able to successfully melt a diamond and, for the first time, measure the temperature and pressure necessary to do so. When diamonds are heated to very high temperatures, they don’t melt; they simply turn into graphite, which then melts (and the thought of liquid graphite isn’t nearly as appealing or beautiful as liquid diamond.) Therefore, the addition of extremely high pressure -- 40 million times the pressure we feel on earth at sea level -- is crucial to melt a diamond.

The extreme temperature and pressure used in this experiment are found on Neptune and Uranus, and scientists therefore believe that seas of liquid diamond are possible on these two planets. Oceans of diamond may also

account for these planets' peculiar magnetic and geographic poles, which do not line up like they do here on earth. Lastly, as the scientists were melting the diamonds, they saw floating shards of solid diamond forming in the pools -- just like icebergs in our oceans. Imagine: distant planets with oceans of liquid diamond filled with bergs of sparkling solid diamonds drifting in the tide...

These theories are obviously all conjecture, but this alluring imagery provided heaps of inspiration for ***Diamond Tide***, which utilizes the "melting" sounds of metallic water percussion and trombone glissandi throughout.

The work is in two movements, which may be performed separately.

Heartfelt thanks to Cheryl Floyd, Richard Floyd, the TMEA Region 18 bands, and John Mackey for making this piece possible.

- *Program Note by composer*

Concertpiece for Marimba and Wind Ensemble

Duration - *10*'

Clifton Taylor's ***Concertpiece*** for marimba and wind ensemble is an exciting and upbeat concerto for solo marimba with wind ensemble accompaniment. Largely in 6/8 and 3/4 time, the musical material of the piece is mostly motivic, with various opportunities for the marimba soloist to showcase their abilities. Stylistically, the piece has a fusion/pop style, taking its influences from the music of The Pat Metheny Group.

The solo part is appropriate for an advanced undergraduate or faculty member, while the ensemble parts are playable by a high school band and can be easily put together, making it accessible to a wide variety of both school and university programs. It contains the technical complexity admired by soloists with an overall sound and feel that will be accessible to the general public.

- *Program Note from publisher*

Playfellow

Duration - 3'

Henry Fillmore's dog, Mike, could bark on cue and Henry composed or arranged numerous pieces of music for him. Mike performed with Henry's band on WLW radio broadcasts and also recorded as "an exclusive Columbia Record Artist." In his biography of Henry Fillmore, Paul Bierley says, "There were not, up until that time at least, many pieces of music written for or dedicated to dogs. Henry filled that void with a new march in the spring of 1927. He called it ***Playfellow*** and the dedication read, 'To a dog. Our dog, Mike, a faithful playhound.' This was the piece Mike could call his own, because Henry did not mark the published music with the barking spots. Whenever he played it at a concert, he would tell the musicians where to cut off and let the barks come through."

- *Program Note by Paul Bierley, in* Hallelujah Trombone! The Story of Henry Fillmore

Shine

Duration – 8.5'

Shine (2017) is a programmatic work that centers around the Prohibition era. Backwood stills and liquor-running jalopies are a part of our American heritage. Many a legitimate distillery has a history in bootlegging, and NASCAR of course was born out of moonshine running souped-up cars. America is a country of immigrants, and every immigrant who comes here brings their music and instruments with them. What we call bluegrass music today represents that Irish and Scottish folk music "sound." The folk music of the American

hill people, the Appalachians, Smoky Mountains stretching from the south to the north, gave birth to not only our bluegrass but to several instruments as well. Banjos, fiddles, dulcimers, autoharps, jaw or jews harp, the jug, mandolins, guitars, and several other instruments became our folk instruments; some instruments that existed before, some we invented. There is only one problem ... none of those instruments are normal instrumentation for symphonic bands.

I wanted to capture the imagination of an audience with as much bluegrass flavor as I could without having to score for the actual instruments. Double reeds, muted brass, combinations of low winds with other instruments all captured a lot of that visceral essence. Using washboards and special mallets in the percussion helped too. The sixteenth notes followed by dotted-eighth rhythms and vice versa so prevalent in Scottish and Irish music is also the backbone of bluegrass music.

Moonshine is a big part of our country's past and many today still earn a living making and selling legal and illegal white lightning. I will admit I sampled many different types and flavors of moonshine while I was composing this work. Some I bought in a store, some, well, not exactly. My opinion of moonshine has not changed. I still don't care for it. When I close my eyes and listen to *Shine* I can see those stills far back in the woods, hear those tires spinning out in gravel as they tear down country roads, and I can feel the burn of moonshine not just down my throat but in my soul. I hope as you listen to this back road American heartbeat, you can see it, live it too.

- *Program Note by composer*

Splitting Light

Duration - 8'

As a child, I loved looking through my father's telescope. I remember being in awe of he Milky Way — which to me looked more like a swirl of white foam than a chocolate bar. My love of the cosmos took shape through experiences with my dad, whether watching late-night meteor showers or rewatching Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* series. Since his passing in 2021, I've found connection to him through composing works inspired by astrophysics.

Splitting Light is the fourth in a series of works inspired by Earth's telescopes. High in the Chilean Andes, the Vera C. Rubin Observatory is poised to transform how we see the universe. Its massive camera will photograph the entire sky every few nights, creating a time-lapse record of cosmic change — capturing everything from exploding stars to distant galaxies. At the heart of its mission is dark matter, an invisible substance thought to make up most of the universe. Though it cannot be seen, its presence is revealed through gravity and subtly bending light in a phenomenon known as gravitational lensing.

I imagine *Splitting Light* as an exploration of light and the gravity surrounding it. The work opens with bright percussion and accented entrances that drive the music forward over pulsing rays of light. A sense of humanity emerges as the music breathes through carefully paced dynamic fades and pauses. While dark matter is often represented in the bass of the ensemble, it also appears through harmonic resolution, forte dynamics, large chords, and pointed tutti entrances.

A defining characteristic of my music is the layering of instrumental color. Arranged by tessitura, these strands often fall into one another, creating an overall soundscape rather than a strict hierarchy of melody and harmony. As lines shift between foreground and background, instruments emerge from the texture. In this way, *Splitting Light* reflects human connection, often through musical dialogue between instruments. Solos emerge momentarily, adding emotional weight. Specific examples include when an alto saxophone rises above fluttering percussion, or when solo oboe, clarinet, and baritone saxophone soar above the deep resonance of bassoon, tuba, and double bass. After an arrival of towering chords forms a late climax, haunting lyrical fragments emerge, adding a sense of longing and introspection as the music fades into the unknown.

Splitting Light was premiered by the Hartwick College Wind Ensemble, conducted by Dr. Andrew Pease, at Carnegie Hall on March 23rd, 2026.

- *Program Note by composer*

Mare Tranquillitatis

Duration – 6.5’

I was commissioned in the summer of 2007 by Jeffrey Bishop to write a short piece for his string orchestra at Shawnee Mission Northwest High School in Kansas City. They premiered the string version of this work on February 12, 2008. In 2012, a consortium of wind ensembles around the United States commissioned a transcription of this work for band, and it was premiered throughout the 2012-2013 season.

Mare Tranquillitatis translates to "Sea of Tranquility," and is the famous location on the moon where Apollo 11 landed and the first man set foot on the lunar surface. The music seeks to capture a dichotomy of emotions -- tranquil beauty and restless isolation. All of the musical material is derived from only two ideas -- the descending fourth heard in the opening bar, and the flowing and surging melody heard not long after. These two ideas trade back and forth within a contrapuntal texture, swelling and flowing as they interact with each other. The music recedes into a quieter realm and a quartet of soloists emerges, juxtaposing the lush full textures with a delicate and intimate passage.

After many peaks and dips, the emotional arc of the piece culminates in the long-awaited return of the second theme. It grows and transforms into a sweeping gesture, bringing closure to the pent-up tension from before. What follows is an epilogue, and the piece ends with one final tender moment with the solo quartet.

- *Program Note by composer*

We Choose to Go to the Moon

Duration – 6.5’

> There is no strife, no prejudice, no national conflict in outer space as yet. Its hazards are hostile to us all. Its conquest deserves the best of all mankind, and its opportunity for peaceful cooperation many never come again. But why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? Why does Rice play Texas?
>
> We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.
>
> *- President John F. Kennedy, September 12, 1962*

In the fall of 2019 when I was asked to write a new wind ensemble work to accompany *Mare Tranquillitatis*, a piece I had written eleven years prior, I was both thrilled to revisit an older work that has meant a lot to me personally, and nervous to try to find a way to bring ideas from that piece into the present and the future. As I write these program notes, we have not sent a person to the moon in 47 years, but our drive to return there and go beyond is as strong as it has been in recent memory. For generations, we dreamed of traveling to the stars, and during the 1960s, competition with the Soviet Union finally pushed us to achieve manned space flight and travel to our nearest celestial neighbor. As President Kennedy said in his famous 1962 speech, we choose to do difficult things because they are hard, and because the reward is so much greater for achieving them. Putting people on the moon and returning them to earth safely was not without many trials and setbacks, such as the Apollo 1 tragedy; succeeding at this monumental task was a testament to perseverance. This composition is a celebration of the achievements of the intrepid astronauts, scientists, and engineers who made what seemed impossible a reality in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and also a reflection of the excitement surrounding the possibility of returning to the moon and going beyond to Mars in the near future.

We Choose to Go to the Moon opens with the same floating A-flat major chord as *Mare Tranquillitatis,* but a sudden shift in harmony led by pitch-bending trombones and horns immediately returns us back to the earth. After a few attempts to get going, a continuous flow of notes helps push the music forward while fragmented

melodies interject. This music is restless and complex, reflecting the difficulty and dangers of sending people outside the comforts of our planet. A calm middle section features euphonium and bass clarinet solos, with rich harmonies that help the music become warmer and more stable. As the stream of quick notes returns, a contrasting chorale emerges that culminates in a celebratory explosion of sound.

Commissioned by the Rocky Mountain Commissioning Project for the 12th Annual Colorado State University-Pueblo Festival of Winds.

- *Program Note by composer*

Nitro

Duration – 2.75'

Nitro, an energy-charged three-minute fanfare for band, was commissioned by the Northshore Concert Band, Mallory Thompson, music director, in celebration of their 50th anniversary season, and received its premiere performance by them on April 9th, 2006.

Nitrogen is the most abundant component of the Earth's atmosphere (78 per cent by volume), and is present in the tissues of every living thing. It is the fifth most abundant element in the universe, created by the fusion deep within stars; it has recently been detected in interstellar space. The sheer prevalence of nitrogen in all of nature, and the infinite range of compounds it is part of — life-giving, energizing, healing, cleansing, explosive — all appealed to me, and served as the inspiration for my music.

The main musical idea for *Nitro* is a powerful, angular theme, first announced by the trombones and horns, and then imitated in the trumpets. Trumpet fanfare calls and a busy and relentless chattering in the woodwinds enhance the bright, festive mood.

The middle section is based on a woodwind theme that is partly fanfare-like, partly dance-like. This contrasting theme is built from intervals occurring in the natural overtone series (octave and twelfth), giving it an expansive, open-air quality. The main theme reappears, growing in power and density all the while, building to a thunderous conclusion.

- *Program Note by composer*

11.19.26 Illinois State Symphonic Winds and Band Program Notes

Professor Lauren N. Bobarsky currently serves as Assistant Director of Bands at Illinois State University where she directs the Symphonic Band, University Band, Pep Band, and assists with the Big Red Marching Machine. Lauren is also the Camp Director for the ISU Junior and Senior High Summer Band Camps.

Prior to her current position, Lauren was the Music Undergraduate Admissions Coordinator at Illinois State University. She worked closely with the admissions process for prospective students auditioning into the School of Music. Lauren was also the Drumline Instructor for the Illinois State University Big Red Marching Machine where she regularly arranged the drumline parts for the organization and oversaw all operational logistics for the drumline.

Lauren was previously a graduate teaching assistant at Illinois State University where she received her master's degree in Wind Conducting. While at ISU, Lauren worked extensively with the wind bands, athletic bands, and taught undergraduate conducting. In 2022, Lauren was awarded the CBDNA Mike Moss Conducting Grant.

Before serving in her current position at ISU, Lauren was a 5th through 12th grade band director and drumline instructor at several schools throughout Central Illinois. Her most recent position was serving as Director of Bands at Central Catholic High School in Bloomington, IL. Lauren is an active conductor, clinician, adjudicator, and percussion arranger. She continues to serve the music education community as the Percussion Coordinator for the Illinois Music Education Conference.

Lauren graduated from Illinois State University with a Bachelor of Music Education. Lauren holds memberships with The National Band Association, National Association for Music Education, Illinois Music Education Association, Percussive Arts Society, and Pi Kappa Lambda Music Honor Society. In her spare time, Lauren enjoys spending time with her husband Kevin and doggies Pumpkin and Thunder.

Dr. F. Mack Wood is in his sixth year as the Associate Director of Bands and Director of the Big Red Marching Machine at Illinois State University. Prior to his appointment at ISU, he was a graduate assistant and pursuing a Doctorate of Music and Arts degree in Wind Conducting at The University of Miami, Frost School of Music where he studies primarily with Dr. Robert M. Carnochan. Mack also has the great fortune to learn from Dr. J. Steven Moore, conductor of the Frost Symphonic Winds and Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Professor Jay C. Rees, Director of Athletic Bands, and Professor Douglas McCullough, Assistant Director of Athletic Bands. At the Frost School of Music, Mack has the opportunity to assist and guest conduct the Frost Wind Ensemble, Frost Symphonic Winds, and co-conducts the University Band with his fellow graduate colleagues. Mack also has the opportunity to assist with all aspects of the Frost Band of the Hour marching band, including arranging some pep band charts.

Prior to his time at The University of Miami, Mack was a Graduate Assistant pursuing a Master's Degree at Louisiana State University where he studied Wind Conducting with Dr. Damon Talley, Dr. Dennis Llinás, and Dr. Kelvin Jones. He assisted with and guest conducted the Wind Ensemble, Symphonic Winds,

Symphonic Band, co-conducted the LSU Chamber Winds, worked with all aspects of The Golden Band from Tigerland marching band, and with the Bengal Brass athletic band. Mack had the great fortune and opportunity to arrange music and design drill for both Tigerband and the Bengal Brass.

Before attending graduate school, Mack was the Director of Bands at North Forney High School just east of Dallas, TX. He opened North Forney High School and created the band program in 2009 where he oversaw all operations of the high school bands and middle school feeder program. Opening a high school was a special opportunity for Mack to learn how to build a band from the ground up. While at North Forney High School, Mack's ensembles received numerous awards and accolades, but most importantly, many of his students continued on to participate in music beyond high school.

Mack earned his undergraduate degree from The University of Texas at Austin in Music and Human Learning. While at UT, Mack served as the drum major of the Longhorn Band from 2003-2005 and as a trumpet section leader in 2002. Once Mack graduated from UT, he was an assistant director at Irving Nimitz High School in the DFW metroplex and then moved to be an assistant director at Forney High School just east of Dallas, TX. An active adjudicator, clinician, music arranger, and drill designer, Mack truly loves all aspects of the wind band world. In his spare time, Mack enjoys cooking and bar-b-que (they are very different according to him), playing golf, and spending time with his wife Rachel and daughter Imogen.



Ben Stiers is Assistant Instructional Professor at Illinois State University, where he serves on the percussion faculty and teaches music theory. He has also served as assistant director and acting director of the ISU Big Red Marching Machine, instructor and arranger for the ISU PULSE Drumline, and director of the ISU Pep Band. Prior to his time at ISU, Ben served as Instructor of Percussion at Centre College in Danville, KY. Ben earned his Doctor of Musical Arts in Percussion Performance from the University of Kentucky, where he also received a certificate in music theory pedagogy. He holds a Master's Degree from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas and a Bachelor's Degree from Illinois State University.

Ben performs frequently with the Peoria Symphony Orchestra, the Illinois Symphony Orchestra, the Heartland Festival Orchestra, and the Millikin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra, as well as in numerous chamber and solo settings. His performance of Jennifer Higdon's Percussion Concerto with the ISU Wind Symphony can be heard on the Naxos Records recording Point Blank. He served on the inaugural editorial team of the PAS Educators' Companion, a publication of the Percussive Arts Society focused on providing percussion-related information to non-percussionist music educators. A frequent adjudicator and clinician, Ben is an artist-endorser for Innovative Percussion, Inc., Grover Pro Percussion, and SABIAN cymbals.

Wyatt Onsen is a small town born educator, conductor, and musician. Wyatt holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Illinois State University. He currently attends Illinois State University as he pursues his Master of Music in Wind Band Conducting. There, his duties include assisting with the Big Red

Marching Machine, Pep Band, coaching undergraduate conductors, as well as guest conducting the Wind Symphony, Symphonic Winds, Symphonic Band, and University Band. While his primary instrument is percussion, he has also taken lessons for voice and performed in regional community choirs and chamber singer groups. While an undergraduate student, Wyatt performed in Symphony Orchestra, Symphonic Winds, Symphonic Band, and Percussion Ensemble here at Illinois State University. Outside of music in academia, Wyatt has played in jazz ensembles, musical theatre pits, Drum Corps International, and appeared on stage in several community theatre productions.

Professionally, Wyatt served as the Director of Bands and Choirs at Streator Township High School from 2021-2026. Under his direction, the marching band received many awards and maintained a sense of growth and enrollment. He grew the choir program to larger numbers and hosted several festivals for ILMEA and Conference Schools. Additionally, Wyatt taught a guitar class and formed a private lessons studio for students wanting to continue learning the guitar. Aside from band and choir duties, Wyatt also was the music director for spring musicals and implemented a Rock Ensemble. Under his direction, students were able to explore genres of music and different ways to perform. The Rock Ensemble gained momentum quickly and became a way for any student who loves music to perform. In 2022, Wyatt received “The LaSalle County Excellence in Teaching Award” because of his efforts in both the classroom and outside. He remains an active educator and continues to assist regional high school marching bands while serving as a graduate teaching assistant as well as teaching jr. high jazz band.