



February 2026

Delaware Symphonic Winds

### Do More 24 Delaware 2026

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We hope you'll consider donating to this worthwhile group during the 24-hour DoMore24 campaign! This would help us continue to bring unique styles of music to Delawareans and continue to provide opportunities for high school musicians to experience new music and develop a lifelong love of music.

Every little bit helps! Even \$5 toward our goal will make you part of the Delaware Symphonic Winds "family" so we can keep you up to date with future concerts, tickets and newsletters.

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The banner features the Delaware Symphonic Winds logo on the left, a geometric pattern of blue and yellow triangles on the right, and text promoting a donation campaign. At the bottom, it includes the 'DO MORE DELAWARE 24' logo and mentions it is powered by United Way and SPURIMPACT.

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**Help us reach our goal!**

Delaware Symphonic Winds is participating in DoMore24 Delaware to help us continue to bring powerful live music to our community. Your support expands access to performances, uplifts local musicians, and keeps music thriving across Delaware.

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**DO MORE DELAWARE 24**

Delaware's Giving Day. Powered By  

### John Sopkanich, Guest Conductor

John Sopkanich is a dedicated musician, educator, and leader. John earned his Bachelor of Music in Music Education from the University of Delaware with a Euphonium concentration. He has since worked with music programs across the state, including Newark High School and Odessa High School, and served as Band Director at his alma mater, William Penn High School, for nearly ten years.

He holds certifications in Special Education and a Master of Education in School Leadership, both from Wilmington University. Currently, John serves as a grade-level administrator at McCullough Middle School in the Colonial School District.

John will be one of a number of guest conductors this spring. His baton will be in motion leading the ensemble in *Dancing In Air*. John notes that, "This intriguing work offers textural and stylistic interest. Transparent layers of sound open the work with an appropriately airy feel, which then gives way to a light dance section. This work has a unique sensibility that is both pleasant and meaty."



### Danielle Jones, Guest Conductor

The Delaware Symphonic Winds' annual Side-by-Side portion of their concert offers a truly special opportunity for high school musicians across the state. Open to every high school student in Delaware, the program invites young performers to join the Delaware Symphonic Winds on stage for the final portion of their concert.

Once selected, students receive their music in advance and prepare it independently. Just prior to the performance, they come together with the full ensemble for a brief rehearsal before stepping on stage. Though the rehearsal time is short, the impact is lasting. Performing alongside seasoned musicians gives students invaluable insight into artistry, discipline, and ensemble collaboration at a high level. The experience is designed to inspire a lifelong love of music while encouraging growth through shared performance with accomplished players.

This year's Side by Side performance features two dynamic works led by guest conductor Danielle Jones.

The first piece, *Congolese* by Williams Owens, takes audiences on a riveting musical safari through the Congo jungle. Lively, rhythmic allegro sections bring the region's vibrant culture to life with a haunting and mysterious andante that suggests the hidden secrets of the deep jungle. Rich colors, driving rhythms, and evocative melodies create an exciting adventure for both performers and listeners, offering a wide spectrum of sounds that capture the imagination.

The second work, *Armed Forces – The Pride of America*, is a definitive patriotic tribute. This powerful medley features the official songs of five branches of the United States Armed Forces, honoring the service and dedication of America's military. The piece also weaves in spirited interludes inspired by the marches of John Philip Sousa, adding a stirring sense of tradition and pageantry.

Together, these selections showcase both the expressive range of the ensemble and the collaborative spirit at the heart of the Side by Side experience. By bringing students and seasoned musicians together on one stage, the Delaware Symphonic Winds continue to strengthen the musical community across the state - one inspiring performance at a time.



### Terry Alvey, Guest Conductor

**Terry Alvey** is another guest conductor leading the DSW in **Cuban Overture**.

Terry sets the stage for us on this performance -- "in 1932, George Gershwin traveled to Havana, Cuba, where he was inspired by the island's lively music, dancing, and energetic rhythms. He loved the sound of Cuban bands so much that he decided to write a piece that captured the excitement of what he heard. The result was Cuban Overture, first performed later that same year by the New York Philharmonic."

Gershwin even brought real Cuban percussion instruments back to the United States, bongos, maracas, claves, and a gourd shaker and used them in the orchestra. At the premiere, these instruments were placed at the front of the stage so the audience could see and hear their unique sounds. Although the music is full of catchy dance rhythms, it is also carefully structured.

Around this time, Gershwin was studying music theory to improve his composing skills, and this piece shows his growth as a composer. You may hear repeating rhythms (called an ostinato), layered melodies, and bright orchestral colors. Cuban Overture is bold, rhythmic, and full of energy, Gershwin's musical snapshot of a Cuban vacation.

Terry has just taken on the new DSW board position in charge of Publicity and Marketing. Alvey recently retired from being the Instrumental Music Director at Walt Whitman High School. Ms. Alvey also held instrumental music positions at Tilden, North Bethesda, and Hoover Middle Schools. Ms. Alvey holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Trumpet Performance from St. Mary's College of Maryland and pursued graduate studies at the University of Maryland and Trinity College.

### Successful Saxophonizing in your Adult Band

In other news, this spring DSW member Dawn Russo will be presenting Successful Saxophonizing in your Adult Band at the Association of Concert Bands National Convention outside Baltimore, MD. "Music Meets History in Charm City" will feature both presenters and several performing ensembles from the northeast. The ACB partner band for ACB is the Hunt County Wind Ensemble.

Dawn is a retired music educator. Her longest tenure was as Director of Bands at Randolph High School, Randolph, NJ. She directed the Wind Ensemble and Marching Rams, in addition to small ensembles. As a saxophonist Mrs. Russo has been a clinician for many saxophone clinics, maintained a private studio, and performed in many pit orchestras She has had the honor of performing nationally and internationally as a saxophonist with The New Jersey Wind Symphony, American Music Abroad and Delaware Symphonic Winds.



## **Cultural Reflections: How Band Music Grew Over Time**

### **By: Dr. Lawrence Stoffel**

Our nation has undergone vast changes during the past sixty years, and so too has the concert band music written during those years. The repertoire from the mid-1950s to today reflects the social and political customs of each decade.

#### **The 1950s**

Let's begin with the 1950s—the decade of determination. The United States had come out of World War II as a world power, our economy was strong, the population was growing, but at the same time, the new threats of the Cold War and of the Space Race brought about a prevailing undertone of worry and uneasiness in day-to-day life. As counterpoint to the worry, this was also the decade of Futurism. Possibilities were limitless. Modernism would solve all of our woes.

You can see this bipartite vision in the music and cinema of the decade. The optimism of futurism balanced with atomic-era fears. It is no wonder, therefore, that the rash of bipartite band compositions from this era, such as Chorale and Alleluia and Dance and Intermezzo, would prove so effective that composers would continue to rely on the two-part form for decades to come: Chorale and Shaker Dance. There's even a band arrangement from this era entitled Prelude and Hula!

Despite all the optimism of futurism and of the modernism that would define the 1950s, the overriding concerns over the Cold War and the Space Race brought a damper to the otherwise unbridled enthusiasm of this decade.

Clifton Williams' Fanfare and Allegro is a befitting example of 1950s band music. The two-part form is commonplace from this time period. But even more profoundly, it reflects the emergence of the concert band from an entertainment medium (for which it had been largely known prior to the '50s) into an artistic medium. The band was now destined for a new future. And this futurism is found in compositions such as Fanfare and Allegro, among the first to elevate the compositional craft above that found in a typical school band work.

In some ways, it is an emergent example of a new, more sophisticated style of band music to come – especially for school band repertoire. To our ears today, the orchestration, the melodic treatment, and the harmonic language of this music all scream “the 1950s!” and while it still has the freshness and power of the movies above, it shows its age. It is a seminal work that has helped bring us to where we are today. It is authentic: This is the real thing, fresh as the day it burst upon the scene. It's not an imitation of the '50s – it is the 1950s embodied.

#### **The 1960s**

The 1960s was a decade which largely rejected the old and sought the new. It was also the decade of a new interest in the global community. It was the decade of preemptive political war, the decade of the United Nations, and the decade that brought to us lunar spaceflight, which revealed just how small our planet is and how close our populations live regardless of political borders. The 1960s was indeed the decade of a new world order. It was the decade of Internationalism.

This decade brought us a new type of concert band: a wind ensemble – a concept would reject the old notion of an over-sized concert band for a new standard, one embracing clarity, transparency, and economy. This new internationalism that so excited the American people is also prevalent in band composition from the decade of the '60s. Composers of other nationalities emerge from the pack of Americans: Japanese, French, Finnish, Czech, Brazilian, and Greek all writing band music. References to cultural and historical events permeate titles of band works from the 1960s: Scenes from “The Louvre,” Music for Prague 1968, Homenagem a Villa-Lobos, King Lear Variations. John Barnes Chance and Variations on a Korean Folk Song. (Perhaps one man’s personal reparation for an earlier war?)

A new surge takes place in the both quality and ambition of compositional craft found in most band works. Variations on a Korean Folk Song by John Barnes Chance is not simply a reflection of '60s-era internationalism. It is also a fine example of the new quality of composition – compositions completely accessible by school bands — that came to flourish in this decade. The concert band genre was riding a wave of newfound prestige.

### **The 1970s**

And then came the 1970s... the “Me Generation”... the decade that would attempt to stave off the gloom of an economy in a new kind of recession with both inflation and economic stagnation (dubbed “stagflation”) ... a war that divided families, and a presidency that scandalized a nation.

Big, over-the-top, outlandish... yet impersonal, selfish, alone.

For all of the glamour, excitement, and spectacle of the disco scene, there was also indescribable loneliness, self-doubt, and self-destruction. In the '70s one could be surrounded on the dance floor by hundreds of gyrating bodies, but you often felt utterly ignored and completely alone. We were so occupied with having a good time, it seemed as though we weren't too aware of taking time to bring good to others.

The pervasive themes of the 1970s: Feeling loneliness, self-destructive indulgence, and a gloomy fear. '70s era composers were ready to let their audiences feel equally alienated. Just like in the other arts, in the 1970s band music took a decidedly new direction. There was a tremendous output of new music for bands in this decade – art music for the sake of art. But much of this music was received as being impersonal, selfish, and distancing. Audiences were alienated by this new music. This new style of band music may very well have been genuine, heartfelt, and profound; and many performers, conductors, and audiences would readily accept that this new music was, indeed, artistic. But to many, it seemed that composers did not care if anyone was listening.

For it was during the '70s that audiences literally walked out of many a band concert. It seemed as though most people were not interested in hearing this new, art music for wind ensemble. Just as one might ask, “What is that Alexander Calder sculpture supposed to be? I don't get it,” audiences at wind ensemble concerts asked, in all seriousness, “Was that supposed to be music?”

Perhaps John Paulson's intent when he composed *Epinicion* for band was to make his audience, through music, think about the horror of war. Published three years before the end of the Vietnam War, his very modern epinicion (historically, an ancient Greek victory song but there is no victory here) epitomizes this volatile, lonely, gloomy decade of the '70s. His music makes a powerful statement and employs incredible orchestration; at the same time *Epinicion* is lonely, destitute, and alienating music.

### **The 1980s**

The "Big 1980s!" If the '70s was the "Me Generation," then the '80s was the decade of pure self-indulgence. Bigger, brighter, louder, faster.... More "special."

So imagine how shocked, how stunned the audience (entirely of college band directors) responded to the premiere performance of David Maslanka's *Symphony No. 2* in 1987 at the College Band Directors National Association's national convention held at Northwestern University. (Now if there was ever a gentlemen's club profession in the '80s, it was certainly such among college band directors.) Mossy band directors heard a band work unlike any other known at the time! This minimalist-influenced, gargantuan work electrified the profession. It was big in scale, physically taxing, kinetic in tempo, driving in rhythm. It spawned a whole new generation of composers to write for the biggest concert band ... for the symphonic wind ensemble.

Maslanka's symphony was (and I say it in this fashion to parody every '80s-era sitcom television show) Maslanka's symphony was a "very special episode of band music." And it was electrifying!

### **The 1990s & The 2000s**

Now I must close my script, because there is no history yet for our remaining decades: the 1990s and our initial years into the 21st century. There has been too little time ... not enough time has passed to make history yet. Our commentary on these recent decades will not be history; it will be sociology at best. We do not know yet what will be recognized as the predominant themes in the arts and culture from the 1990s to the present.

But we can certainly conjecture now what some of the likely themes for these decades will be – and they are humor in the '90's and what I call excursionism (or escapism) in the '00's.

As to humor: Eric Whitacre's *Godzilla Eats Las Vegas!* is an example of farce; Robert Sheldon's *A Longford Legend* is fantasy; Andrew Rindfleisch's *The Light Fantastic* is parody; and Rob Deemer's *Carnival of Dreams* is a perfect example of slapstick.

With '90s-era humor came what I describe as a lack of vigilance, or a sense of complacency. This is tragically recalled in our thoughts of September 11, 2001. But even before that dark day of history we see already in cinema movies that reveal in our psyche that sense of complacency and a lack of vigilance.

And from the disastrous results from complacency, we find in art the reaction of running away or trying to get away. You don't necessarily know where you are trying to go, you just want to get away. Run away as fast as you can, as frantically as you can.

In the 21st century, band music has been scattershot with excursion or escapism compositions: Windsprints, Persistence, Whirlwind(s), Full Tilt, INTO THE CLOUDS! (all five by Richard Saucedo), Rush (Samuel Hazo), Turbine (John Mackey), Spin Cycle, Recoil (Joseph Schwantner), Slalom (Carter Pann), Shortcut Home (Dana Wilson), The Red Machine (Peter Graham). All of them compositions with constant fast driving rhythm and speed. All going somewhere, but not necessarily having a prescribed destination. They are works of speed to go, but not necessarily works of speed to arrive. Excursions just to get away.

Will excursionism or escapism be remembered as the predominant compositional style in both band music and all of the arts in the early ought's? Only time will tell. But no doubt in the band realm, these types of compositions are the mainstay found in today's publisher's catalogs.

We treasure cinematic masterworks that epitomize the attitudes, politics, and mores of their generation. And from the richness of the wind ensemble's repertory we discover that our finest works from the band repertory, too, communicate the attitudes, politics, and mores of their generation.

It is true that the band medium does not often garner the same level of recognition and even respect that our colleagues find with orchestral music and choral music. It is true that the concert band is not as conspicuous in the professional musicians' world because in our society the band is largely situated in our nation's academic realm. But it is an unequivocal truth that band music matters. It matters because it is meaningful; it is timely; it is artistic; it is pertinent; it is profound. Band music communicates, explains, reveals, and provides purpose and meaning to our everyday lives. And band music will continue to do so because it is and I hope always will be music of human experience.

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### **A Special Thank You**

A huge and heartfelt thank you to Kayla and Clay Riepen for all their years of service to Delaware Symphonic Winds as both musicians and members of the Executive Board.



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