



Spontaneous Beings



Kurt Elliott, Conductor

Special Guest:

Native American Flutist

Eric “Many Winds” Herrera

Saturday | October 22, 2022 | 7 p.m.

Bennett High School Performing Arts Center
610 7th Street | Bennett, Colorado 80102

www.highplainsmusicensemble.com

Program

Native American Flutist
Eric “Many Winds” Herrera

- intermission -

High Plains Music Ensemble

Standing Stones	Todd Stalter
Legend of Devil’s Lake	Michael Sweeney
Dark Cloud	Ryan Main
Ghost Dances	Roland Barrett
Spontaneous Beings	Brian Balmages

Thank you for supporting the High Plains Music Ensemble!
Please join us in the lobby for refreshments following the concert.

Next concert: March 11, 2023

Program Notes

Standing Stones

Todd Stalter

A fascinating legend from Native American folklore comes to life in this programmatic work. The Oneida call themselves “People of the Standing Stone,” as in legend they confounded their enemies by shape-shifting into stones. In relaying this story, the music takes on various contrasting styles—some flowing and lyric, some bold and emphatic with colorful percussive passages.

Composer-conductor **Todd Stalter** (born 1966) is currently the Director of Bands at Eureka High School in Eureka, Illinois, and serves as Chair of the Department of Fine Arts for CUSD #140. At Eureka, he directs all components of the high school band program in addition to teaching General Music grades K–4, and 5th and 6th grade brass and percussion lessons and technique classes. Awards for Mr. Stalter’s music include five ASCAP Plus awards for excellence in music composition. Many of his works appear on national and international contest and festival lists.

Legend of Devil’s Lake

Michael Sweeney

Devil’s Lake, in central Wisconsin, was formed during the last ice age. It is located in an area of scenic hills and forests, and is known for the majestic limestone cliffs that surround the lake. From ancient times many legends of the lake have been passed down from generation to generation. *Legend of Devil’s Lake* musically depicts one of the more colorful tales—a Native American legend of an epic battle between the Serpents of the lake and the giant Thunderbirds who inhabited the surrounding cliffs.

This 8th-note figure with its contrary motion simulates the flapping wings. The descending lines depict giant falling eggs as the Thunderbirds bombard the Serpents below. This is followed by sounds of the ensuing battle.

Legend of Devil's Lake was commissioned by the Wisconsin Youth Band Directors Association for the 2011 Honor Band. It was premiered at the Wisconsin Music Educators Association State Conference on October 28, 2011 in Madison, WI with the composer conducting.

Michael Sweeney is currently Director of Band Publications for Hal Leonard LLC in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, one of the largest publishers of printed music in the world. Michael is directly responsible for the development, production, recording and marketing of new publications for school bands. In addition, he contributes as a composer and arranger in all instrumental areas, and is particularly known for his writing at the younger levels for concert band and jazz. Since joining the company in 1982, Hal Leonard has published over 500 of his compositions and arrangements.

His works appear on numerous state contest lists, and his music is regularly performed throughout the world. He is also in demand as a clinician and conductor for honor bands and festivals.

Michael resides in the Milwaukee area, where he enjoys fishing and playing traditional Irish music.

Dark Cloud (Oologah)

Ryan Main

The title of this impressive work is translated from the Cherokee Indian word "Oologah" and is inspired by Native American musical influences. It renders the imagery of a powerful and dramatic storm that appears suddenly, sweeping viciously across the Midwestern plains. At first

brooding on the horizon and later exploding with intensity, *Dark Cloud* represents the challenges and strife of a people battling the fierce and unpredictable elements in a time before technology.

Ryan Main holds a Master of Music in Music Composition and a Master of Music in Music Education from the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University. He holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Composition from the University of Missouri - Kansas City's Conservatory of Music and Dance.

Ryan is passionate about quality music education for all. He founded and serves as artistic and executive director of the Youth Chorus of Kansas City, a non-profit organization serving youth of all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds throughout the Kansas City metro area.

Ryan is a member of the American Choral Directors Association, the Missouri Choral Directors Association, the National Association for Music Education and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. He currently serves on the National Association for Music Education's Council on Music Composition.

Ghost Dances (Wounded Knee, 1890)

Roland Barrett

This piece, *Ghost Dances*, was inspired by the tragic story of the massacre of some 300 members of the Lakota Sioux tribe at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1890.

On the morning of December 29th, a group of about 350 Lakota Sioux were camped on the banks of the Wounded Knee creek in southwestern South Dakota. Surrounding the camp was a large contingent of U.S. soldiers charged with the responsibility of arresting the chief and disarming his warriors. Emotions were raw, all present were on edge, and the atmosphere was brittle with tension.

The preceding months had been devastating for the proud members of the Lakota Sioux tribe. With their buffalo herds rapidly disappearing and with encroachment on all sides by settlers and government forces, the people knew that the way of life they had known forever was rapidly nearing its end.

In a desperate attempt to return to the days of their glory, many Native Americans sought salvation in a new mysticism preached by a Paiute shaman in Nevada. Several Lakota Sioux emissaries had traveled from South Dakota to hear his message. Wovoka prophesied that the dead would soon rejoin the living in a new world in which all would live without fear. To hasten this event, he encouraged all who would listen to perform the Ghost Dance. Many dancers wore white or brightly colored shirts emblazoned with images of eagles and buffaloes. As they danced wildly, they believed that these “ghost shirts” would protect them from soldiers’ bullets. During the fall of 1890, the Ghost Dance phenomenon spread quickly through the Sioux villages of the Dakota reservations, revitalizing the citizenry and bringing an increased level of fear to the area settlers and to the U.S. army.

In December of 1863, the orders were issued to begin rounding up the area’s tribal leaders. One such communication read, “the Sioux are dancing in the snow and are wild...We need protection and we need it now. The leaders should be arrested and confined at some military post until the matter is quieted and this should be done now.”

After the death of Chief Sitting Bull on December 15, a group of about 350 Lakota fled south, seeking protection on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The army intercepted the group on December 28 and brought them to the edge of the Wounded Knee creek to camp.

In the early morning hours of December 29, all the Lakota men were summoned to the center of the camp. The soldiers ordered the men to surrender their weapons, agitating an already tense and serious situation. The Lakotas began to stack the guns, but the soldiers were still not

satisfied. The troops began ransacking the camp's tents, bringing out bundles and tearing them open, tossing small knives, axes and tent stakes onto the pile. The soldiers then ordered individual searches of the warriors. Although the exact details of the next few moments are sketchy, most accounts say that one of the Sioux, possibly a medicine man named Yellow Bird, spoke out in defiance of the soldiers. Throwing dirt in the air, he danced a few steps of the Ghost Dance and urged his friends not to worry, that the soldier's bullets could not harm them. As the tension built to an unbearable level, the unthinkable happened—in the noise and confusion, a Lakota gun accidentally discharged. Within seconds, the troops fired volley after volley into the now unarmed camp. Clouds of smoke and dust filled the air as men, women and children scrambled for their lives. Many ran for a ravine next to the camp only to be cut down in a withering crossfire. When the smoke cleared and the terrible chaos drew to a close, nearly 300 Lakota Sioux lay dead.

Perhaps no summation of the catastrophic event is more profound or eloquent than the following words, offered by the famous Lakota medicine man Black Elk, who survived the massacre. "I did not know then how much was ended. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream...The nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer and the sacred tree is dead."

Dr. Roland Barrett joined the University of Oklahoma's music theory and composition faculty in 2001 after a fifteen-year stint as Assistant Director of Bands. In addition to his teaching duties, Dr. Barrett continues to serve as the musical arranger for the Pride of Oklahoma marching band.

Barrett is also a nationally recognized composer and arranger, with over two hundred published original works and arrangements for symphonic band, chamber ensembles, and marching band. Barrett is a multiple recipient of the annual ASCAPPlus award, and is a former recipient of the Michael Hennagin memorial scholarship in composition at the University of Oklahoma.

Inspired by the city of Duluth, Minnesota, *Spontaneous Beings* is based on the Anishinaabeg, a large group of tribes indigenous to the Northeastern area of North America including both Canada and the United States. The title comes from Ojibwe historian Basil Johnston, who offered that the literal translation of the name is “Beings Made Out of Nothing” or “Spontaneous Beings.”

According to oral history, seven “beings” (called *mügis*) appeared in a vision relating to a prophecy. The people were instructed to move west, away from the settlers who were entering the area, so they could keep their traditions alive. As they began their westward journey, they reached a series of “stopping places” that were confirmed by snail shells (*mügis* shells). During this time, the Anishinaabeg divided into six nations, including the Ojibwe. This group continued westward, dividing into several groups before eventually reaching the “sixth stopping place,” known today as the city of Duluth.

The music draws inspiration from an Anishinaabe “Spirit Bear” song. Spiritual medicine is an important aspect of this society, and the oral history mentions the Sun Spirit, who came to the people in the form of a little boy to teach them the ways that would ultimately define the Ojibwe people. The boy lives with an adopted family when another of the sons dies. After seeing how sad this makes the mother and father, the boy takes the form of a spirit bear and, upon circling the body several times, is able to bring him back to life. At that point, he reveals himself as the Sun Spirit and stays to teach them the ways of Midewiwin, a spiritual practice. He eventually returns to the sun and mentions that they will continue to feel his influence that way.

The opening section of the music is based on fragments and alterations of the song. It suggests moments of great mystery, fear, power, and pride. As the allegro section begins, the complete song is presented in the woodwinds. The entire section is based on a pentatonic scale, which

follows the original song. Percussion includes a powwow drum (a large drum typically played with players all around it using a special beater) and a buffalo drum (similar to a frame-drum, which is a viable substitute). As the music develops, harmony plays an intricate role and breaks from the pentatonic modality while the melody is augmented and juxtaposed against earlier rhythmic patterns.

Spontaneous Beings was commissioned by the 2014 Summer Teaching Consortium after Brian Balmages presented at the Minnesota Band Directors Association summer conference in Duluth, Minnesota.

Brian Balmages is known worldwide as a composer and conductor who equally spans the worlds of orchestral, band, and chamber music. His music has been performed by groups ranging from professional symphony orchestras to elementary schools in venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Sydney Opera House, Toronto Centre for the Arts, and many more.

As a conductor, Mr. Balmages enjoys regular engagements with all-state and regional ensembles as well as university and professional groups throughout the world. He is an elected member of the American Bandmasters Association and has taught instrumental conducting at Towson University where he also served as Assistant Director of Bands and Orchestras. Currently, he is Director of MakeMusic Publications and Digital Education for Alfred and MakeMusic.

Eric “Many Winds” Herrera

Eric “Many Winds” Herrera, whose heritage includes Blackfeet Indian, European Hispanic and German, has been a musician for over 36 years with talents spanning brass, string, percussion and flute instruments. As a performing artist in both contemporary Christian and native works, the Native American flute is his most heartfelt talent. Eric considers his music as a way of honoring his Native American heritage. Through his music, his intent is to tell the Native American story and to enrich the lives of those who hear it.



Kurt Elliott, Conductor

Piccolo

Darcy Kennedy

Tenor Saxophone

Aidan Lang

Flute

Nancy Butterworth

Darcy Kennedy

Lisa Linnebur

Trumpet

Rebecca Coffee

Dwayne Massner

Oboe

Olivia Martin

Horn

Valerie White

Clarinet

Erica Bertram

Emma Harvey

Laci Harvey

Alawna Hodson

Karen Olson

Trombone

Lyn Goodrum

Mike Goodwin

Euphonium

David Pershing

Bass Clarinet

Selby Butterworth

Tuba

Adam Torres

Josh Wallace

Alto Saxophone

Doug Claussen

Casey Gerczynski

Cole Harvey

Percussion

JaLee Kitzman

Jessica Scott

Katelynn Swallow

Join the



Do you currently, or have you in the past, played an instrument? Interested in joining our ensemble? It's never too late to revisit an old passion. We meet most Mondays at 6:30 p.m. in the Bennett High School band room. Contact us by email, so we can have a folder of music ready for you!

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