

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS



presents

“CONNECTIONS”
UT TYLER SYMPHONIC BAND &
WIND ENSEMBLE

DR. ALEXANDER SCOTT, CONDUCTOR
PETER COHN, GUEST COMPOSER

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2025
7:30 PM
COWAN CENTER, VAUGHN AUDITORIUM

PROGRAM

UT Tyler Symphonic Band

Valdres

Johannes Hanssen (1874-1967)
arr. Glenn C. Bainum

Mitchell Gilbert & Sebastian Hernandez, antiphonal trumpets

Dum Spiro Spero

Chris Pilsner
(b. 1986)

English Folk Song Suite

Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872-1958)

I. March- "Seventeen Come Sunday"

II. Intermezzo- "My Bonny Boy"

III. March- "Folk Songs from Somerset"

Country Gardens

Percy Grainger (1882-1961)
Edited by Brant Karrick

INTERMISSION

UT Tyler Wind Ensemble

Magneticfireflies

Augusta Reed Thomas
(b. 1964)

Trauermusik

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)
Edited by Michael Votta and John Boyd

Letter to Binka

**World Premiere*

Peter Cohn
(b. 2004)

Sketches on a Tudor Psalm

Fisher Tull
(1934-1994)

PROGRAM NOTES

HANSSEN

Johannes Hanssen began his musical career as a tenor-horn player in the Oslo Military Band in 1900. Taken with the band medium, Hanssen quickly began composing his own march in 1901 and eventually three years later, he finished writing Valdres. While the march repertoire of the United States, Germany, England, and Spain have historically been larger and better known, Valdres remains a greatly loved Norwegian tone-poem. The opening melody played by the trumpet is a bugle call from the Valdres Battalion; Valdres being a valley in southern Norway. The second subject is an old tune for hardanger-fiddle; the trio is a pentatonic tune based upon Norwegian folk music.

The march premiered at an outdoor concert in Oslo. Hanssen, who was playing trumpet in the band, heard only two people applaud -- his two best friends. He then arranged the work for the Orchestra of the National Theater, but Johan Halvorsen, the conductor, turned it down. Later he sold the march to a publisher for 25 kroner (about five dollars). Although it was his first composition, Hanssen admitted near the end of his life that he had never written anything better.

-Program Note by Alexander Scott

PILSNER

Dum Spiro Spero takes its title from a Latin phrase meaning “While I breathe, I hope.” When I read that phrase for the first time, I was taken back by the incredible amount of power it held and immediately knew it would be the basis for a new piece.

When I started writing, my goal was to write something as deeply emotional and human as the title was. The result was a series of simple melodies supported by some of the most colorful orchestration and harmonies I’ve ever written. From the lush opening, the gentle singing, and ultimately the triumphal climax, the human quality to the music is what I think gives Dum Spiro Spero a powerful sense of grace and splendor.

It is dedicated to Casey Cropp, the man who has served as a mentor and friend for much of my musical career.

-Program Note by composer

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Vaughan Williams is often cited as one of England’s most respected and admired composers. Throughout his extensive career, he composed music displaying power, nobility, and expressivity- some say representing the true essence of British music. Born in 1872 in Down Ampney, England, Vaughan Williams grew up studying piano and violin. After finishing studies at the Charterhouse School, he studied at Trinity College in Cambridge and the Royal College of Music, where he met and developed a friendship with student Gustav Holst.

Although primarily known as a composer, Vaughan Williams was also active as an organist, conductor, lecturer, teacher, editor, and writer. His interest in English folk songs led him to travel the country transcribing and preserving local folk tunes. As musical editor of The English Hymnal, he composed several well-known hymns and later helped edit The Oxford Book of Carols with similar success.

Throughout his prolific career, Vaughan Williams composed symphonies, film scores, operas, choral works, hymns, and works for orchestra and wind bands. English Folk Song Suite was commissioned by the band of the Royal Military School of Music. It premiered on 4 July 1923, at Kneller Hall. In three movements, the suite contains many different folk songs from the Norfolk and Somerset regions of England, including Seventeen Come Sunday, Pretty Caroline, Dives and Lazarus, My Bonny Boy, Green Bushes, Blow Away the Morning Dew, High Germany, and The Tree So High. Historically, the suite is considered (along with Gustav Holst’s two suites for military band) to be a cornerstone work in the literature, and one of the earliest “serious” works for the wind band.

The original publication of this work contained a fourth movement, Sea Songs, which the publisher, Boosey & Hawkes, subsequently removed and published separately.

-Program Note by Alexander Scott

GRAINGER

Percy Aldridge Grainger (1882-1961) enjoyed a long and distinguished musical career as a concert pianist, composer, educator, innovator, and folk-song collector. Following his first public performances, he was hailed as a prodigy and soon emerged as one of the leading concert pianists in the world. His interest in world music was further inspired after attending a lecture by noted ethnomusicologist Lucy Broadwood in 1905, and by encouragement from his friend Edvard Grieg. He soon became an avid folksong collector and was among the first to use the Edison wax cylinder recorder. Over the next few years, he was able to collect and transcribe over 400 songs, many of which he arranged and orchestrated, and now remain as some of his best-known works.

His first piano arrangement of the English Morris dance tune “Country Gardens” was completed in 1918 as a birthday gift for his mother. It became extremely popular and was his greatest commercial and financial success, making Grainger very rich. He soon, however, began to detest the song as he was continuously asked to play it. Many times, his audience would not leave the concert until he obliged. Even this simple tune displays Grainger’s genius with harmony, counterpoint, and color, and hopefully will entice musicians of all ages to enjoy the music of Percy Grainger.

-Program Note by Brant Karrick

THOMAS

From the initial trumpet entrance to the punctuated percussive elements, short musical ideas are passed throughout the ensemble, creating constant interest for the listener and a challenge for players. Dominated by brass bell tones, metallic percussion sounds, and flutter tongue, the piece builds intensity to a piercing unison finale. *Magneticfireflies* is a work that explores the gamut of timbral possibilities for the wind ensemble. Instrumental color and sound gestures become the driving force behind this work.

Thomas describes *Magneticfireflies* as “very rhapsodic, lyrical, rich and majestic, but also quite playful. One of the main intentions of this music is the juxtaposition between stark, bold, individual colors, such as a loud solo trumpet, Mahler style, with a completely blended timbre, Debussy style.” She creates several compositional layers in this loosely organic form as “arguments” for juxtaposition: solo vs. ensemble, fanfare vs. lyricism, stasis vs. rhythmic activity, dynamic contrast, and contrasting articulations. After the brief first statement, the individual contrasts begin a series of syntheses, taking on characteristics of their opponents. After the brief flute solo, there is a return of sorts, leading to a final synthesis in the coda.

-Program Note by Alexander Scott

WAGNER

On December 14, 1844, the remains of Carl Maria von Weber were moved from London, where he had died, to Germany. Wagner composed *Trauermusik* for the torch light procession to Weber’s final resting place, the Catholic Cemetery in Friedrichstadt. As part of his musical remembrance, Wagner arranged several portions of Weber’s opera Euryanthe for a large wind band of 75 players including 7 oboes, 10 bassoons, 25 clarinets and 14 horns, among others. 20 drums accompanied this wind band during the funeral procession.

The first part of *Trauermusik* is an arrangement of music from the overture to Euryanthe, which represents the vision of Emma’s spirit in the opera. The main section of the work is taken from the cavatina “Hier dicht am Quell,” the text of which contains numerous references to death. The coda comes from a passage in Act II that recalls the opening “spirit music.” Wagner amassed all the military bands around Dresden for the occasion and was gratified by the effect. He remained fond of the work throughout his life and in Mein Leben he wrote, “I had never before achieved anything that corresponded so perfectly to its purpose.”

-Program Note by Michael Votta

COHN

My great-grandmother, Binka, led a fascinating life.

We never met; she died long before I was born. She fled Poland on the eve of the Holocaust with my great-grandfather as a young couple, torn away by circumstance from life and a family that she’d never return to. She spoke six languages and could read and write in two more. I like to imagine she knew Yiddish songs, read ancient Hebrew texts, enjoyed German literature. I like to imagine that when I read and sing and play those same texts and songs, I get to talk to her, even if in just a metaphorical sense. I like to imagine that she’s present when I read Talmudic texts, when I speak Spanish or broken Hebrew, when I write music that incorporates Jewish idioms. I wonder if she knew any of the songs that I read about, if she listened to any of the symphonies I study. I hope she knows that those things weren’t left behind when she fled. I hope she knows that her descendants treasure them, like heirlooms, like our own memories.

She had a beautiful, complicated family, shaped by pride in who they were and where. They came from and by the weight of carrying the stories that they’d witnessed be condemned to silence. I’m lucky to have a brother, her Hebrew namesake, with whom I’m closer than she ever could be to her sister, who is mine. I’m lucky to enjoy a familial love unencumbered by the trauma she never should have had to bear. I hope she sees what we today get to have, and I hope she knows that we’re conscious of just how lucky we are. I hope she knows that we’re Jewish because of her, that we’re proud of it, that her scholarship and love of learning is present in the way I look at the world today. She was inquisitive, learned, grounded in the traditions that shaped her-- this much I know.

I’m a proud Jew, something the world would not allow her to be. I’m fascinated by the lives of the people who shaped mine, by their books and poems and songs, by the melodies that wove throughout their lives. I’m fascinated by their stories, stories that I get to take with me into the future. I get to hear about her life, and I’m sorry she doesn’t get to hear about mine. I’m sorry she doesn’t get to see that the things she endured weren’t for naught, that the things she valued remain in those of us who are lucky enough to hear her story. I’m sorry she doesn’t get to see her traditions live on, that she doesn’t get to see the new ones we create. But I hope she knows, somehow, that she matters, to me and to humanity. I hope she knows that she is remembered that those memories are more valuable than anything she ever owned, than anything the Nazis took from her. I, a proud, Jewish, gay, progressive, intellectual young man, am blessed by her memory.

This piece is for her. It’s about the things I’d say to her if I somehow got the chance, about the stories I’d ask her to tell and the ones that I’d want her to hear. I want her to know that I’m proud, that I’m curious, that I’m loving and am lucky enough to have a family who taught me how to be all of those things. I want her to know that music is my language, that the music I write is made of her just as much as the words I speak or the values I have. I want her to know that this piece is my letter to her, and my letter to the past. I have no way of knowing if she’ll ever hear it, but I wrote it with the knowledge that who I am is because of her, and that if music has meaning across space and time, maybe that meaning will find its way into the great beyond.

My great grandmother, Binka, led a fascinating life.

This piece is not her story—that’s a story I’ve only heard in snippets and fragments. It’s a complicated story, with joy and love and trauma all inextricably mixed together. It’s a story I never got to hear from her. This piece is not that story—this piece is about me, and about her, and about imagining a world in which, just for a moment, the barriers of time and tragedy that separate us were gone, and I could ask her to tell me that story. And then maybe I could tell her mine. I hope she’d like that story; I suspect she would.

To Binka, the polyglot, the cosmopolitan, the scholar, the survivor, the immigrant, the mother and grandmother: O would have loved to meet you. Maybe one day I’ll get to hear your story, the way you want it to be told. For now, this is the best I can do.

Letters to Binka is a musical tapestry, a collection of melodies and ideas stitched together like threads and woven with symbolism. The most prominent is Zayt Gezunterheytt, a Russian Jewish folksong that I first encountered in its anthology setting by Joel Engel. Engel was an ethnomusicologist regarded by many as one of the most important figures in the history of Jewish art music, and learning about him (through this particular song) was the first time I’d seen Jewish music discussed in a conservatory setting. It was the first time I really understood what it felt like for music to represent me, ethnically or otherwise, and it’s a melody that I’ve been unable to get out of my head ever since. In this piece, the opening gives way to a setting of Unzer Nigndl, literally “our song,” attributed to a Galician folk poet who was killed in World War II but often credited anonymously.

The piece culminates in a kind of fantasy, beginning with a quote of Mi Shebeirach, a song by Debbie Friedman, arguably the most prominent Jewish liturgical composer of the twentieth century. It’s a song that always meant a lot to me and is a treasured melody for many American Jews. Mi Shebeirach calls for healing, and the embrace of a community, and while I feel that’s particularly needed at the time I’m writing this, I suspect that yearning for peace and renewal will be relevant long into the future.

One specific interval is prominent in all these melodies, as well as much of the piece’s original melodic material: 1-2-5. In Gematria (Hebrew mystical numerology in which the numbers correspond to specific letter in the Hebrew alphabet) those numbers, rearranged, form the root of the Hebrew word for love. In Zayt Gezunterheytt, a song described by some sources as reflecting the bittersweet goodbye to a bride from her parents on the wedding, this love is the love of a family saying goodbye, and the love present in the memory of a family that never got to reunite. In Unzer Nigndl, the motif is presented with a lowered scale degree 2, which foreshadows the klezmer-infused sections that appear later. Klezmer music has a melody that’s always fascinated me, and that lowered second step forms the beginning of the mode “Ahava Rabbah,” which is arguably the most common scale used in Jewish music is (and most distinctly “Jewish”) as well as literally translating to “great love.” The love in Unzer Nigndl is an intimate, joyous love, the love of having a favorite song to listen to with a loved one. I wonder, if I grew up around Binka, if we’d have a song that was “ours.” The same interval is also present in the piece’s climax, which references Mi Shebeirach, a melody that brings me more comfort than most that I can think of. It’s a song that I associate with family, and with loss, but loss that’s tinged with the joy of memory. It carries a love that manifests in tradition and pride. It’s the love of a community, of people.

There’s much more symbolism in this piece, some of which is obvious and some of which is subtle, some of which is overtly stated for the performer and some which might forever stay with me. This piece is about a nation, and a culture, but also about just two people, communicating across the chasm of time. It’s things I want to say, and the things I think I might hear back. Even if the letters never return, there’s something meaningful in sending them. These are my letters to Binka.

-Program Note by composer

TULL

Fisher Tull was born in Waco, Texas in 1934 and received his musical training at North Texas State University. After he graduated in 1957, he became an instructor in trumpet, theory, and jazz ensembles at Sam Houston State University. He later returned to North Texas State in 1962 to study with Samuel Adler for his doctorate in composition. Upon graduation, Tull returned to Sam Houston State as chairman of the Department of Music. He also served for two years as president of the Texas Association of Music Schools and served the National Association of Schools of Music as a member of the Board of Directors and the Commission on Undergraduate Studies. As a composer, he was awarded First Prize five times in the Texas Composers Guild contests, and he was the recipient of ten ASCAP awards. In 1970, he achieved national recognition by winning the American Bandmasters Association Ostwald Award for his Toccata for band, and in 1979 he was awarded the first Arthur Frazer Memorial Prize for his Three Episodes for orchestra.

Sketches on a Tudor Psalm is based on Thomas Tallis’ sixteenth-century setting of the second Psalm. Originally published in a collection of vernacular psalm settings for Matthew Parker (the first Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury), Tallis’ work consists of eight psalm settings and one ordinal for the psalter. Through Tallis’ setting is a paraphrase of the second Psalm, it maintains the psalmist’s message and instructs us to embrace God and be blessed or defy Him and be damned. Despite the existence of Ralph Vaughan Williams’ well-known Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis based on the same material (and despite his friends’ advice against embarking on this project), Tull was drawn to the famous Tallis melody. Using the existing uneven metrical structure, Tull deconstructs the original tenor melody (first stated in its original form by the alto saxophone) into six distinct segments before utilizing them in the subsequent variations.

-Program Note by Alexander Scott

SYMPHONIC BAND PERSONNEL

Flute

McKenzie Jacobs

Isaiah “Perry” Perez

Aracely Perez-Gonzalez

Morgan Silberman

Nicole Sims

Oboe

Ayden Haun

Jasper Scharp

Clarinet

Ksenia Alvarez

Samuel Antonio

Jeff Emge

Dakota McDowell

Jovanny Morales

Harvey Nguyen

Saxophone

Sebastian Flores

Bradley Guttierrez

Jose Herrera

Keelyn McCary

Anthony Orduna

Domanic Riebschlager

Gracie Sexton

Trumpet

Christian Dsouza

Juan Hernandez

Nicholas Nard

Eduardo Ortiz

Rymington Raven

Jade Washington

Trombone

Logan Kendrick

Jalynn Stowe

Caitlynn Vanzandt

Euphonium

Leonel Botello

Ajani McKentie

Tuba

Danielle Dickens

Percussion

Jordan Dunn

Abigail Phillips

Austin Vickers

Horn

Jordan Keeny

WIND ENSEMBLE PERSONNEL

Flute

Ani Aparicio
Maddison Jones
Chris Rahn
Avery Winfield

Oboe

Max Burell

Bassoon

Jasper Scharp
Brieanna West

Clarinet

Samuel Antonio
Nahomi Briones
Adadrian Cleaver
Brayden Miller
Mia Tamez
Savannah Wasinger
Brycen Williams

Saxophone

Cameron Bussell
Joel Figueroa
Dylan Melvin
Jovanny Morales
Bryan Reyes

Horn

Sarah Elliott
Marjorie Miller

Trumpet

Mitchell Gilbert
Sebastian Hernandez
Thomas Miller
Noah Nunez
Zachary Paul
Dominic Theriot

Trombone

Jovani Mendoza
Thomas Pecot
Isaac Sanders
Taylor See

Euphonium

Matthew Smith

Tuba

Dominick Gregory
Brayden Persinger

Percussion

Rebecca Canaday
Ethan Frederick
Zackary Gee
Samuel Hooker
Conner Wilcoxson

Celesta

Harvey Nguyen

Fall 2025 School of Performing Arts Events

DAY	DATE	TIME	LOCATION	EVENT
Thur	Nov 20	7:30 pm	BRH	UT Tyler Chamber Strings/ Composer Readings Concert
Mon	Dec 1	7:30 pm	TBD	Jazz Combos Concert
Fri	Dec 5	7 pm	Liberty Hall	Swingin' Into Christmas with UT Tyler Jazz
Sat	Dec 6	7:30 pm	St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church	Choral Christmas Concert

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