



March 12, 2023 3:30 pm
Cutting Hall Performing Arts Center
Dr. Frederick Lowe, conductor

PROGRAM NOTES

Wilderness The composer writes:

"My fascination with the natural world began in childhood, and it wasn't long before I learned about the harmful impacts of human activity on the environment. Old growth forests and essential ecosystems like wetlands were being replaced by housing developments and highways. As a child, I felt helpless about it all; now, as an adult, I know that there is so much we can all do to be part of the solution. Sometimes, we just need to feel empowered first, and I believe art is one of the most effective ways to inspire others.

"This piece was commissioned by the Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic in celebration of their 75th anniversary. Wilderness celebrates and honours Earth's remaining wild spaces and the people who fight to protect them. Through this music, I explore the range of emotions I experience as an environmentalist, and I express my gratitude for all that nature has given me. This piece is a call-to-action for all of us to do our part in spreading awareness about climate change, to reflect on our relationship with nature, and to deepen our respect for the stewards of this land."



Cait Nishimura (b.1991) is a Japanese-Canadian composer based in Waterloo, Ontario. Known for writing nature-inspired, programmatic music, Cait has established herself as a prominent voice in the concert band community. Since winning the Canadian Band Association's composition prize in 2017, Cait's music has been presented at MusicFest Canada, the Midwest Clinic, and numerous international conferences and festivals.

Cait is passionate about empowering others through art, and strives to set a positive example for future generations of musicians through her creative work and her dedication to mental health awareness and environmentalism. She holds degrees in music and education from the University of Toronto.

Suite Française was premiered by the Goldman Band in New York City in 1945. The composer wrote of the five parts of the Suite:

*"[They] are named after French provinces, [where] the American and Allied armies fought together with the French underground [for] the liberation of my country: **Normandy, Brittany, Ile-de-France ...**, **Alsace-Lorraine**, and **Provence** ... I used some folk tunes of these provinces ...[for] the young Americans to hear the popular melodies of those parts of France where their fathers and brothers fought ..."*

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) was a prolific French composer, conductor, and teacher. His compositions were influenced by jazz and Brazilian music, and featured unique polytonality.

Milhaud grew up in Aix-en-Provence and studied at the Paris Conservatoire. With the Nazi occupation of France, Milhaud – a prominent Jewish figure confined to a wheelchair by rheumatoid arthritis – fled to California and taught at Mills College in Oakland. His students included many future jazz and classical composers, including Burt Bacharach, Dave Brubeck, and Philip Glass.

Khan depicts Genghis Khan (1165-1227 and his army on the move. The opening "Warlord" theme representing Khan is followed by the "Horseback" theme (with an A and B section.) These musical representations are used throughout, creating a musical "campaign," complete with a serene village scene just before its destruction. Note the brisk tempo combined with energetic rhythms and driving percussion, and dynamic contrasts which contribute to the emotional turbulence. Khan ended the lives of thousands of people and his "Warlord" theme, with great force, ends this work.

Khan was one of history's most brutal, charismatic and successful warlords. A strategic genius with a disciplined and effective army, he conquered more land than any other ruler, creating the largest contiguous empire in history. Many of his campaigns were in conquest of territory and riches, but many were in retaliation. Recent DNA studies suggest that about 10 percent of the men who reside today within the borders of Khan's Mongol Empire may carry his Y chromosome, and so about 0.5 percent of men alive in the world today are his direct descendants.



Composer **Julie Ann Giroux** was born in Massachusetts in 1961. She started playing piano at 3 years of age. She graduated from Louisiana State University and began composing commercially in 1984. She has become a true force in a male-dominated field. With over 100 film, television and video game credits, she has collaborated with dozens of film composers, producers, and celebrities. Her projects have been nominated for Oscars, Emmys, Grammys and Golden

Globes. When she won an individual Emmy for "Outstanding Individual Achievement in Music Direction" she was the first woman to do so, and she subsequently won two more.

Magneticfireflies The composer describes this piece as "very rhapsodic, lyrical, rich and majestic, but also quite playful." In the score, she writes, "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."



Composer **Augusta Read Thomas** was born in New York in 1964. She is a Professor of Composition at The University of Chicago, where she founded the Center for Contemporary Composition. She writes:

"I stay absolutely flexible. Everything is malleable, springy, stretchy, coil-able, color-able, twistable, bouncing, zig-zagging, and splinter-able. It feels like I am dancing with contrapuntal flickering sonic lights that

accumulate into a spinning pinwheel spawning sound and form. I slide, skate, swivel, and spin with my materials, crafting nuance and finesse – and then I sculpt, shape, chisel, fashion and form."

Acrostic Song This moving piece is the lullaby-like concluding aria from the composer's "Final Alice," the fifth of six large works for soprano and orchestra based on Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland books. The gentle melody, heartrending harmonies, and artful instrumental voicing give this piece a truly timeless feeling.

David del Tredici (b. 1937) is an American composer. He has won a Pulitzer Prize for Music and is a former Guggenheim and Woodrow Wilson fellow. He is considered a pioneer of the Neo-Romantic movement. He has also been described by the *Los Angeles Times* as "one of our most flamboyant outsider composers." He started his musical life as an aspiring pianist at age twelve and has said that if he had not been a pianist, he would have become a florist.

Selections from *Porgy and Bess* This “folk” opera with music by George Gershwin was first performed in 1935. It tells the story of Porgy, a disabled black beggar living in the slums of Charleston, South Carolina, and his attempts to rescue Bess from the clutches of the stevedore Crown, her violent and possessive lover, and Sportin' Life, the drug dealer. It featured an entire cast of classically trained African-American singers—a daring artistic choice at the time. After an initially unpopular public reception, it became one of the best-known and most frequently performed American operas. A film followed in 1959.

Selections include “Summertime,” “A Woman is a Sometime Thing,” “I Got Plenty o’ Nuttin’,” “Bess, You Is My Woman,” “It Ain’t Necessarily So,” “*Picnic Parade*,” and “Oh Lawd I’m on My Way.”

George Gershwin (1898-1937) was a gifted writer of popular songs, musical comedies, a folk opera and other art music. Born Jacob Gershowitz in Brooklyn, he left high school to work on Tin Pan Alley as a song plugger. He found early success with “Swanee.” He teamed up with his older brother Ira as lyricist and wrote over a dozen successful musical comedies. He blended jazz and popular and classical music and was widely successful. He died at age 38 from a brain tumor.