

## Program Notes Oct. 29, 2018 PWS Fall Concert

### Odds and Unevens Olin Hannum (b.1985)

Composed for the modern wind ensemble, the rapid, unrelenting pulse of the passing eighth notes moves the piece from beginning to end. Short fragments of thematic material shows itself to the listener, and leads to full brass chordal work toward the end of the piece. Rhythmic in structure, the development of the staccato notes grows more and more frenetic as the work develops, until the codetta leads the listener back to the original source material from the introduction, and ends with a solitary vibraphone.

### For Those Taken Too Soon (Symphony No. 1) Kimberly Archer (b. 1973)

For Those Taken Too Soon is composed in memory of Dennis Kusy. He was an inspiring conductor, a passionate band director and educator, and one of the most gifted musicians I have ever known. He was also my best friend. He was twenty-four years old when he was killed in a car accident on November 10, 2000.

The piece is composed of five seamless sections representative of the stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The key structure is descending thirds, which starts in E-flat minor, arrives in B-flat major at the climax, then shifts up to D major ("D" for Dennis) at the coda. The melodic basis of the piece is the hymn "It Is Well with My Soul," although it is never stated outright until the climax. It is a tune Dennis first encountered in David Holsinger's On a Hymnsong of Philip Bliss, and used to have me play on the piano for him whenever we were together.

Although I chose to end the work on a somber note, in acknowledgment of losing such a good friend and colleague, for those taken too soon .... is meant to be a tribute as much as a working out of my own grief: a celebration of Dennis's life, even in the shadow of his death.

One of the things I found most helpful in organizing this music was a text written by St. Augustine when he was in his 20's. In this excerpt, he discusses the loss of his own best friend, and sums up the experience as well as words can:

*Through this pain, a deep darkness came over my heart, and wherever I looked, there was death .... Everywhere my eyes searched for him, and he was not there .... I became a single great question, and I searched in my soul why it was so sad, why it so confused me, but my soul knew not how to answer. And when I said to it: "Have faith in God," it did not obey, and it was right not to, because this friend, whom it counted as most precious and had lost, was better and truer than the illusion I held out to it as hope. Only weeping was still sweet to me, and among the joys of my heart took the place of my friend.*

*Within me ... an emotion of the most contradictory nature came to life: a complete weariness with life side by side with a fear of death. I believe that the more I loved him, the more I hated and feared death, which stole him from me ... and I imagined death would suddenly devour everyone, because it had been able to devour him .... It surprised me, in other words, that we remaining mortals continued to live while he whom I loved so much had died, as if he might not have had to die, and even more I wondered at the fact that I, as his other ego, survived his death. Someone once called his friend the half of his soul: "For I have felt mine and his soul as one in two bodies." For this reason, I shuddered in the face of life, because I did not want to live as half a man; and for this reason, I was afraid to die, because he, whom I loved so much, would then have died completely.*

### Nabucco Overture Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Nabucco is an opera in four acts, depicting love and conflict among the ancient Hebrews and the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. First performed at La Scala in Milan on March 9, 1842, its success placed Verdi in the company of operatic masters Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti. While it is considered the

best of his very early works, the opera is seldom performed today, having been over-shadowed by his later masterpieces such as Aida, Rigoletto, and La Traviata. --James Huff

**Folk Song Suite**      Ralph Vaughan-Williams (1872-1958)

British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams is one of the most eminent of 20th-century composers. He has been credited with establishing a "new nationalist style based on English folk traditions." He systematically rejected foreign Romantic influences and sought inspiration from native material, including Elizabethan and Jacobean music as well as English folk songs. He began collecting traditional folk songs from the counties of Somerset and Norfolk in 1902, and ultimately collected more than 800. Adapting their modal harmonies and striking rhythms, he created an entirely individual style. This suite, written in the early 1920s, blends his own ideas with well-known folk songs. He also composed nine symphonies and four operas and was active with amateur music groups, conducting and composing for choirs, brass bands and film. --James Huff

**The Bold Benjamin**      David Stanhope (b. 1952)

Written for solo baritone, male chorus and wind band, The Bold Benjamin is a beautifully scored work recounting the legend of an English ship, the Bold Benjamin, and the disastrous loss of life experienced by its crew after an epic battle with the Spanish Armada during one of the English/Spanish conflicts of the 16th or 17th centuries.

**In the Light of the Past**      David Gorham

This reflective original work provides a marvelous vehicle for musical expression. The composer's experience as a successful director is displayed in his colorful and effective scoring, demonstrating an understanding of the spectrum of sound that can be achieved with concert band instrumentation. Brilliantly conceived and expertly crafted, this concert selection achieves a perfect balance of repose and intensity.

**Armenian Dances, Part 1**      Alfred Reed

Armenian Dances (Part I) is a four-movement suite based on authentic folk songs from the Gomidas Vartabed, the founder of Armenian classical music. Part 1 is an extended symphonic rhapsody built upon five Armenian folk songs. Although the composer has kept his treatment of the melodies within the general limits imposed by its vocal, folk-song nature, he has also expanded the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic possibilities in keeping with the demands of a symphonic-instrumental performance. "Armenian Dances" was first performed by Dr. Harry Begian (to whom it is dedicated) and the University of Illinois Symphonic Band in 1973.