

April 25-26, 2015
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Let There Be Music

Welcome. Tonight we celebrate a decade of singing with the Gwinnett Community Band. What a wonderful 10 years it has been!

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once said, "Music is the universal language of mankind." When music plays we instinctively discern its message regardless of what language we may or may not speak.

That is because music is a fundamental part of our humanity. All people of the world, even the most isolated tribes have some form of music. It is hard wired into us – rhythm, pitch, melody. Nothing else communicates a feeling so effectively.

It is as if our creator knew we would need a way to express our most heartfelt joy or our deepest sorrow and be understood, and so he said, "Let there be music". He knew we would need something that could unite us no matter how different from each other we might become, and so he said, "Let there be music." He knew we needed something that could touch our hearts in a tangible and yet somehow still ethereal manner and so he said, "Let there be music."

So we come together tonight to create, share and enjoy music in many different forms -- from the slow and reverent to upbeat jazz with lot's of stops in between. But no matter what form it may take, listen to this universal language with your heart and you will understand.

And now -- Let there music!

For the Beauty of the Earth

When music sounds, gone is the earth I know,
And all her lovely things even lovelier grow;
Her flowers in vision flame, her forest trees
Lift burdened branches, stilled with ecstasies.

When music sounds, all that I was I am
Ere to this haunt of brooding dust I came;
And from Time's woods break into distant song

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The swift-winged hours, as I hasten along.

Walter de la Mare

Joy in the Morning

Plato said "Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything.

Our next selection "Sedona" was inspired by the majestic red sandstone mountains that make up the landscape of Sedona Arizona. This composition will pick you up right out of your seat and send you soaring. Use your imagination and you will see the brilliant red and orange formations glowing at sunset painted by the notes.

Sedona

From Garrison Keillor

If you ask an audience in New York City to sing along on the chorus of "Michael Row the Boat Ashore" they will look diggers at you as if you had asked them to strip to their underwear. But if you do this among Lutherans they'll smile and row that boat ashore and up on the beach! And down the road!

I once sang the bass line of "Children of our Heavenly Father" in a room with about three thousand Lutherans in it; and when we finished, we all had tears in our eyes, partly from the promise that God will not forsake us, partly from the proximity of all those lovely voices. By our joining in harmony, we somehow promise that we will not forsake each other.

You Raise Me Up

As America's transportation transitioned in early 20th century, so did its music. While trains churned across our great land instead of horse drawn wagons, traditional music no longer seem to communicate the new energy that young people felt, and Jazz was born.

Like Jazz, the train was fast, new and exciting and many musicians were inspired. Over the years hundreds of blues, folk and jazz songs have been dedicated to the allegory of the locomotive. Here are a couple of our favorites, which will be immediately followed by something I think needs no introduction.

All Aboard

The Devil Went Down to Georgia

It's hard to imagine our favorite movies without music. The music tells you when something amazing has happened, or something really sad is happening, or something

really bad is about to go down. It's the music that get's you every time! Without music our movie experience would not be nearly as captivating.

"The Rakes of Mallow" – a rake being a rascal and Mallow, a small Irish town, is based on a traditional Irish song, but any true John Wayne fan out there will recognize this tune from his movie classic "Quiet Man".

Rakes of Mallow

Isaiah 49:13

Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

Believe

Mountain Thyme also known as the "The Brae's of Balquhither" is based on a favorite scotch ballad. A pastoral love song that describes the wild hills around the town of Balquhither, Scotland, the words alone have a music all their own.

Let us go lassie go
To the braes of Balquhither,
Where the blae-berries grow,
'Mang the bonnie highland heather;
Where the deer and the rae,
Lightly bounding together
Sport the lang summer day
On the braes o' Balquhither

Mountain Thyme

Sunshine in My Soul

Didn't you love it when Elmer sang, "Kill the Wabbit!" For many of us cartoons are where we first heard the classics. Bugs, Elmer, Daffy, and many others introduced thousands of young Americans to Rossini's "The Barber of Saville", Brahm's "Hungarian Dance" and Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries". So you see Mom and Dad, cartoons CAN be educational!

With increasingly limited attention given to classical music in our schools, cartoon scores have managed to keep the classics in the public's ears, albeit in a context that gives them an entirely different set of meanings. But what does that matter? We love them – and that's all folks!

What's Up at the Symphony?

“A good quartet is like a good conversation among friends interacting to each other’s ideas.” Stan Getz

Barbershop quartets originated with African American men socializing in barbershops; they would harmonize while waiting their turn, vocalizing in spiritual, folk and popular songs. How appropriate then for this hymn by the writer of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” to be arranged into the close harmony bell ringing sound of barbershop.

As this is our 10th season with the Gwinnett Community Band, what better way to celebrate our partnership than by hearing “Still, Still With Thee” arranged by our very own Mark Rusch, who is not only our trombonist tonight but also a nationally recognized barbershop musician. The music is by Felix Mendelssohn and lyrics by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Still, Still With Thee

Confederate General Robert E. Lee once remarked that without music, there would have been no army. Band concerts, pianos in parlors and sheet music had become so popular before the Civil War that many Union and Confederate Soldiers alike carried with them of love of song. In their camps music passed the time, entertained, comforted, strengthened the bonds between comrades, and perhaps stirred quietly in the background they wrote letters to their loved ones waiting for them at home.

Dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days – perhaps tomorrow.

Sullivan and or Sarah (Begin after the salutation and speak at the same time as the narrator):

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days – perhaps tomorrow.

And lest I should not be able to write you again, I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I am no more.

I have no misgivings about or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us. And, I am willing – perfectly willing – to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this government and to pay that debt.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing can break and yet the love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly with all those chains to the battlefield. How hard it is for me to give up and burn to ashes the hopes and future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together and see our boys grown up to honorable manhood around us.

If I do not return, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I loved you and when my last breath escapes me on the battle field, it will whisper your name.

But, oh Sarah, if the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they love, I shall always be with you in the brightest day and the darkest night. —

Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for me, for we shall meet again.

Sullivan

The First Battle of Bull Run would be the bloodiest battle in US history to that date. Sullivan Ballou was not counted among the survivors. His beloved Sarah never remarried.

Ashokan Farewell

“Music is the art which is most nigh to tears and memory” – Oscar Wilde

Isn't it funny how just a few notes of music can return a memory that has long been tucked away? Music and memory are entwined with each other.

So it is only natural that when we want to remember something, or someone we do so with music, which Jerker Johansson has done beautifully in his composition “Missing Man”.

The title refers to the missing man formation, an Air Force salute performed as part of a flypast at a funeral or memorial event. The formation of 4 planes will fly low enough to be clearly seen before one of the aircraft suddenly splits off representing the fallen pilot – who although is missing, will never be forgotten.

Missing Man

“When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again” is a celebration of the soldier that did return home. Written by Patrick Gilmore during the Civil War for his sister Annie as she prayed for the safe return of her fiancé, John O'Rourke. Annie's prayers were answered and Johnny indeed came marching home where he and Annie at long last were married. Hurrah, Hurrah!

When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again!

Before making over 40 films during his 21 year acting career, Audie Murphy was one of the most decorated American combat soldiers of World War II. Among his many heroic acts, he held off the enemy singlehandedly for over an hour, fighting against impossible odds. Although injured, after reaching safety he refused to be evacuated and rallied his men in a successful counterattack.

Bestowed with every military combat award for valor in the U.S. Army, France also recognized his service with the French Legion of Honor and the French Croix de guerre, and the Liberation Medal. Murphy is quoted to have said, “They were singing in French, but the melody was freedom and any American could understand that.”

We would like to honor anyone tonight who has heard that melody and answered the call to serve in the armed forces. As the band plays the Armed Forces Salute if you, or a family member has served, we invite you to stand up when your branch anthem is played.

Armed Forces Salute

Immediately following our last selection _____ will give us a closing prayer. (Sunday in Sugar Hill: Then we invite you to join us for a cookie reception in the back of the hall.)

Bob Marley said "One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain. We've taken a lot of pain killers tonight haven't we?"

My country, tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.

We will finish our celebration of the universal language tonight with patriotic selections arranged by Douglas E. Wagner. There is something about patriotic music that swells the heart. It expresses, as only music can our shared love of this country. It is a testament to the freedom we hold dear and our reverence for the high price that has been paid to maintain it.

As we end the evening the instruments will be put away and the choir will still their voices, but we will carry the tunes we heard tonight in our hearts and as long as we do that, there will always be music.

America: The Spirit Lives on.

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