

AN AFTERNOON WITH  
MICHAEL MARKOWSKI



Paul Worosello, Conductor | Emilio Reyna, Associate Conductor

Sunday, March 24, 2024, 4:00 p.m. - Christ Church Methodist

# AN AFTERNOON WITH MICHAEL MARKOWSKI THE WOODLANDS CONCERT BAND

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Joyride ..... Michael Markowski

Brooklyn Air ..... Michael Markowski

Turkey in the Straw ..... Michael Markowski

*Emilio Reyna - Conductor*

City Trees ..... Michael Markowski

The Divine Right of Kings ..... Michael Markowski

*Tony Yarborough, Todd Olges, Chris Edman – Trumpet Soloists*

## INTERMISSION

Finding the Words ..... Michael Markowski

- II Undefined
- III Foreign Tongues

*Reese Burgan, Jenni Olges, Larry Lindsay, Jesse Caballos*

Desert Sage ..... Michael Markowski

- I A Cowboy's Life
- II Goodbye, Old Paint
- III Bury Me Not
- IV Rye Whiskey

Famishius Fantasticus ..... Michael Markowski

# WOODLANDS CONCERT BAND PERSONNEL

## Flute/Piccolo

Kathy Blaha \*  
Susan Daniell  
Cristen Dimas  
Karin Hinklin  
Erma Hodge \*  
Doris May  
Elizabeth Ricks  
Elaine Shasteen

## Oboe/English Horn

Suzy Reich  
Ashley Yarbrough \*

## Bassoon

Wesley Cannon  
Jacob Fernandez  
Mary Ureke \*  
Kathleen Yeaman

## E♭ Clarinet

Mike Crass \*

## B♭ Clarinet

Andrew Armstrong  
Tiffany Arnold  
Suzannah Bryan  
Michael Crass  
Robert Dearie  
Chase Debord  
Jim Hill  
Brooke Klaus  
Mike Mattner  
Latasha Michaliszyn  
Veronica Monarch  
Kathy Parge  
Rob Parker  
Jackie Walker  
Susan Worosello

## Bass Clarinet

Craig Daniell  
Kellie Hill

## Alto Saxophone

Reese Burgan  
Jenni Olges  
Emilio Reyna \*  
Ron Walker

## Tenor Saxophone

Larry Lindsay  
Elaine Wallace

## Baritone Saxophone

Jesse Ceballos

## Trumpet

Marissa Anthony  
Chris Edman  
Jerry Garcia  
John Garnett  
Carlos Handy  
Ashlynn Harrison  
Obed Mathis †  
Jessie Slaughter  
Jonathan Wilks  
Tony Yarbrough \*  
Wendy Zimmerman  
John Zumwalt

## French Horn

Rachel Broderick  
Chad Buckley  
Jenny Estrada  
Stephen Hill  
Khadija Hoilett-Harris  
Brent Johnston  
Tim LeBlanc \*  
Angel Morales  
Alec Perez  
Liz Royce  
Larry Spino

## Trombone

John Benes †  
Gretchen Klos  
Mike Keig  
Dave Lafferty  
Rich Maher \*  
Robert Hastings  
Ed Yachimiak

## Bass Trombone

Matt Meredith  
Lane Rockoff

## Euphonium

John King  
Mike Ragan \*  
Luke Stoner  
Don Thissen †

## Tuba

James Benton  
Russ Blanchard  
Jose Castro  
Mike Holland \*

## String Bass

Jim Dorr †

## Percussion

Craig Gardner †  
Michelle Olson  
Ted Parge  
Jaclyn Perkins \*  
Jenny Pickering  
Chris Ragan  
Elvis Valdespino

\* section leader

† WCB board member

## MICHAEL MARKOWSKI BIOGRAPHY



Michael Markowski (b. 1986) is fully qualified to watch movies and cartoons. In 2010, he graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 'Film Practices' from Arizona State University. While Markowski never studied music in college, his primary music teachers have included Gary Larkins, Dawn Parker, Jon Gomez, Dr. Karl Schindler, and Michael Shapiro. He has continued this education by participating in a number of extracurricular programs, such as The Art of Orchestration with Steven Scott Smalley (2008), the National Band Association's Young Composer and Conductor Mentorship Project (2008), and the NYU/ASCAP Foundation's Film Scoring Workshop (2014) where he was named one of ASCAP's Film & TV "Composers to Watch." Mark Snow, composer of *The X-Files* and one of the workshop's guest mentors, says Michael's music was "extremely sophisticated" and "complimented the mood and emotion of the scene with unusual maturity and sensitivity." Most recently, Markowski was invited to join the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop (2015) as a composer and lyricist.

*Shadow Rituals*, one of Markowski's first works for concert band, was awarded first prize in Manhattan Beach Music's Frank Ticheli Composition Contest in 2006. Over the last ten years, Markowski has composed nearly twenty-five original works for wind band, nine of which were recently recorded in collaboration with the Brooklyn Wind Symphony, now available on iTunes. *Joyride for Orchestra* (2015) recently won the Arizona Musicfest's young composer fanfare competition, and *You Are Cordially Invited* (2016) recently won a fanfare competition with the Dallas Wind Symphony. He has received commissions from a number of organizations including CBDNA, The Consortium for the Advancement of Wind Band Literature, The Lesbian and Gay Band Association, the Durham Medical Orchestra, the Florida Music Educator's Association, and has received performances from the United States Air Force bands, the United States Army Band "Pershing's Own," the Phoenix Symphony, the Memphis Symphony, the Arizona Musicfest Symphony Orchestra, and from hundreds of bands around the world. He has been the composer-in-residence for the 'Music for All' organization (2015), the 'Mid Europe' international wind band festival in Schlading, Austria (2013-2018), and frequently visits junior high schools, high schools, universities, and community bands around the country to share stories about his music.

He is a member of ASCAP and currently lives in Brooklyn, New York.

## PROGRAM NOTES (FROM THE COMPOSER)

**Joyride** – Nearly nineteen years ago, in the summer of 2005, I was on stage at Carnegie Hall in New York City playing alto saxophone as a senior in my high school band. The concert lineup: Grainger, de Meij, Mackey, and just under three minutes of Markowski.

When my band director, Jon Gomez, first received word that our high school music department was selected to perform in New York, he asked me if I'd like to write something to open the concert and commemorate the trip—something that was bursting with joy. "Maybe," he suggested, "it would be cool to take something more traditional, like Beethoven's *Ode To Joy*, and blend it with something more modern, like John Adams." The idea was so simple and so astounding that the assignment excited me immediately—it excited me so much that within ten days, I had completed the first complete draft of *joyRiDE*, a two-and-a-half-minute concert opener that borrows Beethoven's infamous melody and dresses it in a tie-dye blazer of rhythm and texture that nod humbly to John Adams's *Short Ride In A Fast Machine*.

**Brooklyn Air** - In Brooklyn (and pretty much everywhere else in New York City), the air is always an exotic melting pot of smells. Freshly baked donuts, sweet springtime flowers, and salty ocean breezes combine with car exhaust, dust, and sun-baked garbage to form an aromatic paradox. Every breath you take is complex and bittersweet.

In Italian, the word for "air" is *aria*, a word most of us probably recognize from its origins in opera. Although we typically know it as being a song for solo voice, an *aria* could also be more simply described as any expressive melody. The word also literally translates to "expression" and "tune." *Brooklyn Air* is a musical play on these words: a lyrical song flavored with extended jazz harmonies, grimy dissonances, and sweet melodies.

At its heart, the piece is dedicated to Dawn Parker in celebration of her 30-year career teaching music and, in particular, as a 'thank you' for the two of those years that she taught the scrappy middle school saxophone player who would eventually write this piece. Farewells aren't always sad and they certainly aren't usually happy, and as Dawn prepares for the next chapter of her career as an instrument repair specialist, I can't help but imagine that the transition must have her feeling a little bit of both. Perhaps these bittersweet moments are the ones that linger with us the longest— moments that surprise us, pinch us, and remind us that they are worth remembering.

**Turkey in the Straw** - We all know the melody, even if not by name. But for me, *Turkey in the Straw* is nostalgic, beckoning back to a childhood where grandma and grandpa would sit me in front of their TV with a bowl of orange *Jell-O* (in a small room papered wall-to-wall with decorative clowns), to watch old-time cartoons on *VHS*. From its early days in vaudeville to its silver-screen premiere in Disney's cartoon, *Steamboat Willie* (1928), the tune has become a staple of Americana (and my favorite — cartoons).

Most arrangements stay true to the song's Southern roots. But for a contemporary ensemble such as the concert band, I wanted my arrangement to be what *Ivesian*, and, as colleagues have described it, closer to *Quirky* in the Straw. Above all, I wanted this piece to resemble

## PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

classic cartoon scoring. Rather than simply arranging a brief melody in a handful of contrasting styles (as is typical of theme-and-variations), the form instead takes on an almost storytelling narrative or three act structure.

Each successive treatment of the melody increases the orchestration and contrapuntal complexity, starting with the simplest orchestration within the first 35 measures. The melody quickly modulates, twists and turns, loses itself and finds itself in musical vignettes (already in development by measure 36). Each new scene seems to bring its own musical plot, orchestration, characterization, and many a custard pie in the face.

**City Trees** - I had just moved from Arizona to New York City when I began sketching the first fragments of *City Trees*. After being born, growing up, and living in the desert for 25 years of my life, moving to New York so suddenly was and continues to be one of the most challenging things I've ever done. I think it has also been one of the bravest. I left my friends, my family, and my ridiculously cheap rent all without much planning.

Every time I walk down a street in New York, I notice the trees shackled by the sidewalk. Some have little fences around them, many have trash nestled up next to their exposed roots, and others have grown so big and become so strong that they have broken right through the concrete pavement. As I pass beneath them, they all seem to wave their leafy pom-poms in the wind, a thousand leaves applauding, cheering me on as if I had just returned from the moon.

These trees have learned how to brave the concrete jungle, and it gave me solace knowing that they had flourished in such a challenging environment. Over time, the impossibilities of the city have become familiar, and although I continue to learn new lessons everyday, I've slowly begun to assimilate, finding my way around, discovering new places, and making friends while still keeping close with those who aren't close by. The music in *City Trees* began to take on a growing sense of perseverance, embodied by the expansive melodies that sweep over the pensive, rhythmic undercurrent.

For me, *City Trees* is a reflection of the bravery that it often takes to venture into new worlds, embrace other cultures, and lovingly encourage new ideas. I am deeply honored to dedicate this piece to the Lesbian and Gay Band Association. Although I may never completely understand the unique challenges my friends have faced and had to overcome, I am inspired by the overwhelming courage that has been so firmly planted for 30 years and that continues to grow, perhaps slowly, but always stronger.

**The Divine Right of Kings** - This commission was very unique — it's not every day that someone asks you to write a piece for wind orchestra featuring three solo trumpets. What on earth was I going to write about?

When I think about 'trumpets' and what they have symbolized over the centuries, I immediately think about 'fanfares,' I think about 'royalty,' and I think about that one time a few years ago that I saw the changing of the guards outside Prague Castle. For a long time, trumpets

## PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

have symbolized 'power' and 'strength,' but rather than write heroic, romantic passages (many composers have already written hundreds of majestic pieces that glorify leaders like this), I wanted these three trumpets to live in a darker world. I wanted to write something where the trumpets represented something not praiseworthy but something a bit more dastardly, something perhaps even villainous.

In the Middle Ages, many kings in Europe believed in an idea known as the "Divine Right," which was the idea that kings and queens were ultimately chosen by God and therefore only had to answer to God rather than to the people or to a Parliamentary system. There wasn't anything particularly bad about this idea until some monarchs started to abuse the idea and abuse their power. For instance, King Charles I of England almost fanatically believed in his own divinity, in his own self-righteousness, that whenever he disagreed with Parliament, he simply had Parliament dissolved in order to uphold his own absolute decisions. But of course, after King Charles' arrogance eventually led to a civil war, it also ultimately ended with his execution. Sometime during my research into this topic, I came across a painting of King Charles I — a "triple portrait" which shows the king from three different angles all on one canvas: left profile, head-on, and right profile. I immediately thought of the three solo trumpets I was writing for! Together, I think they represent the split personality of a man plagued by his own hubris, a man obsessed with his own superiority.

**Finding the Words** - Sometimes, a piece of music is about... nothing. And that's okay! But in deciding what to title that piece about 'nothing,' the music itself can lend clues. The style, harmony, and overall visceral feeling can often suggest a particular character or musical personality that the composer perhaps never initially intended.

For instance, the first movement from *Finding The Words* is full of flashy, technical phrases designed to dazzle and impress. Its personality, though, seems to me to sound a bit pretentious, highfalutin, and rhythmically stiff. Because of this, I found myself lured into naming this movement *Five-Dollar Diction* as an echo of Mark Twain's warning to aspiring writers: "don't use a five-dollar word when a fifty-cent word will do."

If movement one is trying too hard to show off how much it knows, then in contrast, movement two is offering humility. To me, this heartbreaking song seems to express some kind of emptiness — perhaps a longing to find meaning, purpose, or importance. Even as the music searches for this fulfillment, though, in the end, it will remain tragically unfulfilled and *Undefined*.

A short pause cleanses our palette for a change of scenery. Here in movement three, the musical character seems to venture somewhere across the border. The saxophones sing passionately in their *Foreign Tongues*, and we're quickly seduced by their charming accents and exotic vernacular. Although this isn't our own native language, the music seems to invite us to join in and sing along, even if we have to mouth the words. But who needs words anyway?

## PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

**Desert Sage** - In early 2020, Maestro Curt Ebersole reached out to me about a potential commission project—a project that was to be generously funded by the band’s euphonium player, Marc Tartell, and his family to celebrate the life of his late father, Bob Tartell. Although he was a “dentist who grew up in the back of a candy store,” Bob loved music and spent his life singing and performing as much as he could. Even from our early conversations, it was clear that this commission had to have something to do with *Song*.

There is a longstanding tradition among composers to use the folk songs and dances of a particular place and people to celebrate that culture. For instance, Percy Grainger celebrated folksingers in rural England in his *Lincolnshire Posy*. My own teacher, Michael Shapiro, has written several pieces based on traditional Jewish melodies, such as his *Variations on Eliahu Hanavi* for solo cello. And perhaps most famously, the composer Aaron Copland used the old American fiddle tune “Bonaparte’s Retreat” as the basis for the Hoe-Down from his ballet, *Rodeo*.

For this commission, I really wanted to follow in these footsteps and celebrate where I come from: the American Southwest. As a boy from Arizona, I grew up around “cowboy” culture, but I never really realized how important it was to our American identity until I moved about as far away from it as I could possibly get: Brooklyn.

I began my research by scouring the internet for old “cowboy songs” and eventually came across a treasure trove of recordings from the 1930’s and 40’s thanks in part to the Lomax Family Collection at the American Folklife Center (a division of the Library of Congress). I immediately uncovered dozens of wonderful old songs—many about the hardships, loneliness, and tragedy of early cowboy life—recorded faithfully by folks like Jess Morris and Charley Willis (Movement II: “Goodbye, Old Paint”), Carl T. Sprague (Movement III: “Bury Me Not”), and Elmo Newcomer (Movement IV: “Rye Whiskey”). There were many recordings that I fell in love with, but these three songs stood out in particular for the singers’ unique performances and for generally having the elements of a strong melody that I felt would translate well to a concert band.

In the past, composers like Grainger actually recorded their subjects first-hand (on wax cylinders, no less!). Similarly, the musicologist John Lomax traveled America recording his own subjects in the ‘30s and ‘40s. This got me wondering: were there any folk singers alive today—in 2022—who were continuing the oral tradition and still singing these historic cowboy songs? After submitting a few inquiries to organizations like the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum and the Western Music Association, the name “Skip Gorman” kept coming up.

Skip is an accomplished singer and fiddle player currently living in New Hampshire who, over the last few decades, has recorded nearly every cowboy song imaginable as authentically as possible. They are beautiful acoustic recordings—bare bones and “unplugged”—featuring only his voice and his guitar or fiddle as accompaniment. He is the latest generation of American cowboy singers, and I thought it would be absolutely amazing to include a contemporary

## PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

folk singer in this suite of songs—somebody who was actually breathing life into these dusty old songs today, getting them off the library shelves and onto the dance floor. After reaching out to Skip, I was fortunate to get his permission to re-imagine his version of “A Cowboy’s Life” from his 2012 album *A Herder’s Call* for the first movement of this piece.

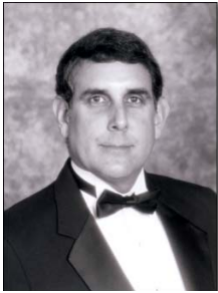
Together, these four movements are called *Desert Sage*. Desert Sage (also known as Purple Sage or *Salvia dorrii*) is a common desert shrub with tall, vibrant purple flowers, a stark contrast to the rusty orange sand and stone that often surrounds it. Musically, this piece is an homage to the cowboys who once roamed this vast country and to the singers and musicians who have kept their stories alive. Each movement is based not only on the traditional song for which the movement is named after, but also gives credit to the particular folk singers who lent their unique personalities and pizzazz to this transcription.

**Famishius Fantasticus** - 2012 marked the 100th birthday of the late and great *Looney Tunes* director, Chuck Jones. His work—and the work of his colleagues, Tex Avery, Bob Clampett, Friz Freleng, to name a few—has helped shape my personality for as far back as I can remember. When I was first asked to write a piece that “captured the energy of the students,” I couldn’t help but think that Wile E. Coyote was the man (or animal) for the job. The title, *Famishius Fantasticus*, is a direct allusion to the faux binomial (the scientific Latin name) of Wile E. Coyote, as shown in the opening freeze-frame of the 1956 *Looney Tunes* cartoon, *There They Go-Go-Go!* If this was actually Latin (and again, it is totally made up), one would probably pronounce it fah-ME-see-oos fahn-tahs-TEE-coos, which might roughly translate into something like, “Fantastically Famished” or “Fantastically Hungry.”

Many composers of the *Looney Tunes* era have defined the cartoon music genre, perhaps most notably Carl Stalling (with the help of Raymond Scott’s extensive Warner Brothers catalogue) and MGM’s Scott Bradley. *Famishius Fantasticus* is not an attempt to rewrite these masters, but rather to take the techniques that make these scores so exciting—colorful and period orchestration, extended performance techniques, exotic percussion and sound effects, constantly shifting musical textures—and draw my own composition for the wind band medium. Of course, without the animated accompaniment, the visual gags are best left to our imaginations.

Above all else, *Famishius Fantasticus* is intended to be a wild concert-closer, a “That’s not all, folks!” encore, an existential cat-and-mouse (or coyote-and-roadrunner) chase, and is dedicated to all my friends and colleagues who vehemently go after their dreams, who never give up, and who continue to try new things no matter how many crazy ideas might blow up in their faces.

## DIRECTORS



Paul Worosello is in his 13<sup>th</sup> year as director of music for the Woodlands Concert Band. He received his Bachelor of Music Education and Master of Music from West Texas State University in Canyon, Texas. In 2013, Mr. Worosello retired after a 37-year career of teaching music, the last 34 as Director of Bands at Klein Forest High School. In addition, he maintains an active schedule as an adjudicator, clinician of bands and honor groups, and band camps in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and New Mexico. Mr. Worosello is a member of the National Band Association, Texas Music

Educators Association, and Phi Beta Mu. He has twice received the National Band Association Citation of Excellence and the Diploma of the Sudler Order of Merit from the John Philip Sousa Foundation as a Legion of Honor Laureate, one of only ten awarded nationally each year. In 2020 Paul Worosello was inducted as a member of the Texas Bandmasters Hall of Fame.



Emilio Reyna is in his 4<sup>th</sup> year as the associate director for The Woodlands Concert Band. He received his Bachelor of Music Education from Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Mr. Reyna is also currently in his 4<sup>th</sup> year as Director of Bands at Nimitz Senior High School. He is a member of Texas Music Educators Association and is on his 8<sup>th</sup> year of being a member of The Woodlands Concert Band.



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**SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 2024 | 4 PM**

*Joint concert with the Carrollton Wind Symphony*

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**SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2024 | 4 PM**

*I Love America: XXIII: This is My Country  
(includes winners of the Concerto Contest)*

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**THURSDAY, JULY 4, 2024 | 8 AM**

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