

University Concert Band

Tuesday, November 18, 2025 at 7:30pm
Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Center

Pacific Lutheran University
The College of Professional Studies and School of Music, Theatre & Dance present

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Matt Vegh, *conductor*

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Welcome to Lagerquist Concert Hall.
Please disable the audible signal on all watches and cellular phones for the duration of the concert.
Use of cameras, recording equipment, and all digital devices is not permitted in the concert hall.

PROGRAM

Mt. Everest.....Rossano Galante (b. 1967)
Shine..... Michael Markowski (b. 1986)
Undertow John Mackey (b. 1973)
October..... Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)
Halcyon Hearts..... Katahj Copley (b. 1998)
Dancing in Air Yo Goto (b. 1958)
The Liberty BellJohn Philip Sousa (1854-1932)
ed. Keith Brion

Program Notes

Rossano Galante's *Mt. Everest* (2013) captures the grandeur, peril, and triumph of humanity's relationship with the world's highest peak. Known for his lush, cinematic writing, Galante translates the mountain's immensity into sound through expansive brass chorales, surging rhythmic figures, and sweeping melodic gestures that evoke both the beauty and danger of the climb. A contrasting lyrical section suggests moments of reflection amid the storm, before a powerful return to the summit theme. Galante's experience as a film orchestrator for major Hollywood composers is evident in his orchestral color and pacing, making *Mt. Everest* both a thrilling listening experience and a showcase of the wind band's expressive and dramatic range.

Composed in 2017, *Shine* by Michael Markowski is an exuberant, rhythmically kinetic work celebrating individuality, self-expression, and optimism. Markowski describes the piece as a musical embodiment of "letting your light shine," a concept reflected in its bright harmonic language, shifting meters, and playful interplay among instrumental voices. Pulsating ostinatos in the woodwinds and colorful bursts of brass and percussion create a kaleidoscopic texture that radiates energy and joy. Yet beneath its brilliance lies a deeper message about perseverance and the courage to remain authentic. A self-taught composer whose works are performed internationally, Markowski blends accessible melody with sophisticated structure, continuing to expand the emotional vocabulary of the modern wind ensemble.

Undertow (2008) represents John Mackey's exploration of rhythmic drive and adolescent intensity. The title suggests a hidden current beneath calm waters – a perfect metaphor for the piece's propulsive understructure. A restless rhythmic pattern in the low brass and percussion underpins fluid melodies that surge and recede, creating the sensation of being pulled forward by an invisible force. Syncopations and meter shifts heighten the feeling of turbulence and tension before the piece resolves in a vigorous, unified climax. *Undertow* remains one of Mackey's most frequently performed works, admired for its ability to engage players and audiences alike with its immediacy and vitality.

Eric Whitacre's *October* (2000) has become a cornerstone of the contemporary wind band repertoire for its remarkable emotional depth and sonorous beauty. Written as a reflection of the composer's favorite month, the piece conveys the sense of stillness and introspection that accompanies autumn's change. Its opening chorale unfolds in warm, consonant harmonies, expanding gradually into rich, overlapping lines that recall Whitacre's celebrated choral writing. Moments of dissonance emerge organically from within the texture, coloring the harmony with bittersweet resonance. The music builds toward a glowing climax before dissolving into quiet repose. *October* exemplifies Whitacre's ability to evoke deep emotion through harmonic color and simplicity of gesture, offering a contemplative balance within any concert program.

Katahji Copley's *Halcyon Hearts* was written as an expression of peace, hope, and unity during a period of global uncertainty. The title alludes to the myth of the "halcyon days," a time of calm seas and serenity. Copley achieves this through radiant harmonies, flowing melodic lines, and rhythmic interjections that suggest both joy and resilience. The piece moves between moments of tranquility and exuberance, often layering textures in a way that gives every section of the ensemble a voice. Copley's writing merges traditional concert band sonorities with a distinctly modern harmonic language rooted in emotion and inclusivity. A prominent figure among emerging composers, his works often emphasize connection, representation, and the shared humanity that music can inspire.

Japanese composer Yo Goto's *Dancing in Air* (2005) is a buoyant, rhythmically intricate work that exemplifies his characteristic precision and clarity. The piece opens with light, agile motifs that develop into increasingly complex rhythmic dialogues between sections, giving the impression of movement suspended in space. Syncopated figures and unexpected accents propel the music forward while maintaining an effortless sense of lift, as though the dancers themselves defy gravity. Goto's craftsmanship lies in his control of texture and pacing – each phrase contributes to an overarching sense of motion and exhilaration. As both composer and educator, Goto has profoundly influenced Japan's wind band culture, and *Dancing in Air* remains one of his most joyful and technically engaging contributions to the international repertoire.

Composed in 1893, *The Liberty Bell* is one of John Philip Sousa's most distinguished marches, known for its dignified character and balanced craftsmanship. Inspired by America's historic symbol of freedom, Sousa originally intended the march for a circus production before dedicating it to the Liberty Bell itself – an emblem of independence and perseverance. The piece features a graceful melody supported by Sousa's hallmark counterpoint and dynamic trio section, where the piccolo obbligato and layered brass lines exemplify the march form at its finest. In this edition, conductor and musicologist Keith Brion restores authentic phrasing, articulations, and dynamics based on Sousa's original band

practices. Beyond its concert tradition, *The Liberty Bell* has achieved a unique place in popular culture through its use as the theme to *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, ensuring the march's enduring presence across generations.

About the Director

Matt Vegh has served as the director of the PLU Concert Band since the fall of 2024. He graduated from Pacific Lutheran University in 2012 with a Bachelors of music education (K-12 band and K-12 music) and Central Washington University in 2016 with a Masters of Music in wind band conducting, where he studied with Lewis Norfleet and Mark Lane. Professor Vegh also serves as the Director of Bands at Steilacoom High School. At SHS, he directs Wind Ensemble, Percussion Ensemble, Symphonic Band, Jazz Band, and has taught AP Music Theory. His concert bands consistently receive Superior ratings at festivals, while the percussion ensemble frequently performs at the WIAA/WMEA State Ensemble Contest, and has performed as a guest ensemble with Pacific Lutheran University's Percussion Ensemble twice. Matt Vegh's primary instrument is saxophone. He studied privately with Tracy Knoop, Dr. Erik Steighner, and online with Chad Lefkowitz-Brown. He has been fortunate to perform with the Columbia Basin Jazz Orchestra, South Sound Symphonic Band, Sophisticated Swing Jazz Band, and various other groups in the Pacific Northwest.

About the Ensemble

The **PLU University Concert Band** is a non-auditioned ensemble open to students and community members. Many of our members are non-music majors representing every department and school that our thriving liberal arts community at PLU has to offer. The musicians join our ensemble primarily for the opportunity to continue performing and engaging with music for personal, social, and intellectual enjoyment. The band performs once per semester and rehearses on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons in the MBR center on the PLU campus. Students who would like to join the ensemble for the Spring semester 2026 are encouraged to register for the class and join the band!

University Concert Band Personnel

Flute

Kera Buckmaster
Kate Dery
Lauren Dufay
Kaitlynn Koehn, *piccolo*
Isis Romero-Chavez
Sitlaly Santiago-Sanchez
Kai Smith

Oboe

Gabrielle Guerrero
Steven Blankenship

Bassoon

Logan Somers
Rameses Unat-Almanza

Clarinet

Alexa Colin Gonzalez
Bethani Juarez
Dani McMains
Jeremiah Ruiz
Clarissa Sacksteder

Bass Clarinet

Cas Stanhope

Alto Saxophone

Adrianna Kaeka-Ajeta
Diana Kaufman
Courtney Lazzarini
Cadence Philbeck

Tenor Saxophone

Madelyn Mitchell
Grace Weddle

Baritone Saxophone

Noah Ping

French Horn

Max Kiger
Elizabeth Oie
Ciel Simpson
Mitchell Smith

Trumpet

Dani Ballard
Lydia Brannan
Moiria Bugal-Fender
Levi Read
Kurtis Sacksteder

Trombone

Daniel Allen
Esteban De Anda
Wyatt Hammer
Sophia Okan

Euphonium

Jevon Ignaco
Nick Salas

Tuba

David Hobson
Noah Somers

Percussion

Nolan Akers
Rory Lacy
Brandon Liukkonen
Makayla Lu
Aidan Miller
Rachel Mower
Garrett Saez