University Concert Band

Tuesday, November 17, 2026 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

Midway March ..... **John Williams (b. 1932)**
arr. John Moss

Melodious Thunk ..... **David Biedenbender (b. 1984)**

Esprit de Corps ..... **Robert Jager (b. 1939)**

Unimaginable ..... **Christina Huss (b. 1962)**

Sea Songs ..... **Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)**

Our Cast Aways ..... **Julie Giroux (b. 1961)**

Yagi-Bushi ..... **Japanese Folk Song**
arr. Naohiro Iwai

Golden Guides ..... **Kelijah Dunton (b. 1999)**

Program Notes

Midway March by John Williams, arr. John Moss

The Battle of Midway, fought in June 1942, remains one of the pivotal engagements in the history of the United States Navy. In his original program notes, John Williams recalls the emotional spectacle of American and Japanese veterans reuniting in friendship as they searched for the site of the battle. When he was invited to compose the score for the 1976 film *Midway*, Williams was inspired by a family memory of his father, who had seen and heard John Philip Sousa conduct his celebrated band. Williams' goal for the piece was to resemble the great American marches that enthralled him since childhood, but with a "jazzy nautical swagger." This arrangement by John Moss retains the character of the original composition, but makes it more playable for bands of various experience levels.

Melodious Thunk by David Biedenbender

"I don't normally like to begin program notes with dictionary definitions–it feels pretty stuffy to me–but it seemed appropriate for this piece, so here goes…

Thunk [thuhngk] *noun and verb*

1. [n.] an abrupt, flat, hollow sound (example: The book landed on the floor with a *thunk*.); synonym: thud
2. [v.] to produce an abrupt, flat, hollow sound
3. [v.] colloquial past tense and past participle of *think*

Melodious Thunk was inspired by the famous jazz pianist Thelonious Monk. Monk's wife, Nellie Smith, nicknamed him "Melodious Thunk" because of his clunky, awkward, and brilliant(!) piano playing, and his somewhat scatterbrained and disoriented nature. I really liked the idea of playing around with Monk's name–first, because I personally really enjoy goofing around with 'spoonerisms' (silly, ridiculous, mix-and-match letter games, which often happen by accident: for example, *slip of the tongue* becomes *tip of the slung*), and second, because this nickname actually provided great musical inspiration. Melodious–well, that's fairly obvious–and *thunk* (which is a great onomatopoeia!) became the starting points for the piece. Big, fat *thunks* are interspersed with pointy, clunky, bluesy blips, which are then transformed into a long, smooth, laid-back melody accompanied by a funky bass line. I haven't consciously borrowed any specific tunes or links from Monk, although I do use a small fragment of Dizzy Gillespie's tune, *Salt Peanuts*, but I hope you'll hear some similarities between this piece and Monk's iconic musical style and quirky attitude."

– program notes by the composer

Sea Songs by Ralph Vaughan Williams

Ralph Vaughan Williams composed *Sea Songs* in 1923 for military band, motivated in part by his admiration for the players of the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall. Like many English composers of his era, Vaughan Williams collected traditional English folk songs from around the country, often in rural English counties like Somerset and Lincolnshire. Cast in conventional march form with a trio, the piece is a medley of three traditional British sea songs: "Princess Royal," "Admiral Benbow," and "Portsmouth." The audience will hear the first two tunes in the opening section; "Portsmouth" then supplies the contrasting trio before the opening material returns to close the piece. The work is closely associated with his famous *English Folk Song Suite*, of which *Sea Songs* may have served as one of the suite's original movements. Its character is light, buoyant, and unmistakably English.

Our Cast Aways by Julie Giroux

6.5 million companion animals enter animal shelters every year and 2.4 million of these adoptable animals are put down. These numbers do not include the thousands who suffer in silence. Thanks to thousands of caring people, these numbers are steadily decreasing, but we still have a long way to go. This work is dedicated to all those who work hard in the fight to end puppy mills, to rescue suffering pets, and to provide care and medical attention to all those rescued. It is dedicated to those companions who get rescued and for those who rescue never comes. We are all shepherds. Every living creature is in our care. Hopefully mankind will someday uphold its responsibility and become caretaker of all living things on earth. Maybe someday all humans will be humane, and mankind will be kind.

– program notes by the composer

***Esprit de Corps* by Robert Jager**

Robert Jager composed *Esprit de Corps* in 1984 on commission from the United States Marine Band, then under the direction of Colonel John R. Bourgeois. It is the second Robert Jager piece commissioned by the ensemble. *Esprit de Corps* is based on "The Marines' Hymn," but is an original march designed as a tribute to the Marine Corps in general. In addition to this inspiration, Jager writes that this work "is also a display piece for any fine group of band musicians," intended to demonstrate an ensemble's virtuosity. *Esprit de Corps* is full of drama and energy, although it also contains moments of formality and even a pseudo-waltz in the middle of the piece. Robert Jager denotes the tempo marking as "Tempo di Bourgeois," meant to reflect the spirited energy of the former conductor of the United States Marine Band.

***Unimaginable* by Christina Huss**

Christina Huss's *Unimaginable* was commissioned by band director Frances Shelton to honor the resilience of Western North Carolina in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. With support from the Women Band Directors International Foundation and the Biltmore Music Showcase, it received its premiere from the Asheville Community Band in the fall of 2025. In her program note, Huss explains that she wished to depict the storm and the widespread devastation it caused, but also to celebrate the beauty of the ancient Appalachian landscape and, above all, the courage of its people. The work unfolds as a dramatic arc. It begins with the quiet patter of rain as clouds gather over the mountains, and introduces a noble "Asheville motif." Traditional tunes, including "Black Is the Color" and "Wayfaring Stranger," are woven into the texture. The music then grows furious as melodies fragment and the storm breaks. From this turmoil emerges "Amazing Grace," first in the minor mode and then transformed into a radiant statement of hope. The returning Asheville motif, now strengthened, closes the work as a testament to renewal.

***Yagi-Bushi* – Japanese folk song, arr. Naohiro Iwai**

Yagi-Bushi is a traditional folk song and dance from Japan's Gunma Prefecture, which is about an hour northwest of Tokyo. The dancers wear large hats called *kasa*, and dance in a counter-clockwise circle around a *mikoshi*, which is a type of portable Shinto shrine. The dance is very spirited, and ends with everyone throwing their hats in the air, depicted in the coda of this work. The arranger, Naohiro Iwai (then a member of the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra) introduced this piece to Dr. Frederick Fennell, who was the first permanent conductor of the ensemble. Fennell then premiered Iwai's arrangement in the United States with the North Shore Concert Band.

***Golden Guides* by Kelijah Dunton**

Kelijah Dunton is a Brooklyn-born composer who began serious musical study in high school as an alto saxophonist and has since developed, largely without formal training in composition, into one of the most frequently performed young voices in the wind-band repertoire. *Golden Guides* received its world premiere at Carnegie Hall in May 2026. It was performed by students of the NYC All-City High School Music Program, Dunton's alma mater, as part of a celebration of the program's ninetieth anniversary. As a work written for and first performed by young musicians, *Golden Guides* also carries a particular resonance: it is a gift from a former student of the program to the students who came after him.

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 General 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 2027 are encouraged to register for the class and join the band!

University Concert Band Personnel

Flute
Kera Buckmaster+
Bailey Coville
Piper Grindstaff+
Lilly Prohaska
Isis Romero-Chavez
Haramy Shimokawa

Bassoon
Logan Somers+

Clarinet
Steven Blankenship+
Briseyda Chavez
Lucy Harvey
Dani McMains
Christopher Pihlman©
Antonio Torres©

Bass Clarinet
Gavin Smit

Alto Saxophone
Kaleb Elario
Diana Kaufman+
Eduardo Racy
Daniel Santos
Tylor Wise

Tenor Saxophone
Matthew Hughes©
Madelyn Mitchell
Grace Weddle+

Baritone Saxophone
Noah Ping©

French Horn
Benjamin Hanks©
Max Kiger+
Mitchell Smith

Trumpet
Noah Alvarado
Lydia Brannan
Gaje Dequis
Moira Fender+
Jacob Lambe©
Ayden Little
Levi Read

Trombone
Louisa Davis
Esteban De Anda
Sophia Okan
Casey Westendorf+

Euphonium
Hannah Hack
Nicholas Salas
Theodore Schmeltzer

Tuba
David Hobson©

Percussion
Max Bailey
Hellena Christensen
Aubrie Clark©
Jim Harkins
Eli Mease©
Cadence Philbeck+
Garrett Saez

+Section leader
©Community member

PLU | SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE & DANCE

ALL MUSIC EVENTS ARE IN MARY BAKER RUSSELL MUSIC CENTER, LAGERQUIST CONCERT HALL UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

SEPTEMBER

13 Sunday, 3pm
Faculty Recital: Erik Steighner, Saxophone & Oksana Ejokina, Piano, free admission

20 Sunday, 12pm
Faculty Recital: Vianna & Trindade, Brazilian Jazz Duo. Jennie Lee Hansen Recital Hall, free admission

20 Sunday, 3pm
Richard D. Moe Organ Recital Series: Christa Rakich, Organist

OCTOBER

4 Sunday, 5pm
Evelina Bozhko, Piano – Forestine Wise Monsen Memorial Scholarship Recital, free admission

7 Wednesday, 7:30pm
Guest Artist Lecture Recital: Alejandro Cremaschi, Piano, free admission

11 Sunday, 3pm
University Wind Ensemble

15 Thursday, 1:45pm
Jessica Dodge-Overstreet Saxophone Masterclass. Mary Baker Russell Music Center Room 334, free admission

15 Thursday, 7:30pm
Guest Artist Recital: Jessica Dodge-Overstreet, Saxophone, free admission

18 Sunday, 3pm
South Sound Saxophone Ensemble, free admission

19 Monday, 7:30pm
University Jazz Ensemble: Miles Davis Centennial. Eastvold Auditorium, Karen Hille Phillips Center

20 Tuesday, 7:30pm
Fall Festival of Choirs

25 Sunday, 2pm
Choir of the West Centennial Celebration

27 Tuesday, 7:30pm
University Symphony Orchestra

29 Thursday, 1:30pm
Emely Phelps Piano Masterclass, free admission

29 Thursday, 7:30pm
Guest Artist Recital: Emely Phelps, Piano, free admission

30 Friday, 12pm
Orchestra Festival concert, free admission

NOVEMBER

1 Sunday, 3pm
Angela Meade Vocal Competition, free admission

3 Tuesday, 7:30pm
Keyboard Students Recital, free admission

8 Sunday, 3pm
Richard D. Moe Organ Recital Series: Justin J. Murphy-Mancini and Friends

11 Wednesday, 7:30pm
Early Music Concert, free admission

14 Saturday, 3pm
Woodwind Students Recital, free admission

14 Saturday, 4:30pm
Brass Students Recital, free admission

15 Sunday, 3pm
University Wind Ensemble

15 Sunday, 5:45pm
Tracy Doyle Flute Masterclass. Mary Baker Russell Music Center Room 334, free admission

17 Tuesday, 7:30pm
University Concert Band

18 Wednesday, 7:30pm
Percussion Ensemble, free admission

NOVEMBER, Cont.

20-21 Friday-Saturday, 7:30pm
Opera Scenes. Eastvold Auditorium, Karen Hille Phillips Center

21 Saturday, 3pm
Steel Band, free admission

22 Sunday, 3pm
Choral Union

22 Sunday, 7:30pm
Guitar Orchestra & Guitar Ensemble, free admission

23 Monday, 7:30pm
University Jazz Ensemble. Eastvold Auditorium, Karen Hille Phillips Center

24 Tuesday, 7:30pm
Mariachi del Pacifico. Eastvold Auditorium, Karen Hille Phillips Center, free admission

DECEMBER

***Light Beyond Shadow*, A PLU Christmas Concert**
Tickets go on sale Wednesday, November 4

Friday, December 4, at 7:30pm - Lagerquist Concert Hall
Saturday, December 5, at 2pm - Lagerquist Concert Hall
Saturday, December 5, at 7:30pm - Lagerquist Concert Hall
Sunday, December 6, at 2pm - Lagerquist Concert Hall
Monday, December 7, at 7:30pm - Benaroya Hall, Seattle

1 Tuesday, 6pm
Saxophone Quartets & Jazz Combos. The Cave, Anderson University Center, free admission

2 Wednesday, 7:30pm
Piano Ensemble, free admission

8 Tuesday, 6pm
Chamber Music Kaleidoscope, free admission

8 Tuesday, 7:30pm
String Kaleidoscope, free admission

9 Wednesday, 7:30pm
Let Your Heart Be Light, featuring University Singers, Knights Chorus, and PLU Ringers

10 Thursday, 7:30pm
Sølvvinden Flute Ensemble, free admission

13 Sunday, 3pm
Composers Forum, free admission

JANUARY

9 Saturday, 4:30 and 6:30pm
Northwest High School Honor Band, free admission

12 Tuesday, 12:30pm
TBDetermined!, free admission

17 Sunday, 6pm
PLU Honor Orchestra for Strings, free admission

28-30 Thursday-Saturday, 7:30pm and 31 Sunday, 2pm
The Magic Flute by W. A. Mozart. Eastvold Auditorium, Karen Hille Phillips Center

To view more detailed event information, please visit:
www.plu.edu/music/calendar (Updated October 22, 2026)