



**BRUSH|REED**  
**at Westonka High School**  
**October 2, 2025**

**Set 1**

“Ombra mai fù” from <i>Serse</i>	George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) arr. J. Bill
<i>Enveloped</i>	Jenni Watson (b. 1985)
<i>Winter’s Summer</i>	Ted King-Smith (b. 1988)
<i>Hummingbrdd</i>	Steven Bryant (b. 1972)
<i>Garden of Love</i>	Jacob Ter Veldhuis (b. 1951)

**Set 2**

<i>Après un rêve</i>	Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) arr. J. Bill
Suite No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1008 Prelude	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
<i>Performed to Amanda Gorman’s “The Hill We Climb”</i>	
<i>The Seventh Healing Song of John Joseph (Blue)</i>	James Demars (b. 1952)
Solo from <i>Adjusting Parameters</i>	Jenni Watson
<i>New World</i>	Björk and Sjón arr. J. Bill

**Set 3**

<i>Frost</i> V. Erik Postlude	Marc Mellits (b. 1966)
<i>Girl on Fire</i>	Alicia Keys, Salaam Remi, Jeff Bhasker, and Billy Squier. arr. by J. Bill
<i>Portals</i> 2	Nathan Hall (b.1982)
<i>The Show Must Go On</i>	Queen arr. J. Bill



## Program Notes

### **Ombra mai fù**

Commonly known as Handel's 'Largo of Love', *Ombra mai fù* is the opening aria in the 1738 opera *Serse*. Sung by the character Xerxes I of Persia, the vocal part is composed for a countertenor. The title of the aria translates into 'Never was a shade', and within the context of the opera, Xerxes is singing about the admiration and love he has for the shade of the plane trees.

-Alex Burns

Never was a shade  
of any plant  
dearer and more lovely,  
or more sweet.  
Tender and beautiful fronds  
of my beloved plane tree  
let Fate smile upon you.  
May thunder, lightning, and storms  
never disturb your dear peace,  
nor may you by blowing winds be profaned.  
Never was a shade  
of any plant,  
dearer and more lovely,  
or more sweet.

### **Enveloped**

Walking through a forest of beech trees, at first noticing delicate sounds of trees, small rivers & echoing birdsong, but the more you listen, the more you hear the interplay of sound.

A sense of being enveloped - physically and aurally - by the forest

-Jenni Watson

### **Winter's Summer**

Written for Duke Sullivan in April 2014, *Winter's Summer* is inspired by his poem Re-Blooming, specifically the last phrase:

But,  
in the depth of winter  
I had an invincible summer to feed the buds,  
a *chance* to bloom again.

This piece emulates various aspects of the poem, but specifically the last phrase. It shifts between a winter soundscape, still and quiet; and a summer one, bright and active. The Alto Saxophone and fixed media are often intertwined with each other, as the fixed media was written almost entirely with filtered sounds and techniques on saxophone. *Winter's Summer* begins with a winter soundscape of melancholic phrases in the Alto while being accompanied by a cold, empty wind in the fixed media.



Several interruptions in the fixed media foreshadow the arrival of summer, which contrasts winter with fast, rhythmic, and jazz-like gestures. Summer gradually fades away and returns following the climax of the piece. However, at winter's return the Alto is no longer melancholic. Having had the opportunity to "bloom" in the brief summer of this piece, the Alto waits once more for winter to fade away, and is given one final reminder of it in the fixed media before the winds of winter finally let go.

-Ted King-Smith

### **Hummingbrd**

*Hummingbrd* is a happy, lively little piece I wrote over one weekend, primarily as a test drive of a new piece of software, Melodyne. Every sound in the entire piece is from my own voice (I didn't use any synthesizers, drum machines, samplers, etc.). Not being a gifted singer, I'd never attempted anything quite like this before, and found it incredibly fun to do. As a compositional exercise, it reminded me of the value of simply playing, with musical materials and creative tools.

-Steven Bryant

### **Garden of Love**

*Garden of Love* is based on a poem by William Blake. The audio track consists of sound bytes from speech, oboes, harpsichord, birds, and electronic sounds.

-Jacob TV

*I went to the Garden of Love,  
and saw what I never had seen:  
A chapel was built in the midst,  
where I used to play on the green.*

*And the gates of this chapel were shut,  
and 'Thou shalt not' writ over the door;  
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,  
that so many sweet flowers bore.*

*And I saw it was filled with graves,  
and tomb-stones where flowers should be:  
And priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,  
and binding with briars, my joys and desires.*



## **Après un rêve**

*Trois Mélodies* is a set of mélodies for solo voice and piano, by Gabriel Fauré. It consists of "Après un rêve" (Op. 7, No. 1), one of Fauré's most popular vocal pieces, "Hymne" (Op. 7, No. 2), and "Barcarolle" (Op. 7, No. 3). The songs were written between 1870 and 1877 and were published separately, only appearing together for the first time in 1878 as a part of his first of 3 song collections. In "Après un rêve" (*After a dream*), a dream of romantic flight with a lover, away from the earth and "towards the light", is described. However, upon awakening, the dreamer longs to return to the "mysterious night" and the ecstatic falsehood of his dream. The text of the poem is an anonymous Italian poem freely adapted into French by Romain Bussine.

-Jean-Michel Nectoux

In sleep made sweet by a vision of you  
I dreamed of happiness, fervent illusion,  
Your eyes were softer, your voice pure and ringing,  
You shone like a sky that was lit by the dawn;

You called me and I departed the earth  
To flee with you toward the light,  
The heavens parted their clouds for us,  
We glimpsed unknown splendours, celestial fires.

Alas, alas, sad awakening from dreams!  
I summon you, O night, give me back your delusions;  
Return, return in radiance,  
Return, O mysterious night!

## **The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman**

When day comes we ask ourselves, where can we find light in this neverending shade? The loss we carry, a sea we must wade. We've braved the belly of the beast, we've learned that quiet isn't always peace and the norms and notions of what just is, isn't always justice. And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it, somehow we do it, somehow we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken but simply unfinished.

We, the successors of a country and a time where a skinny black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president only to find herself reciting for one. And, yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine, but that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect, we are striving to forge a union with purpose, to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man.

So we lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us. We close the divide because we know to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside. We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another, we seek harm to none and harmony for all.



Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true: that even as we grieved, we grew, even as we hurt, we hoped, that even as we tired, we tried, that we'll forever be tied together victorious, not because we will never again know defeat but because we will never again sow division.

Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one should make them afraid. If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade, but in in all of the bridges we've made. That is the promise to glade, the hill we climb if only we dare it because being American is more than a pride we inherit, it's the past we step into and how we repair it. We've seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it. That would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy, and this effort very nearly succeeded. But while democracy can periodically be delayed, but it can never be permanently defeated.

In this truth, in this faith, we trust, for while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us, this is the era of just redemption we feared in its inception we did not feel prepared to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour but within it we found the power to author a new chapter, to offer hope and laughter to ourselves, so while once we asked how can we possibly prevail over catastrophe, now we assert how could catastrophe possibly prevail over us.

We will not march back to what was but move to what shall be, a country that is bruised but whole, benevolent but bold, fierce and free, we will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation, our blunders become their burden. But one thing is certain: if we merge mercy with might and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and change our children's birthright.

So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left, with every breath from my bronze, pounded chest, we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one, we will rise from the golden hills of the West, we will rise from the windswept Northeast where our forefathers first realized revolution, we will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the Midwestern states, we will rise from the sunbaked South, we will rebuild, reconcile, and recover in every known nook of our nation in every corner called our country our people diverse and beautiful will emerge battered and beautiful, when the day comes we step out of the shade aflame and unafraid, the new dawn blooms as we free it, for there is always light if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it.

### **The Seventh Healing Song of John Joseph (Blue)**

The Seventh Healing Song of John Joseph (Blue) for flute and recorded sounds was written for flutist Eric Hoover, who recorded the flute parts and premiered the work in 1983. Manipulated acoustic sounds were brought together to create a "dialogue with the supernatural" and an evocation of Southwestern cultures in which the shaman may incorporate repetitive color imagery (usually red or blue), ceremonial drums, and hypnotic mandalas. In this way the "Healing Song" becomes itself an artifact of honor and fascination for those gifted individuals who practice the mystical art of healing.



### **Solo from Adjusting Parameters**

ADJUSTING PARAMETERS: Interpreting shifts in society through the lens of shifts in audio.

A suite which looks at positive aspects of change, exploring acoustic and electronic sound in a symbiotic relationship representative of personal reflections on aspects of society.

SOLO: Reconnecting with Nature & Self. Surface reflection replacing integral understanding.

-Jenni Watson

### **New World**

If living is seeing  
I'm holding my breath  
In wonder - I wonder  
What happens next?  
A new world, a new day to see

-Bjork

### **Frost**

In the northeast of the United States, the winter of 2010-11 saw incredible record-breaking snowfall. However, early March provided a brief stay from the cold and the warm weather started to thaw the frozen landscape. As the ice and snow began to melt, audible cracks in the frozen blocks could be heard. Icicles and snow drifts would exclaim a snapping sound as they cracked and then hit the ground, echoing through the neighborhood. I imagined these echoes turning into groovy loops of sound, rebounding off the houses and trees. Slowly melting sheets of ice yielded more introverted lyrical lines of sound. From its initial frozen formation, each movement warmed and metamorphosized itself into a sound portrait of the Rönmark family.

-Marc Mellits

### **Girl on Fire**

Alicia Keys' "*Girl on Fire*" is a bold and empowering anthem that celebrates strength, independence, and resilience. Released in 2012 as the lead single from her fifth studio album of the same name, the song blends soulful vocals with a driving beat, creating an atmosphere of determination and triumph. Keys delivers the lyrics with both power and vulnerability, portraying a woman who has found her inner force and is unapologetically stepping into her own. The fiery imagery symbolizes passion, confidence, and the ability to rise above obstacles, making the track a rallying cry for self-empowerment. Beyond its musical impact, "*Girl on Fire*" has become a cultural touchstone, often used to inspire individuals—particularly women—to embrace their strength and their unique voice.

-ChatGPT. OpenAI, 2025



## **Portals**

I began writing "Portals" as a reaction to the more serious chamber compositions I was working on at the time. Sometimes it feels great to let loose. The resulting piece is a karaoke-like track full of synths and drums, and a driving saxophone part with playful melodies and rhythmic twists. The first movement is a primordial, almost sci-fi scattering of sounds and echoes. Those sounds coalesce into the second movement's undeniably pop grooves.

-Nathan Hall

## **The Show Must Go On**

Queen's "*The Show Must Go On*" stands as one of the band's most powerful and poignant songs, released in 1991 on their album *Innuendo*. Written primarily by Brian May, the track reflects both resilience and vulnerability, serving as a metaphor for perseverance in the face of struggle. Its lyrics capture a defiant spirit, acknowledging hardship while refusing to give in, echoing Freddie Mercury's incredible ability to deliver soaring, passionate vocals despite his declining health at the time. The combination of theatrical intensity, layered instrumentation, and Mercury's raw performance transforms the song into an anthem of courage and endurance. Today, it remains not only a tribute to Mercury's extraordinary artistry but also a universal message about strength, dignity, and continuing forward no matter the challenges.

-ChatGPT. OpenAI, 2025