

## **Best of the West Musical Festival at Colorado Mesa University - Grand Junction, Colorado**

Best of the West began in 2000 as a one-day select band event called Colorado Senior Band Day. 40 enthusiastic high school seniors joined the Colorado Mesa University Wind Symphony for rehearsals culminating in an exciting concert. The second year, 60 students attended allowing the event to form its own high school band with Dr. Calvin Hofer conducting. In 2002, with the financial support of Stephen Boelter and Karen Combs, the first guest conductor, Eugene Corporon, was invited to conduct and CSBD became a two-day event. James Houlik, tenor saxophone, was featured in a Colorado premiere of Joseph Wilcox Jenkin's new concerto composed for Mr. Houlik.

In 2004, to include participation of all high school students, the name was changed to Best of the West Select Band. Eighty students participated, and the event featured the Memphis Brass as guest soloists with the CMU Wind Symphony in a performance of Eric Ewazen's *Shadowcatcher*. The guest conductor, John Tuinstra also performed a tuba recital on our Guest Artist Recital Series, at which time this component of the festival was added. All of our BOTW guest artists now open the festival with a recital on the Guest Artist Recital Series.

A milestone was achieved in 2005 with the participation of over 140 students, necessitating the formation of two bands, equal in ability. With the continued financial support of Stephen and Karen, BOTW invited guest conductor Dr. Paula Holcomb and commissioned a new work from Dr. Karl Boelter, premiered by the Colorado Mesa University Wind Symphony. Our featured guest soloist was Bob Spring (clarinet) from Arizona State University performing *Black Dog* by Scott McAllister with the CMU Wind Symphony as well as a recital on the Music Department's Guest Artist Recital Series.

In 2006, the format moved to auditioning students to be placed in bands of like ability forming the BOTW Wind Symphony and Symphonic Band, with the more experienced students placed in the Wind Symphony. Jason Nitsch composed a new work, and a second guest conductor was added to conduct the Symphonic Band with Mark Wurst from Mountain Vista High School joining the growing BOTW family.

A special component of this event is the Best of the West Commissioning Project. Each year a composer is commissioned to write a new piece for band, and the Colorado Mesa University Wind Symphony gives the world premiere. The two high school bands perform works of the guest composer if possible, and the composer works with the high school students and conductor in rehearsal. This unique opportunity allows the students and conductor to gain artistic insight from the composer.

The conductor of the BOTW Wind Symphony is a well-respected conductor from a top university music school in North America. The conductor of the Symphonic Band is a successful, well-respected conductor from a high school program in Colorado.

Another important element of BOTW that has transpired is the continuing education aspect for high school and middle school band directors. Band directors can register for continuing education/graduate credit regardless of whether they bring students. The guest composer, conductors and artist(s) present sessions for the teachers, and the guest artists present a master class to the high school students. The guest composer-in-residence also gives a composition master class to aspiring young composers.

This vision and format continues today, seeking excellent conductors and soloists and commissioning outstanding composers. BOTW has evolved into a premiere event in Colorado and the western United States for high school students, teachers, and the students and faculty of Colorado Mesa University.

After another inspiring and emotionally charged event in December of 2008 with over 180 high school students, we realized that this event is so much more than a select band. It is a Festival of Music that includes inspiring rehearsals, master classes, sectionals, performances, a world premiere, guest soloists, educational sessions, and a banquet. To more closely represent this unique experience, "Music Festival" has been added to "Best of the West". However, to those who experience this event, it has become affectionately referred to simply as "Best of the West".

2010 marked the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and BOTW was pleased to bring back the first guest conductor, Eugene Corporon who was given the opportunity to choose the composer. He chose John Mackey, and John's commission, *Hymn to a Blue Hour* is being performed around the world. 2012 was another exciting year as we "Celebrate Colorado"! All of our guest artists were from Colorado and represent the talent that abounds in this great state!

2013 marked another milestone in the history of BOTW when the festival moved to three bands and over 220 students attending.

We are ever so thankful to Karen Combs for her continued support of the Best of the West Music Festival.

### Best of the West Music Festival History

Year	Guest Conductor	Guest Artist Recital & Soloist	Guest Composer
2000	Calvin Hofer, Colorado Mesa University		
2001	Calvin Hofer, Colorado Mesa University		
2002	Eugene Corporon, Univ. of North Texas	James Houlik, tenor sax Duquesne University	
2003	John Tuinstra, Univ. of Wis-Whitewater	John Tuinstra, tuba	
2004	Alan Lafave, Northern State University	The Memphis Brass, The Univ. of Memphis	
2005	Paula Holcomb, SUNY-Fredonia Calvin Hofer, Colorado Mesa University	Robert Spring, Clarinet Arizona State University	Karl Boelter SUNY-Fredonia
2006	Gary Hill, Arizona State University Mark Wurst, Mountain Vista HS	Patrick Sheridan, tuba	Jason Nitsch Houston, TX
2007	Kraig Alan Williams, Univ. of Memphis Tim Libby, Cherry Creek HS	The Memphis Brass University of Memphis	Eric Ewazen Julliard School of Music
2008	Joan deAlbuquerque Cal-State Long Beach (now at Luther College) Stephanie Texera, CU Grad Asst. Summit County High School (now at Skyline HS)	Lisa Pegher, percussion	Carolyn Bremer Cal-State Long Beach
2009	Gillian McKay, Univ. of Toronto, CA Craig Ketels, Lewis-Palmer HS	Brian Bowman, euphonium University of North Texas	David Gillingham Central Michigan Univ.
2010	Eugene Corporon, Univ. of North Texas  Sara Wynes, Cherry Creek HS	Anna Marie Wytko, saxophone Kansas State University	John Mackey
2011	Wendy McCallum, Brandon University, Brandon, Manitoba, CA Butch Eversole, Palmer Ridge High School	Project Trio  Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville	Kimberly Archer
2012	Allan McMurray, University of Colorado Karen Gregg, Lyons High School	The Stonbeback Sisters, trumpet trio	Daniel Kellog University of Colorado
2013	Carolyn Barber, Univ of Nebraska-Lincoln Casey Cropp, Rocky Mtn. HS (retired) Jonathan Hinkle, Colorado Mesa University	Timothy McAllister, saxophone	Roshanne Etezady
2014	Karen Fannin, Univ. of Nebraska – Omaha Debbie Baker, Fountain Creek Brass Band/Colorado Springs Christian Schools Jonathan Hinkle, Colorado Mesa University	JD Shaw, horn	Michael Markowski
2015	Ray Cramer, retired, Univ. of Indiana Tammy Ahmed, Bear Creek HS Michael Hudson, Univ. of Kentucky	Lisa Pegher, percussion	Julie Giroux

### Best of the West Commissioning Project

### Soloist(s) & Repertoire with the CMU Wind Symphony

2005	<i>Mountains &amp; Mesas</i> , Karl Boelter	Robert Spring, clarinet: <i>Black Dog</i> , Scott McAllister
2006	<i>Elegy for a Ghost Town</i> , Jason Nitsch	Patrick Sheridan, tuba: <i>Black &amp; Tan</i> ; Gabriele's Oboe, Spec. Arr.
2007	<i>Grand Mesa</i> , Eric Ewazen	The Memphis Brass: <i>Shadowcatcher</i> , Eric Ewazen
2008	<i>Saturnalia</i> , Carolyn Bremer	Lisa Pegher, percussion: <i>Concerto for Percussion</i> , Joseph Schnwater
2009	<i>Abiquiu</i> , David Gillingham	Brian Bowman, euphonium: <i>Concerto for Euphonium</i> , David Gillingham
2010	<i>Hymn to a Blue Hour</i> John Mackey	Anna Marie Wytko, saxophone; <i>Concerto for Soprano Sax</i> , John Mackey
2011	<i>The Caledonian Forest</i> , Kimberly Archer	Project Trio, Special Arrangements by Project Trio
2012	<i>Monument</i> , Daniel Kellog	The Stoneback Sisters, works from the Rafael Mendez library
2013	<i>Invincible Summer</i> , Roshanne Etezady	Timothy McAllister, <i>Concert Suite</i> , William Bolcom
2014	<i>Our Illusion of Separateness</i> , Michael Markowski	JD Shaw, <i>Mystic Dance</i> , Rick DeJonge
2015	<i>Vortex</i> , Julie Giroux	Lisa Pegher, percussion, <i>Concerto for Percussion &amp; Symp Band</i> , Brett Dietz