

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.

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 Wind Symphony and Symphonic Band, with the more experienced students placed in the Wind Symphony. 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. The commissioned piece is performed by the Colorado Mesa University Wind Symphony. 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. BOTW 2009 marks the first time a conductor from another country has been invited. 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. The guest composer, conductors and artist(s) present sessions for the teachers. Band directors can register for continuing education/graduate credit regardless of whether they bring students.

The guest artist(s) opens the festival on Thursday night by performing a recital as part of CMU's Guest Artist Recital Series. In addition, the guest artist presents master classes to the college and high school students, performs a concerto with the Colorado Mesa University Wind Symphony and presents a session for the teachers.

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, world premiers, 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 10th 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 we couldn't be happier! Also joining us was conductor Sara Wynes and saxophonist Anna Marie Wytko. 2011 is another exciting year!

Best of the West Music Festival Time-Line

<u>Year</u>	<u>Guest Conductor</u>	<u>Guest Artist Recital & Soloist</u>	<u>Guest Composer</u>
2000	Calvin Hofer, Colorado Mesa University		
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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 Performance with CMUWS: <i>Shadowcatcher</i> , Eric Ewazen	
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 Performance with CMUWS: <i>Shadowcatcher</i> , Eric Ewazen	Eric Ewazen Julliard School of Music
2008	Joan deAlbuquerque Cal-State Long Beach Stephanie Texera, CU Grad Asst. Summit County High School	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 Migliaro 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	TBA	Daniel Kellog University of Colorado

Best of the West Commissioning Project

Soloist(s) & Repertoire with the CMU Wind Symphony

2005	<i>Mountains & 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 & 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 Schwatner
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	_____, Daniel Kellog	Soloist TBD

Colorado Mesa University, Grand Junction, Colorado

Colorado Mesa University is one of the fastest growing public colleges in Colorado with an enrollment of approximately 8,000 students. The Music Department is located in the Moss Performing Arts Center, which houses a 288-seat Recital Hall, 620-seat theater, two large rehearsal halls, 13 faculty studios, a piano/technology lab with 16 stations, as well as classrooms and practice rooms. CMU offers a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Education, Performance, Liberal Arts and Elective Studies in Business.

Grand Junction is located in western Colorado and is nestled below three mountain ranges, the Colorado National Monument, the Grand Mesa and the Bookcliffs. Grand Junction and the greater Grand Valley have a population of approximately 115,000 residents, and is the largest city between Denver and Salt Lake City.

Personal Note:

Our beloved friend, patron and clarinetist in the Wind Symphony, Stephen Boelter, lost his battle with skin cancer on July 10, 2009. His absence leaves a tremendous void in our hearts and we miss him dearly. His wife Karen Combs is committed to the Best of the West Music Festival and the educational and artistic experiences and opportunities it gives to everyone involved.