



AMERICAN COMPOSERS FORUM

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Odysseus and the Sirens Premiere with Boynton Middle School Concert Band in Ithaca New composition brings music to Homer's story of myth and adventure

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St. PAUL, Minn., March 28, 2008— Composer Dana Wilson's new composition titled *Odysseus and the Sirens* will premiere May 8, 2008 as part of the spring concert for the Boynton Middle School Concert Band in Ithaca, New York at Ithaca High School, Kulp Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. In addition to Wilson's new composition, the band will also perform the world premieres of three pieces written by Boynton Middle School students.

Odysseus and the Sirens was commissioned by the American Composers Forum as part of their BandQuest® series. "This series fosters collaborations between composers and young bands through a residency component. This gives the composer and the students the opportunity to learn from each other through this process," said Carey Nadeau, Director of Community and Education Engagement at American Composers Forum.

In preparation for writing his piece, Wilson conducted a survey of the Boynton band members to learn about their lives and musical interests. He also attended rehearsals of the band in order to tailor his piece to their sound. Wilson said, "I'm always amazed by the energy and excitement of young people around music; the hope is to write a piece that will challenge them while also allowing them to have fun and focus some of their enthusiasm. This particular band is always so

well prepared and used to bringing brand new music to life, so it will be a pleasure to collaborate with them. "

Odysseus and the Sirens tells Homer's story of Greek hero Odysseus making his way home to Ithaca after fighting in the Trojan Wars, and his adventure of listening to the sirens that call to sailors with their enticing singing, trying to lure them to their death. In the myth, Odysseus instructs his crew to plug their ears to ignore the sirens' singing, but Odysseus has them tie him to the mast of the ship so he can experience their sound. The ship passes the sirens without incident, and as a result, the sirens fling themselves into the sea and are drowned.

According to Wilson, "This piece suggests this dramatic encounter. If you listen carefully, you can hear the wind-song becoming ever more insistent, the rocking of the ship, Odysseus' screams, and finally the sirens plunging to their death. It might also be mentioned that sirens are still found in our stories today. Perhaps most recently, the Marvel Comics superhero 'Siryn' (associated with the X-Men) is an Irish mutant that possesses a 'sonic scream.' And the term 'siren song' still refers to an appeal that is hard to resist but, if heeded, will lead to disaster."

Boynton Middle School Concert Band has commissioned seven new works for band since 2000. Director of Bands at Boynton Middle School Michael Allen said, "A project such as this is in line with our desire to expose our students to high quality creative experiences and add valuable literature to the middle school band repertoire."

In addition to the premiere performance of *Odysseus and the Sirens* and the three student compositions, the concert May 8 will also include *Trilogy*, by Bill Calhoun, *Flourish for Wind Band*, by Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Of Dark Lords and Ancient Kings*, by Roland Barrett.

About composer Dr. Dana Wilson



Composer Dana Wilson holds a doctorate from the Eastman School of Music, and is currently Charles A. Dana Professor of Music in the School of Music at Ithaca College. He is co-author of *Contemporary Choral Arranging* and has written articles on diverse musical subjects. He has been a Yaddo Fellow (at Yaddo, the

artists' retreat in Saratoga Springs, New York), a Wye Fellow at the Aspen Institute, a Charles A. Dana Fellow, and a Fellow at the Society for Humanities, Cornell University.

About Boynton Middle School

Boynton Middle School is committed to teaching and learning in an environment where diversity is valued and students are challenged to develop the skills needed to foster a positive self image, to make sound personal decisions and to have success in lifelong learning.

About BandQuest® and American Composers Forum



BandQuest is a series of music for middle-level band, written especially for middle-level bands by world-class composers. The series is commissioned and published by the American Composers Forum (St. Paul, MN), an organization that has supported the creative spirit of today's composers since 1975 by linking communities with composers and performers, encouraging the making, playing, and enjoyment of new music.

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