

Manukau Concert Band &
West City Concert Band present

ANGELS' ASCENT

Thursday 3 April
7:30 pm
Auckland Town Hall



WEST CITY
CONCERT BAND



WEST CITY CONCERT BAND

The **West City Concert Band** is a community wind ensemble based in West Auckland. Directed by Chad Davenport, they are made up of people from all walks of life ranging from school students through to retirees. WCCB is one of four music ensembles at West City Music Inc which provides opportunities for people to come together through the sheer enjoyment of music and stretch their musical skills through performance.



The West City Concert Band has provided a diverse range of concerts and educational experiences in the community for nearly 50 years. They frequently engage in innovative collaborations with world-class musicians, dancers, choirs, even a circus troupe. The band gives back to the community through free events like the ANZAC Day Memorial Service at Titirangi RSA and the Farmers Santa Parade. They also perform at the New Zealand Concert Band Festival every year and have been awarded the Royal New Zealand Navy Band trophy for Most Outstanding Performance 8 years in a row.

James Barnes – Symphonic Overture, Op. 80

This work was commissioned as a "large, Romantic-style overture" by the U.S. Air Force Band to celebrate their 50th anniversary. The band premiered the work at the March 1991 American Bandmasters Association convention in Tempe, Arizona.

After a bold introductory fanfare in the brass, a jaunty theme emerges in solo oboe which is then passed around the band. A middle *Adagio* section features a melancholy

alto saxophone solo, duetting at times with euphonium and cor anglais. On returning to the original theme, a second fast development includes some special "champagne music" (listen out for the moment where the cork is popped to launch the celebration), and the theme jumps around different sections of the band almost reminiscent of Benjamin Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*. After some almost Broadway-type recapitulation, Barnes returns to the opening fanfare in a *Presto* coda.

Philip Sparke – Clarinet Concerto (Movement 2)

Philip Sparke usually waits until a piece is fully finished before presenting it to anyone, but in the case of his *Clarinet Concerto*, the original soloist, Linda Merrick, asked to be kept informed of the complete process of composition, including material which did not make it into the final work. Throughout the process, the composer sent sketches to the soloist, who advised on technical difficulties and suggested articulation changes.

The original concept was for a suite of short movements, each with its own character, but by the time the first movement was complete, it was clear that a conventional three-movement format was going to work out better.

Tonight, soloist Glenn McCord plays the second movement. This slow, introspective piece explores initially the chalumeau (lower) register of the clarinet in a theme that is later taken up by the band, with a metropolitan jazzy feel. As the band carries the melody onwards, the clarinet weaves an intricate descant, becoming increasingly more passionate until leading to a marvellous cadenza.

Frank Ticheli – Angels in the Architecture

Angels in the Architecture was commissioned by Kingsway International and received its premiere performance at the Sydney Opera House in 2008. The work's title is inspired by the Sydney Opera House itself, with its halo-shaped acoustical ornaments hanging directly above the performance stage. The piece unfolds as a dramatic conflict between the two extremes of human existence -- one divine, the other evil.

Angels in the Architecture begins with a single voice singing a 19th-century Shaker song:

I am an angel of Light

I have soared from above

I am cloth'd with Mother's love.

I have come, I have come.

*To protect my chosen band
And lead them to the promised land.*

This "angel" -- represented by the singer -- frames the work, surrounding it with a protective wall of light and establishing the divine. Other representations of light, played by instruments rather than sung, include a traditional Hebrew song of peace ("Hevenu Shalom Aleichem") and the well-known 16th-century Genevan Psalter, *Old Hundredth*. These three borrowed songs, despite their varied religious origins, are meant to transcend any one religion, representing the more universal human ideals of peace, hope, and love. An original chorale, appearing twice in the work, represents Ticheli's own personal expression of these aspirations.

Angels in the Architecture poses the unanswered question of existence. It ends as it began: the angel reappears sings the same comforting words. But deep below, a final shadow reappears -- distantly, ominously.

INTERMISSION

MANUKAU CONCERT BAND

Manukau Concert Band is a group attracting members from around the greater Auckland area. The band's philosophy is to bring musicians together with a common goal of making and enjoying music at the highest level, and providing music for the wider community. The ensemble is currently directed by Alex Eichelbaum.



The band plays a wide range of music to engage audiences, from popular marches and show tunes, to classical works and original compositions for concert band. MCB regularly presents New Zealand premieres of exciting and challenging new compositions for wind band. They are most active in the Howick area, supporting local events and staging regular concerts throughout the year. Manukau Concert Band are highly lauded by the NZCBA and are frequent recipients of the David Chaulk Memorial Award for Best Performance of a New Zealand work. At the 2024 Festival, they were also awarded for their excellent performance of an Original Concert Band work for Cesarini's *Archangels* (Movements 2 & 3). They will be taking this evening's programme to Melbourne to compete in the Australian Band Championships at the end of April.

Ralph Vaughan-Williams – Sea Songs

Sea Songs was written in 1923 as the original second movement of the *English Folk Song Suite*, but was later published as a standalone piece. It is a medley of three well-known sea shanties: *Princess Royal*, *Admiral Benbow*, and *Portsmouth*, each originating from the late 17th and early 18th century. Although it uses the tunes of these three songs, it is not in typical “shanty” style, but a march form with a lyrical trio section. Nonetheless, it does retain the call-and-response framework from the shanty genre. Each time this effect is used throughout the piece, it gets increasingly more complex, each one being different from the last. These variations, rather than exact repetition, reveal the influence of the classical style on the shanties in this piece. Listen closely, and unexpected harmonies and counter-melodies can be heard throughout.

Vaughan-Williams created an orchestral version in 1942, which later became the theme music for the British television show *Billy Bunter* and the startup music for Anglia Television.

Franco Cesarini – Symphony No. 1: The Archangels

1. GABRIEL, THE MESSENGER OF LIGHT
2. RAPHAEL, THE GUIDE OF SOULS
3. MICHAEL, THE PRINCE OF THE HEAVENLY HOST
4. URIEL, THE TIME KEEPER

The Archangels Symphony is a vast composition with highly dramatic language, intense musical developments and frequent polyphonic elaborations. The thematic material is directly taken from old Gregorian melodies. Cesarini nods to ancient religions speaking of divine messengers, as well as Christian stories on which these movements are based. Cesarini draws on these powerful stories to give the work great gravity.

The first movement is dedicated to the Archangel Gabriel, the Messenger of God. The gentle angel, who announces the birth of Christ, at times becomes a fierce warrior, as when launching the attack against the Rebel Angels. The two sides to this angel's personality are reflected in the forceful, quick character portrayed in the first theme, and in the gentle and pastoral character in the second.

The second movement deals with the Archangel Raphael. Known as the Supreme Healer, he is said to be the angel who heals the minds, spirits, and bodies of mankind. He traditionally has various other roles, such as that of guiding souls in the afterlife. This movement is sombre and thoughtful, featuring close and exposed harmonies in the woodwinds and muted, mournful passages from the brass.

The third is named after the Archangel Michael, the Prince of the Heavenly Host. The powerful and energetic music in the third movement portrays the combative nature of this archangel, who is celebrated for having triumphed over Satan's hordes. This movement is mostly in a compound time of 17/8, giving the piece a dance-like feel.

The final movement is dedicated to Uriel, the "forgotten archangel". He had been honoured up until 1545, when the Council of Trent decided to eliminate the Fourth Book of Ezra from the list of sacred texts. As this was the only sacred text in which he was mentioned, the Archangel Uriel has been almost entirely forgotten. Nevertheless, he can still be seen in many early murals as the guardian angel of time. This movement, reminiscent of Holst's *Saturn: The Bringer of Old Age*, builds up very slowly and thoughtfully, towards a climactic end to the whole symphony.



GUEST ARTISTS & SOLOISTS

Glenn McCord (Clarinet)



Glenn McCord is a software engineer by day, but a long time clarinet and saxophone teacher since 2001. He has been the principal clarinet for West City Concert Band for over 10 years now and is keen to showcase the versatility of the clarinet with Sparke's concerto. Glenn is now a dad to a young son with a highly supportive partner, Olga, endeavouring to keep the musical spark going.

Henrietta Reid (Soprano)



Henrietta learned singing with Dr Morag Atchison and Catrin Johnsson at the University of Auckland where she completed Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Commerce in 2016. She is a member of Voices NZ and the NZ Opera Chorus. Recently, she has also been a featured soloist with Camerata Chamber Choir, the Bay of Island Singers, and the Devonport Chamber Orchestra, and sings with St Matthew's Singers. When she isn't singing, she works as an accountant, enjoys tramping and getting outdoors.

Jonathan Dunlop (Organ)



Dr Jonathan Dunlop is a multi-keyboard specialist, conductor and répétiteur. Following his Doctoral studies at the University of Waikato with Katherine Austin, Dr Rachael Griffiths-Hughes and the late Professor Martin Lodge, Jonathan is an Associate Artist with the TANZOS programme at the University, and has worked as a répétiteur since the programme's inception in 2023. Jonathan also holds the position of principal organist at St Paul's Collegiate School in Hamilton, and is active as both a choir director and accompanist.