Program Notes – Summer Concert – July 2026

The Star Spangled Banner – arr. John Williams
This is a dramatic, distinctive orchestral setting of the United States national anthem, originally penned for the pre-game ceremonies of the 2004 Rose Bowl. At the time, Williams served as the Grand Marshal of the 114th Rose Parade and conducted the premiere performance of this arrangement himself.

The arrangement is famous for its powerful, brass-heavy, film-score-style introductory and optional transitional fanfares. It retains the traditional melody but infuses it with the rich, sweeping chord progressions characteristic of Williams' legendary cinematic compositions (like Star Wars or Superman). The piece transitions from a heroic, brilliant brass opening to a "simply and nobly" stated woodwind and string section before building to a massive, soaring climax.

Sun Dance by Frank Ticheli – Ticheli Program Note
"While composing Sun Dance, I was consciously attempting to evoke a feeling: bright joy. After completing the work, I found that the music began to suggest a more concrete image -- a town festival on a warm, sun-washed day. I imagined townspeople gathered in the park, some in small groups, some walking hand in hand, others dancing to the music played by a small band under a red gazebo.

Throughout the composition process, I carefully balanced the songlike and dancelike components of “bright joy.” The oboe’s gentle statement of the main melody establishes the work’s song-like characteristics, while in the work’s middle section, a lyrical theme of even greater passion appears. Several recurring themes are indeed more vocal than instrumental in nature. The work’s dancelike qualities are enhanced by a syncopated rhythmic figure... The figure is used not only in the main melody, but also as a structural building block for virtually everything in the piece, including other melodies, accompaniment figures, and episodes."

The Red Covered Bridge by Robert Sheldon Op. 177
A lyrical concert band work inspired by a real landmark spanning Big Bureau Creek in Princeton, Illinois. The piece evokes nostalgia, quiet reflection, and simpler times through warm harmonies and expressive melodies.

American Overture for Band by Joseph Willcox Jenkins
The work was dedicated to the Army Field Band's conductor, Chester E. Whiting. It was written in a neomodal style, being flavored strongly with both Lydian and Mixolydian modes. Its musical architecture is a very free adaptation of sonata form. The musical material borders on the folk tune idiom although there are no direct quotes from any folk tunes. The work calls for near-virtuoso playing by several sections, especially the French horns, and is a favorite of advanced high school and university bands. Although American Overture was Jenkins's first band piece, it remains his most successful work and, in his words, he is "hard-pressed to duplicate its success."

Washington Post by John Philip Sousa - arr. Brion/Schissle
The Washington Post" is an iconic 1889 marching band composition by John Philip Sousa. It was originally commissioned by the Washington Post newspaper to celebrate a children's essay contest and became internationally famous because it perfectly matched the rhythm of the newly popularized two-step dance. The newspaper's owners asked Sousa, who was then the leader of the U.S. Marine Band, to write a special tune for their Amateur Authors' Association awards ceremony. When the march premiered on the Smithsonian grounds in June 1889, it was an instant hit. Because it was ideally suited for the "two-step" dance that was sweeping society, the march became a massive international success and helped earn Sousa his famous title, "The March King". Today, it remains one of the most widely played and recognizable marches in the world.

Armed Forces Salute – arr. Bob Lowden
Lowden’s tribute is an upbeat medley of tunes that includes The U.S. Army’s The Caisson Song (1908), the U.S. Coast Guard’s Semper Paratus (Always Ready, original version, 1922), The U.S. Marine Corps’ The Marine’s Hymn (original date unknown but it was in widespread use by the mid-1800s), The U.S. Air Force’s The U.S. Air Force (1951) and The U.S. Navy’s Anchors Aweigh (1907). Lowden’s arrangement flows smoothly from one song to the next, while spreading the melody around. Listen throughout for countermelodies and complex harmonies—transitional links between the military songs.

Simple Gifts by Frank Ticheli
A four-movement suite built upon authentic Shaker melodies: "In Yonder Valley," "Dance," "Here Take This Lovely Flower," and "Simple Gifts". Ticheli wrote the work to preserve the straightforward, unadorned beauty of Shaker culture through fresh variations in harmony, texture, and orchestration.

The Magnificent Seven by Elmer Bernstein – arr. by Roy Phillippe
The Magnificent Seven is a 1960 American Western film directed by John Sturges and starring Yul Brynner, Eli Wallach, Horst Buchholz, James Coburn, Brad Dexter, Steve McQueen, Robert Vaughn, and Charles Bronson. The film is an Old West-style remake of Akira Kurosawa's 1954 Japanese film Seven Samurai. Brynner, McQueen, Buchholz, Bronson, Vaughn, Coburn, and Dexter portray the title characters, a group of seven gunfighters hired to protect a small village in Mexico from a group of marauding bandits and their leader (Wallach).

The film's score is by Elmer Bernstein. Along with the iconic main theme and effective support of the story line, the score also contains allusions to twentieth-century symphonic works, such as the reference to Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra, second movement, in the tense quiet scene just before the shootout. The original soundtrack was not released at the time until reused and rerecorded by Bernstein for the soundtrack of Return of the Seven.