



THE UNITED STATES
COAST GUARD BAND

Commander Kenneth W. Megan, Director



WINTER 2010

www.uscg.mil/band

BEHIND THE SCENES

U.S. Coast Guard Band (pb)
U.S. Coast Guard Academy
15 Mohegan Avenue
New London, CT 06320

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The Process of a Song

One of the most unique things about being the vocalist with the Coast Guard Band is that I perform a solo every time I sing. I am very lucky in that I have a lot of choice when it comes to what I will perform.

The first step to choosing music for a concert program starts, not surprisingly, with Commander Megan. He comes up with a concert theme and may have an idea of something specific that he would like me to sing. This, however, was not the case last June for our "Out of This World" concert. I knew he had programmed *The Planets* and Michael Daugherty's *UFO* so I worked from there. I immediately came up with an aria called "Song to the Moon" from a Dvorák opera called *Rusalka*, which is based on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. Though not astronomical, it is still otherworldly so I felt that it fit. Next I came up with a contrasting encore piece from the American Songbook. A long list of "moon" songs came to mind, like "How High the Moon," "Paper Moon," and "Moon River," but ultimately I settled on the hauntingly beautiful "Nature Boy" which I felt most appropriately complimented "Song to the Moon."

Once we have settled on repertoire, I give the scores to our arranger, Chief Musician Ian Frenkel. We discuss keys that are comfortable for me to sing in and general ideas about the style of the piece. In the case of an aria like "Song to the Moon," we generally leave it alone and perform it as written but substitute wind parts for string parts. I leave him alone for a month or so and he creates the charts for the band.

When learning a new piece, the more time I have ahead of a concert the better, especially if the piece is in a foreign language, and even more so if it is in a language like Czech! As soon as I knew "Song to the Moon" was programmed I set out learning the words first. The best method is to just repeat the words over and over again. And then repeat them some more. It's important to get foreign sounds under your tongue as quickly as possible. I had a translation written out in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and a recording of someone who was fluent in Czech speaking the text. I listened and repeated it over and over again until I didn't trip over any of the words. Even once the words begin to roll off the tongue easily, they are still just a series of ambiguous syllables so the next step is to line up the Czech words with a word-for-word translation. With languages that I sing in often, like French, Italian, or German, I just look them up in a dictionary, but with something like Czech, a language I have never studied, I seek out a literal translation. It also helps to have an idiomatic translation of the aria to give context. These can be found in CD liner notes, aria books, as well as a multitude of good online resources. Using both the word-for-word translation and the idiomatic one, I end up with a pretty good understanding of the aria. With any piece that I perform I seek out as many different recordings and videos of the aria or song that I can find—this is why the iPod and YouTube are two of my favorite things! Also with an aria, or song from a Broadway show, I try to watch the whole show. An aria is really just like a monologue in a play, so it's important to put it in the context of the whole story. The audience doesn't get to see what happens before and after the aria so it's my job to make it clear what I am singing about and why. The next step is to take the music to a voice teacher who works with me on vocal technique and a vocal coach who will smooth out pronunciation and help with dramatic interpretation.

At this point, my music is prepared, the new charts are ready, and the band has probably had one or two rehearsals on the pieces without me. I come in to rehearsals with the band the week before the concert and we spend rehearsal time focusing on lining up musical ideas and timing. Now it's concert time and we get to put all the hard work to the test in front of you!

—MU1 Lisa Williamson

Please direct comments or questions to:

Public Affairs
U.S. Coast Guard Band
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15 Mohegan Avenue
New London, CT 06320
(860) 701-6826

Co-principal flutist Chief Musician Elizabeth Jackson is the featured soloist on the January 17, 2010, Band concert in Leamy Hall, performing the theme from John Williams's film score to *Sugarland Express*. With a new baby and a recent advancement to Chief Musician, she leads a demanding and rewarding life. Taking a break from her collateral duty in the music library, she chats about her musical beginnings in Houston and what life is like now.



When did you begin to play the flute? Is this the instrument you started with?

I started with the violin at age 5. At around age 8, I decided I didn't want to play the violin anymore. My mom wanted me to continue to learn music so I began taking piano lessons. The public schools in Texas have strong music departments. The elementary school I attended was a magnet school with a band and an orchestra! All of the kids were having so much fun playing in the band, so around age 9, I began flute lessons with my band director. I fell in love with playing the flute and ended up playing in the band at school, continuing through junior high and eventually attending a performing arts high school.

Was there someone who encouraged your musical abilities?

My mother was the major influence early on in my life. She plays the piano and has a good ear and really appreciates music. She encouraged my brother, a professional jazz tenor saxophonist, and me to pursue our musical abilities.

When you aren't working, what are you up to?

My husband, USCG Band euphoniumist James Jackson, and I are usually taking care of our young son. When time allows, I enjoy cooking, and, of course, practicing. I also play in a woodwind quintet, Radiance, with fellow Band members Carla Parodi, Stevi Rehncy, and Jaime Thorne, and band alumna Kelli O'Connor. As soon as we started playing together, we clicked musically and personally. We enjoy playing challenging repertoire, such as Ligeti's *Six Bagatelles* and Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel*, and have played recitals across New England.

What are some of your hobbies?

I love baking, cooking, and reading. I have also been enjoying doing the CrossFit workout program. I love to snow ski, too. I have found that it helps me to get through the long New England winters.

Of what accomplishment are you most proud?

Professionally, I am very proud of winning the Co-Principal Flute position in the U.S. Coast Guard Band, but personally I am proud of my amazing family.

What did you do prior to joining the USCG Band?

I was in school at the University of Southern California working on a master's degree in flute performance. The timing of the job opening in the Band was perfect for me: I completed my degree and won the audition soon after.

Concert Band

Sunday, January 17—2 p.m. Leamy Hall

It's madness, I tell you. Join the Band for its fourteenth iteration of film score favorites, *Movie Madness XIV*, with music from *Mission Impossible*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Sunday, February 14—2 p.m. Leamy Hall

In commemoration of Black History Month, The Coast Guard Band presents music by William Grant Still and Duke Ellington, and MU1 Lisa Williamson sings spirituals.

Sunday, March 28—2 p.m. Leamy Hall

To rejoice in the bounty of works and the supreme wit of William Shakespeare, the Band collaborates with New London's Flock Theatre. The troupe presents vignettes from the Bard's pen and the Band intersperses music inspired by the playwright and poet.

Sunday, April 25—2 p.m. Leamy Hall

Toshiyuki Shimada, the new Music Director of the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, leads the Coast Guard Band in the sixth annual Captain Lewis J. Buckley Guest Artist Concert.

Chamber Players

Sunday, January 31—2 p.m. Leamy Hall

Sunday, February 21—2 p.m. The United States Coast Guard Memorial Chapel at the USCG Academy

Members of the U.S. Coast Guard Band join the **Rampart Winds**, the wind quintet of the United States Air Force Academy Band in Colorado Springs.

Around the State, Around the Nation, Around the World

Touring Taiwan

In December and January, the **United States Coast Guard Brass Quintet** and the **United States Coast Guard Saxophone Quartet** travel to Taiwan for a week of recitals around the island. Read about their adventures in the next issue!

The U.S. Army Band Tuba-Euphonium Conference

In January 2010, **The United States Coast Guard Brass Quintet** performs on a recital at the well-regarded conference in Washington, D.C.; **MU1 Bonnie Denton**, in addition to giving a lecture and master class, is euphonium soloist in *Grandfather's Clock* by George Doughty for the Grand Concert ending the symposium.

North American Saxophone Alliance Conference

In March, the esteemed **U.S. Coast Guard Saxophone Quartet** performs at this biennial event at the University of Georgia in Athens.

The U.S. Coast Guard Band Spring 2010 Tour: The West

From May 3 through May 16, the Band performs at venues throughout Utah, Arizona, and California.

from the Education Department

2010 Outreach Performances

On February 17, 19, 22, 23, 24, and 26, small chamber ensembles from the Band travel to local schools to present creative musical and educational assemblies.

Young Artists Competition

On March 13, 2010, musicians attending Connecticut high schools in select counties compete for the opportunity to perform as soloist with the United States Coast Guard Band in Leamy Hall on April 25th as part of the Band's monthly concert series.

School Concerts in Leamy Hall

The United States Coast Guard Band produces educational concerts for students in grades four through eight that occur on March 30, 31 and April 5, 6, 7, and 9, 2010.

For more information about the Band's educational initiatives, contact MUC Aimee Page at (860) 701-6836 or Aimee.D.Page@uscg.mil.