

**2005 Bands of the Beanpot program notes**  
**Courtesy of Boston College Bands**

**“Blue Shades,” composed by Frank Ticheli**

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Frank Ticheli (born January 21, 1958 in Monroe, Louisiana) has composed works for band, wind ensemble, orchestra, chamber ensembles, and theater music. His works have been performed by numerous ensembles throughout the United States, Canada, and Japan, including the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, the Pacific Symphony Orchestra, the orchestras of Austin, Colorado, Frankfurt, Memphis, Nashville, and San Antonio, and many university, high school, and middle school ensembles.

He has received commissions and grants from the American Music Center, the Pacific Symphony Orchestra, the Prince George’s Philharmonic Orchestra, the Adrian Symphony Orchestra, the City of San Antonio, Stephen F. Austin University, the University of Michigan, Trinity University, the Murchison Middle School Concert Band (for *Cajun Folk Songs* for concert band), and from John Whitwell (for *Amazing Grace* and for *Gaian Visions*, both for concert band).

He received his Doctor of Musical Arts and Masters Degrees in Composition from the University of Michigan where he studied with William Albright, George B. Wilson, and Pulitzer-prize-winners Leslie Bassett and William Bolcom, and his Bachelor of Music in Composition from Southern Methodist University where he studied with Donald Erb. He is an Associate Professor of Music at the University of Southern California, and is now in his fourth year as Composer-in-Residence of the Pacific Symphony Orchestra. He previously was Assistant Professor of Music at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, where he served on the board of directors of the Texas Composers Forum, and on the advisory committee for the San Antonio Symphony’s “Music of the Americas” project.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The composer writes, “In 1992 I composed a concerto for traditional jazz band and orchestra, “Playing With Fire,” for the Jim Cullum Jazz Band and the San Antonio Symphony. That work was composed as a celebration of the traditional jazz music I heard so often while growing up near New Orleans.

I experienced tremendous joy during the creation of “Playing With Fire”, and my love for early jazz is expressed in every bar of the concerto. However, after completing it I knew that the traditional jazz influences dominated the work, leaving little room for my own musical voice to come through. I felt a strong need to compose another work, one that would combine my love of early jazz with my own musical style.

Four years, and several compositions later, I finally took the opportunity to realize that need by composing “Blue Shades.” As its title suggests, the work alludes to the Blues, and a jazz feeling is prevalent—however, it is not literally a Blues piece. There is not a single 12-bar blues progression to be found, and except for a few isolated sections, the eighth note is not swung. The work, however, is heavily influenced by the Blues: “Blue Notes” (flatted 3rds, 5ths, and 7ths) are used constantly; blues harmonies, rhythms,

and melodic idioms pervade the work; and many “shades of blue” are depicted from bright blue, to dark, to dirty, to hot blue.

At times, “Blue Shades” burlesques some of the clichés from the Big Band era, not as a mockery of those conventions, but as a tribute. A slow and quiet middle section recalls the atmosphere of a dark, smoky blues haunt. An extended clarinet solo played near the end recalls Benny Goodman’s hot playing style, and ushers in a series of “wailing” brass chords recalling the train whistle effects commonly used during that era.”

### **“Just a Closer Walk With Thee,” arranged by Don Gillis**

#### ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Don Gillis was born in Missouri in 1912 and grew up in bands programs throughout his childhood. He played trumpet and trombone in school bands and went to Texas Christian University on a musical scholarship. He went on to become program arranger for the NBC orchestra in New York for twenty years. He was chairman of the Music Department at Southern Methodist University and was also chairman of fine arts at Dallas Baptist College. He was a radio scriptwriter as well as a composer.

#### ABOUT THE MUSIC

“Just a Closer Walk With Thee” is a traditional New Orleans street band piece. Characteristically, it would have been played in a solemn funeral procession from the church to the cemetery. Following the slow, dirge-like beginning, the up-tempo rendition beginning in measure 38 represents a happy send off to a better life. The original melody has been found in hymnals dating as early as 1860. From the earliest roots of Dixieland style, musicians have often improvised on music they knew from attending church services.

### **“When Jesus Wept,” composed by William Schuman**

#### ABOUT THE COMPOSER

William Schuman is one of America’s leading composers. Completing study at the Malkin Conservatory in New York, Teachers College of Columbia University, and the Mozarteum Academy in Salzburg, Schuman became music instructor at Sarah Lawrence College, and later was appointed president of the Julliard School of Music. Schuman began to acquire national prominence when his *American Festival Overture* was performed by Koussevitsky and the Boston Symphony in 1939. A listing of his compositions includes an opera, six symphonies, concertos, choral works, band works, and chamber music. *Newsreel*, a delightful suite of descriptive music was Schuman’s first venture into the band medium and was completed in 1941. The music of Schuman is generally characterized by great emotional tension and rhythmic vivacity, with contrapuntal structures, which reach great complexity.

#### ABOUT THE MUSIC

“When Jesus Wept” is movement two of William Schuman’s most famous three part work, *The New England Triptych*. He creates music that is thoroughly his own, a stark, active-surface Americana. “When Jesus Wept” is the more hymn-like and solemn

of the three movements banked on either side by two past-paced entralling works. “When Jesus Wept” is full of life and direction, incisive, with a gorgeously lyrical middle section.