The St. Olaf Band 2015–16
Timothy Mahr, Conductor · Terra Widdifield, Manager

ICETOY, 6 U-C-R-APT, 70U-R-APT, 70U-APT

PICCOLO
Ashley Wang, Carlsbad, Calif. chemistry

FLUTE
Madeline Baccarini, Olive, Iowa music education
Kristen Benson, River Falls, Wis. music
Libby Brown, Apraxia, Mass. biology
◆ Emily Burrill, Savage, Minn. music education
△ Kristina Bubli, Burnsville, Minn. Spanish/music
E-FLAT CLARINET
Ashley Wang, Carlsbad, Calif. chemistry

HORN
Elleanor Arnold, Shoreview, Minn. biology
△ Nathan-Crosby, Wheaton, Ill. music theory/composition
△ Clare Dvorak, Middleton, Wis. nursing
△ Madelines Ferkowski, Fort Ordford, Wash. music performance/psychology
Megan Gerli, Omaha, Neb. nursing/women’s & gender studies
△ Irene Henry, St. Louis, Mo. music
△ Andrew O’Dell, St. Paul, Minn. music/Asian studies
Emily Stephanewich, Melrose, Minn. music/Flamenco
△ Grace Wilson, Roseville, Minn. music/chemistry

BASS TROMBONE
Ben Westover, Roebling, N.J. environment studies
△ Jonas Widness, Mankato, Minn. music/chemistry

EUFONIUM
Gray Harline, Hopkins, Minn. economics
Eric Magnus, Bloomington, Minn. physics
△ Adam Sanders, Brentwood, Tenn. music theory/composition
Karl Strickland, Roseville, Minn. music education

STRING BASS
△ Mirah Stooldal, Onamia, Minn. music performance

HARP
Emma Buck, Aurora, Ill. environmental studies

KEYBOARDS
Andrew Barthel, Saukville, Wis. music education
Tim O’Grady, Fort Calhoun, Colo. music theory/composition/film studies

PERCUSSION
Natalie Anderson, Chanhassen, Minn. music
William Arnold, St. Paul, Minn. music
Andrew Barthel, Saukville, Wis. music education
Henry Hulzer, Minneapolis, Minn. music education
△ Tim O’Grady, Fort Calhoun, Colo. music theory/composition/film studies

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The St. Olaf Band 2015–16
TIMOTHY MAHR ’78 FINDS HARMONY IN A LIFE OF CONDUCTING AND COMPOSING

A musical performance begins long before its first downbeat, says St. Olaf Band Conductor Timothy Mahr ’78. At the core of his work as a conductor and composer is the “glimmer of what can be,” he says, describing the woodwind, brass, and percussion sounds he later guides from the podium, as well as the creative spark that inspires him to write music.

Mahr took the helm of the St. Olaf Band in 1994, and has since led the college’s oldest performing ensemble in acclaimed performances throughout the United States and on tours to Mexico, Japan, and in Europe. Mahr will lead the St. Olaf Band in its first-ever performance at Carnegie Hall in February 2016 in honor of the band’s 125th anniversary, celebrated in 2015–16.

Mahr has bolstered the ensemble’s reputation as a champion of contemporary music and earned international accolades for several of its recordings. The German music journal Clavier, in comparing the St. Olaf Band’s recording of Yasuhide Itō’s Glorioso to a recording by the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra (widely considered to be the top professional wind ensemble in the world), declared, “The American band produces a sensational outburst of sound. Underneath all of the iridescent tone, the young people, under their inventive and highly musical director, discover the essential elements of the score and allow their joy of playing to roam freely.”

SHARING HIS GIFTS

Mahr is widely sought as a guest conductor, and his award-winning compositions are known throughout the world. He has guest-conducted more than 30 intercollegiate and all-state bands, as well as a number of professional and award-winning ensembles, including the United States Air Force Band and the United States Army Field Band. He is the principal conductor of the Minnesota Symphonic Winds, an ensemble that was awarded the coveted Sudler Silver Scroll from the John Philip Sousa Foundation. Mahr has twice guest-conducted the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra (Minnesota) and has appeared as a commissioned composer/conductor with the Salina Symphony (Kansas). He was featured with the Festival Band at the 2008 International Association of Southeast Asian Schools Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, and was invited to lead the acclaimed Ensemble Libere Wind Orchestra while in Japan in 2010.

As one of America’s leading composers of concert band music, Mahr has written more than 75 pieces, many of which have been presented on CDs, including The Music of Timothy Mahr, a 2004 recording of the University of New Hampshire Wind Symphony that includes nine of his works. The Homestead High School Marching Band of Cupertino, California, performed an arrangement of Mahr’s Fantasia in G in the 2011 Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City, bringing his music to millions nationwide. A St. Olaf Band recording of his composition by blue lake, listening, dreaming, was broadcast nationally this past August on the American Public Radio show Performance Today.

With his international reputation, the waiting list of ensembles asking Mahr to write new works routinely approaches double digits. He typically has three or more pieces contracted for the ensuing year. “[I] look to the future with a bit of trepidation,” he says. “I just have to have faith that there’s still going to be some music left in me.” Mahr’s current project is fulfilling a consortium commission from 56 ensembles across the nation for his first symphony.

Mahr’s professional career is complemented by his personal life. He and his wife, Jill, who teaches flute and conducts St. Olaf’s handbell choirs, have two daughters: Jenna, who currently works as a photographer, and Hannah, a budding actress in her senior year of high school.

EARLY INSPIRATION

Mahr was born in 1956 and spent most of his childhood in La Crosse, Wisconsin. He took piano lessons from his mother, Jeneane, and in second grade inherited his uncle’s trombone. He began conducting in high school while also writing and arranging tunes for a church brass ensemble and other groups. Halfway through high school, Mahr attended a summer performance of the Symphony School of America in La Crosse and left awestruck after hearing a performance of Ottorino Respighi’s Pines of Rome: “It was an incredible, visceral experience,” Mahr says — one that marked a turning point in his life, inspiring him to make music his profession.

In 1974, Mahr enrolled at St. Olaf and spent three of the next four years playing trombone in the St. Olaf Band, which was then under the direction of Miles “Mity” Johnson, whom Mahr calls his musical father. “Under Mity, I discovered the beauty in the band sound, whereas before I found primarily excitement,” Mahr says.

Mahr studied trombone and composition under Professors Donald DeYoung and Arthur Campbell, earning a bachelor of music degree in music theory/composition in 1977 and a B.A. degree in music education in 1978. He earned a master’s and a doctorate degree from The University of Iowa, and led the Milaca High School band program in central Minnesota and was director of bands at the University of Minnesota–Duluth. Amid studying and conducting, Mahr continued to compose. His concert band music, characterized by introspective interludes, frequently shifting rhythms, and colorful employment of piano and the human voice, began to gain a national following. His professional prestige was recognized in 1991 with the American Band Association’s highest composition honor, the Ostwald Award, for his work The Soaring Hawk.

RETURN TO ST. OLAF

After graduating from St. Olaf, Mahr maintained strong ties with the St. Olaf Band and with his mentor, Johnson, who frequently invited him to the college as a guest conductor. The band premiered Mahr’s first two published pieces in the early 1980s, and in the following decade, he wrote three commissioned works for the ensemble, including the multi-event festivals that honored the St. Olaf Band’s 1991 centennial anniversary.

When Mahr took the helm of the St. Olaf Band in 1994, he began a new era with the ensemble, but maintained an air of familiarity. He remained in close contact with his predecessor until Johnson’s death in 2004 after a six-year battle with Alzheimer’s disease.

Under Mahr’s leadership, the ensemble also has explored a wider range of contemporary music. His programs often include pieces by current composers, such as David Maslanka, John Mackey, Donald Grantham, Toshio Mihama, and Kenneth Hesketh. With support from the Miles Johnson Endowment Fund, Mahr has commissioned and premiered works from leading Minnesota composers, notably Libby Larsen, Stephen Paulus, and Mary Ellen Childs.

Mahr also teaches composition, conducting, and music education at St. Olaf. His former students number more than 1,000, including Jayce Ogren ’01, a recent assistant conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra and music director of the New York City Opera.

“Tim’s eagerness to support and promote his students has resulted in important growth opportunities we would not otherwise have experienced,” says Travis Cross ’99, a composer and conductor at UCLA.

Although Mahr’s complementary professions require months of preparation for brief moments of harmony, he says that his work as a composer-conductor brings ample rewards in performance. “Nothing beats being on that podium with an outstanding ensemble, especially if the music is your own,” Mahr says. — TIMOTHY MAHR

“We give audiences polished, exciting performances of memorable music that reach out and grab them by the heart.”

— TIMOTHY MAHR
The St. Olaf Band • 2016 Winter Tour

ECSTATIC FANFARE (2012)
Steven Bryant (b. 1972)

TRUMPET CONCERTO NO. 2 (1993)
Jukka Linkola (b. 1955)
Transcribed by Russell Pesola ’61
II. Ballade, moderato
III. Ritmico
Martin Hodel, trumpet

ANGEL OF MERCY (2015)
David Maslanka (b. 1943)
Premiere performance

HIVEMIND (2014)
Peter Van Zandt Lane (b. 1985)

A CELEBRATION OVERTURE (2014)
Bruce Broughton (b. 1945)

ENDURANCE (1991)
Timothy Mahr (b. 1956)

ADORAMUS TE, CHRISTE (c. 1620)
Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)
Setting by Timothy Mahr

SYMPHONY FOR WINDS AND PERCUSSION (2009)
Donald Grantham (b. 1943)
3. Stomp

ADDITIONAL WORKS

ARIA & ALLEGRO (1989)
Gregory Pascuzzi (b. 1952)

MOTHER EARTH (2005)
David Maslanka (b. 1943)

SWEET LIKE THAT (2011)
Christopher Theofanidis (b. 1967)

Soloists

MARTIN HODEL
As an associate professor of music at St. Olaf College, Martin Hodel teaches trumpet and is the conductor of the St. Olaf Philharmonia. He holds a full-time trumpet position with the Minnesota Orchestra during its 2005–06 season, an ensemble with which he has recorded and regularly performs as an extra. Hodel has performed as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral player throughout the United States and around the world, including as principal and solo trumpet for the Eastman Wind Ensemble and the Dallas Brass. He has shared the stage with numerous jazz artists and toured Germany with organist Bradley Lehman as part of the Hodel-Lehman Duo. The duo has recorded a CD, titled In Thee is Gladness. Hodel appears as a soloist on seven other compact discs and has performed live on the nationally broadcast radio programs A Prairie Home Companion, Sing for Joy, and Pipe Dreams.

Hodel has been the trumpet professor at St. Olaf since 1997. He holds a doctorate in trumpet performance and a performer’s certificate from the Eastman School of Music, a master of music from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a bachelor’s degree in music education from Goshen College.

DEREK SMITH ’16
Derek Smith is a senior music education major from Thousand Oaks, California. This is his fourth year as a member of the saxophone section in the St. Olaf Band, and he cherishes all the tours, memories, and experiences he has shared with his fellow bandies. In his time at St. Olaf, Smith has enjoyed creating music with incredible mentors and friends in band, orchestra, jazz ensembles, and sax quartets. He also has had the wonderful opportunity to teach saxophone privately to a small studio of talented musicians from ages 9 to 20. When he’s not practicing or teaching, Smith enjoys hiking, playing outside with friends, and catching up on the latest episodes of Grey’s Anatomy. Smith is looking forward to student teaching during spring semester and, hopefully, moving back west to be a music educator.

**Program**

**SOLOISTS**

**DEREK SMITH ’16**

**MARTIN HODEL**

**ST. OLAF BAND**

**INTERMISSION**

**ADDITIONAL WORKS**

**ARIA & ALLEGRO**
Gregory Pascuzzi (b. 1952)

**MOTHER EARTH**
David Maslanka (b. 1943)

**SWEET LIKE THAT**
Christopher Theofanidis (b. 1967)
ECSTATIC FANFARE (2012)
Steven Bryant (b. 1972)

Steven Bryant is an American composer who is reshaping the wind band repertoire of the 21st century. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, his graduate studies were at the University of North Texas, where he studied with Cindy McTee, and the Juilliard School, which enabled him to work closely with John Corigliano. Bryant’s works have received performances around the globe, and he is a three-time recipient of the Revelli Prize in composition from the National Band Association. He also has won the American Bandmasters Association’s coveted Ostwald Award. Bryant states in his score note:

Eccstatic Fanfare is based on music from the first movement of my Ecstatic Waters. One day in May 2012, I mentioned to my wife (conductor Verena Mösenbichler-Bryant) that it might be fun to someday take the soaring, heroic tutti music from that earlier work and turn it into a short fanfare. She goaded me into doing it immediately and so in a panicked three-day composing frenzy, I created this new work, which was premiered by Johann Mösenbichler with the Polizeiorchester Bayern just three short weeks later, followed immediately by my wife conducting it with the World Youth Wind Orchestra Project at the Mid Europe Festival in July 2012.

TRUMPET CONCERTO NO. 2 (1993)
Jukka Linkola (b. 1955)
Transcribed by Russell Pesola ’67

Jukka Linkola is both a leading Finnish composer and conductor and a highly regarded jazz pianist. Born in Helsinki, he studied at the Sibelius Academy, during which time he worked as a rehearsal pianist at the Helsinki City Theatre. He later was a conductor there from 1975 to 1990. He has composed many works for the stage, including operas and ballets, and he often uses solists with orchestras. He wrote his first Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra in 1988, followed by the Trumpet Concerto No. 2 in 1993. Trumpet Concerto No. 2 is a very demanding work that presents gratifying moments for the soloist in a variety of styles. The serene second movement opens with engaging lyrical lines over gentle harmonic areas that are alternately unassuming and pensive. This opening section ends with a clarion call from the soloist in anticipation of an ensuing segment that is quite aggressive and agitated. Over time this mood dissipates and the movement closes with an elevated line ascending over pleasant harmonies.

The final movement is marked by insistent rhythmic propulsion. At times the soloist seems pitted against the other musicians on the stage. The heightened energy recedes with a cadenza that recalls earlier lyricism before quick ascending lines bring the work to a rousing conclusion.

ANGL OF MERCY (2015)
David Maslanka (b. 1943)

PREF: PERFORMANCE

David Maslanka was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and attended the Oberlin College Conservatory, where he studied composition with Joseph Wood. He spent a year at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, and earned master’s and doctoral degrees in composition at Michigan State University, where his principal teacher was H. Owen Reed. He has been a faculty member at the State University of New York at Geneseo, Sarah Lawrence College, New York University, and College of the City University of New York. He has been a freelance composer since 1990 and currently lives in Missoula, Montana.

Maslanka’s works for winds and percussion have become especially well known. Among his more than 130 works are 48 pieces for wind ensemble, including seven symphonies, 15 concertos, a Mass, and many concert pieces. His chamber music includes four wind quintets, five saxophone quartets, and many works for solo instrument and piano. In addition, he has written a variety of orchestral and choral pieces. Maslanka Press, Carl Fischer, Kjos Music, Marimba Productions, and OU Percussion Press publish his works, which have been recorded on Albany, Reference Recordings, BIS (Sweden), Naxos, Cambria, CRI, Mark, Novisse, AUR, Ciafa (Japan), Brain Music (Japan), Barking Dog, and Klavier labels.

The St. Olaf Band has been involved with consortium commissions of six of Maslanka’s works since 2001, when the band performed his Symphony No. 5 while on tour. At that time, Maslanka came to St. Olaf for a few days to aid in the work’s preparation and then joined the band at its Montana performances during the tour. The band has since released three compact disc recordings that feature his music, including Inner Visions: The Music of David Maslanka, a double CD set devoted entirely to his works.

Funding from the Miles Johnson Endowment supported the St. Olaf Band’s participation in these consortia, as well as the commission for Angel of Mercy, a work he created expressively in observance of the 125th anniversary of the St. Olaf Band. Angel of Mercy is presented by arrangement with Maslanka Press.

By acclamation of the St. Olaf College Board of Regents, Maslanka will be awarded an honorary degree from St. Olaf College on February 12, 2016, during a four-day residency.

The composer states:

I have been playing and singing the Bach 371 Four-Part Chorales for more than 25 years. Although they have a Christian/Lutheran context, they are primarily — and for me most importantly — just music, glorious and powerful in themselves.

After all these years, I have come to feel that singing the Chorales is an act of prayer, and to date I have sung through the entire book, all four voices, of each Chorale some 23 times. These ancient melodies are the voice of peace, and over the years, they have formed a peaceful center in me.

Angel of Mercy is a prayer for peace in our troubled time. Three Chorale melodies are the foundation for this music: “O Fear, Disquiet and Aprehension,” “Oh, How Blest Are Ye,” and “I Leave All Things to God’s Direction.” This piece was commissioned by Timothy Pahr and the St. Olaf Band in honor of the band’s 125th anniversary. It is dedicated to them with profound gratitude and respect.

HIVEMIND (2014)
Peter Van Zandt Lane (b. 1985)

Peter Van Zandt Lane is an American composer of instrumental and electro-acoustic music. The New York Times named his music a Critics’ Pick, praising it as “refreshingly relevant.” Top-tier ensembles such as the Cleveland Orchestra, the International Contemporary Ensemble, the New York Virtuosi Singers, and the Lydian String Quartet have performed Lane’s music. He holds degrees from Brandeis University and the University of Miami and is currently assistant professor of composition and director of the Dance Center for New Music at the University of Georgia.

Van Zandt Lane describes his new work:

Hivemind is a fast-paced, energetic piece for winds and percussion. Thematically, the piece explores the idea of consensus building. Scattered themes and fragments gradually come together into more cohesive units. Melodies emerge from buzzing textures, trying to make sense of conflicting harmonies. Instruments imitate each other in different ways, until they finally agree on how the music goes in the more climactic moments of the piece. Two percussionists ground the ensemble, each with economical and identical instrument setups, who constantly bounce rhythms back and forth from the far sides of the stage (until they also, coalesce into unity). I like to think of the resulting antiphony between percussionists (and other instrument groups as well), as a conversation between the left-brain and right-brain—a spatial and musical dialogue that reinforces the dichotomy between what is structured and what is free, what is anticipated and what is surprising, and what is cerebral and what is emotive.

The Sydney Conservatorium Wind Symphony commissioned Hivemind and premiered it at the inaugural Estivo Festival in Verona, Italy. Composed at the MacDowell Colony in the spring of 2014, the work was conducted by John P. Lynch, to whom the piece is dedicated.

INTERMISSION

2016 WINTER TOUR

ST. OLAF BAND
A CELEBRATION OVERTURE (2014)
Bruce Broughton (b. 1945)

American composer Bruce Broughton created scores for many popular television shows during the 1960s and 70s, including Gunsmoke, Hawaii Five-O, and Dallas. His composing for movies took off with the 1985 film Silverado, a score that garnered an Academy Award nomination. He went on to score nearly 50 films while continuing his activity in television and expanding into video gaming music. He has taught at the University of Southern California and the University of California–Los Angeles. Of late he has increasingly turned his attention to writing serious works for the concert stage.

Broughton describes his new overture as “an extended fanfare, opening with an energetic brass and percussion motif that forms the basis of most of the piece that follows.” Following the exciting opening moments is a contrasting lyrical section that reappears “before the final push to the end.” Broughton created the work for Dr. Thomas G. Leslie and the University of Nevada Las Vegas Wind Orchestra.

ENDURANCE (1991)
Timothy Mahr (b. 1956)

Endurance was commissioned by the American Bandmasters Association (ABA) in conjunction with the awarding of its 36th biennial ABA/Ostwald Composition Award to Mahr for his 1990 work, The Soaring Hawk. The United States Interdivision Band under the direction of Ed Lisk, premiered the work on March 7, 1992 at the 58th Annual Convention of Endurance Interservice Band, under the direction of Ed Lisk, premiered The Soaring Hawk for his 1990 work, Association (ABA) in conjunction with the awarding of its Endurance of Nevada Las Vegas Wind Orchestra.

The composer writes:
This work is a musical reflection upon the endurance of the human spirit, the religious spirit, and the spirit of the earth. Initial inspiration for the piece came from a book by the same title by Alfred Lansing, which documents the amazing story of the ill-fated expedition of the Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, beginning in 1914. His ship, the Endurance, became ice-bound and eventually sank, stranding Shackleton and his crew of 27 men on the ice shelf. They survived for more than 15 months, exposed to the unrelated, dangerous Antarctic weather, and miraculously lived to tell about it. The strength of character exhibited by these men while enduring incredible hardships is both humbling and awe-inspiring. Since reading this fascinating account, the story has been in the back of my mind whenever I find myself challenged by what seem to be insurmountable problems. It helps me put things into proper perspective.

At the time of composition I was also moved by current expressions of religious spirit around the world and found solace in the realization that this spirit has and forever will endure in many forms. Additionally, considering the pollution and abuse of our planet, I couldn’t help but get the sense that it, too, would endure, going through some sort of forced evolution in spite of our maltreatment.

All three spirits — human, religious, earth — seem intertwined to me. In pondering them, I find hope and peace.

ADORAMUS TE, CHRISTE (c. 1620)
Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
Setting by Timothy Mahr

Composers have often favored this well-known Latin passage offering adoration to Jesus Christ. Held dear by worshippers for centuries, one can find settings of variants of this text by Palestrina, Gesualdo, Gasparrini, Byrd, and Brahms, among many others. It presents an opportunity for tender, lyrical expression.

Monteverdi stood astride the transition between the Renaissance and the Baroque periods, creating music that maximized the contemporary practice of the former while anticipating the new directions of the latter. His seminal composition, La favola d’Orfeo in 1607, is today the earliest work in the operatic repertoire still receiving regular performances. Monteverdi was the maestro di cappella in Venice at the San Marco Basilica (St. Mark’s) for the final 30 years of his life. It was there, while on a visit as part of the St. Olaf Band’s 2014 international concert tour, that Mahr sensed the potential for an instrumental setting of Monteverdi’s Adoramus te, Christe. Mahr has dedicated this setting to his mother and father.

Monteverdi chose to set the work for six voices and the piece was often performed with light instrumental accompaniment. The work was first published in 1620 as part of Giulio Bianchi’s Libro primo de motetti in lode d’iddio nostro signore.

SYMPHONY FOR WINDS AND PERCUSSION (2009)
Donald Grantham (b. 1943)

3. Stomp

Donald Grantham is the recipient of numerous awards and prizes in composition, including the Prix Lili Boulanger, the Nissim/ASCAP Orchestral Composition Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, three grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and First Prize in the National Opera Association’s Composition Competition. His wind ensemble music has been recognized with three first-prize awards in the NBA/William D. Revelli Composition Competition and two first-prize awards in the ABA/Ostwald Band Composition Contest. In recent years, the orchestras of Cleveland, Dallas, and Atlanta, as well as the American Composers Orchestra and many others, have performed his works. Highly sought after as a composer, he has fulfilled commissions in media from solo instruments to opera. Grantham is a professor of composition at the University of Texas–Austin.

“Stomp,” the third movement from Symphony for Winds and Percussion, was commissioned by Director Donald LeFevre and the West Texas State University Symphonic Band.

Grantham writes about the work:
“Stomp,” is an aggressive, swaggering, dance movement that is in swing rhythm throughout. The movement is divided into three large sections and concludes with a coda. The main theme is introduced in the low brass and woodwinds in moderate tempo, followed by a presentation of two highly contrasting themes. These three themes are expanded upon, developed, and combined in the two sections that follow, with each new presentation being introduced by an accelerando to a dramatically faster new tempo.

ADDITIONAL WORKS

ARIA & ALLEGRO (1989)
Donald Grantham (b. 1943)

Praise be You, my Lord, for our sister, Mother Earth, Who nourishes us and teaches us, Bringing forth all kinds of fruits and colored flowers and herbs. — St. Francis of Assisi

Mother Earth was commissioned by and is dedicated to Brian Silvey and the South Dearborn High School Band of Aurora, Indiana.

SWEET LIKE THAT (2011)
Christopher Theofanidis (b. 1967)

Sweet Like That was written as part of the Bandquest Series, a project sponsored by the American Composers Forum that pairs leading composers with middle school band programs for collaboration in creating new works for young bands.
WELL BALANCED BANDIES

MAKING MUSIC ISN’T THE ONLY THING THESE OLES ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT.

Members of the St. Olaf Band are passionate about music making, and they certainly excel at it. But you are just as likely to find them conducting scientific research, volunteering in the community, or playing sports as you are to find them holed up in a practice room in Christiansen Hall of Music. Although many students choose to major in music, it’s not a requirement for participation in a St. Olaf music ensemble, so students study a range of fields and engage in activities across the liberal arts. We asked a handful of St. Olaf Band members to tell us about their diverse interests.

Elizabeth Ulanday ’16 • flute

**Hometown:** Libertyville, Illinois

**Major:** Biology

**ACTIVITIES:** Bible study leader with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Resident Assistant, local hospital volunteer, mentor to middle school kids

**BUILDING BLOCKS:** Ulanday is fascinated with how the world works. “Biology makes me say, ‘Wow!’ when I realize the complexity of life around and in us,” she says. This past summer, she began researching snapping turtles in partnership with a St. Olaf biology professor, and is currently working on characterizing one specific cell type that might play a role in hatchling navigation from the nest.

**FUTURE PLANS:** “Especially after everything connects and we take care of children not just medically, but emotionally and socially,” she says. She also worked at a nonprofit in Minneapolis to help children slow the “summer slide” in literacy topics of interest.

Robin Wheelus ’16 • percussion

**Hometown:** Austin, Texas

**Majors:** Physics and Mathematics, Nordic Studies concentration

**ACTIVITIES:** Drummer for a handful of on-again, off-again campus bands, self-taught banjo player

**BUILDING BLOCKS:** Ulanday loves rehearsal. “I love hearing things around and in us,” she says. This past summer, she began researching snapping turtles in partnership with a St. Olaf biology professor, and is currently working on characterizing one specific cell type that might play a role in hatchling navigation from the nest.

**FAVORITE BAND MOMENT:** “Always my favorite moment before concerts,” he says. “I got tears in my eyes the first time because I’d never felt such joy and love from 90 people.”

**FUTURE PLANS:** Earning a Ph.D. in materials science.

Megan Gehle ’18 • French horn

**Hometown:** Omaha, Nebraska

**Major:** Nursing, Women’s and Gender Studies concentration

**ACTIVITIES:** Head Start volunteer, cook, French speaker; and member of the Volunteer Network, St. Olaf Democrats, and Students for Reproductive Rights

**CAREGIVER AT HEART:** Gehle fell in love with nursing while volunteering at a children’s hospital in high school. The experience fostered her deep belief in holistic care. “I want to take care of children not just medically, but emotionally,” she says. She also cares for families of children undergoing treatment and encouraged their classmates to interact with kids hospitalized at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Gehle is the founder of Go Girls Go, a weekly club for elementary-aged girls that boosts self-confidence and self-esteem through healthy eating, exercise, music, and other activities.

**FAVORITE BAND MOMENT:** Bandie hugs. “This is always my favorite moment before concerts,” he says. “I got tears in my eyes the first time because I’d never felt such joy and love from 90 people.”

**FUTURE PLANS:** Earning a nurse practitioner’s degree and working in a hospital’s pediatric unit. Other plans include volunteering as a nurse in northern Africa, Haiti, or other Francophone countries.

Erica Hall ’16 • tenor saxophone

**Hometown:** Waseca, Minnesota

**Majors:** Sociology/Anthropology and Religion

**ACTIVITIES:** St. Olaf Band manager, Wellness Center peer educator, president of the Mental and Spiritual Health Awareness Club, Sustained Dialogue group member, security guard at the Lion’s Pause

**TALKING IT OUT:** Hall’s majors challenge her to think, live, and interact vitally with the world around her. “They have taught me to have conversations that matter,” she says, noting that her classes have helped her grow into a more open and accepting person. This past summer, she worked at a nonprofit in Minneapolis to help children slow the “summer slide” in literacy and guide them in fun learning activities. “The kids taught me so much about the power of connection,” she says. At St. Olaf, Hall founded “Thought Provoking Thursday,” a worldwide email exchange that sparks conversation on topics of interest.

**FAVORITE BAND MOMENT:** “The band’s family atmosphere and shared love of music. A highlight was hiking around Helen Hunt Falls and the Seven Bridges trail with band friends during a stop in Colorado Springs on last year’s tour.

**FUTURE PLANS:** Working in materials engineering.

Eric Nygren ’16 • tuba

**Hometown:** Bloomington, Minnesota

**Majors:** Physics and Mathematics

**ACTIVITIES:** Manitou Ringers handbell choir member, tech manager at the Lion’s Pause, Habitat for Humanity volunteer, social dancer with swing and ballroom clubs

**PROBLEM SOLVER:** Nygren has loved solving problems since he was young, developing an early fondness for mathematics and its applications in the natural sciences. By middle school, he’d decided on a career in engineering. “Physics resonates with me more than any other subject,” he says. He has conducted summer research at the University of Minnesota on the impact of specimen size on granite fracture and the determining characteristics of self-healing mortar, as well as research at St. Olaf on the impact of plaque buildup on arterial walls.

**FAVORITE BAND MOMENT:** The band’s family atmosphere and shared love of music. A highlight was hiking around Helen Hunt Falls and the Seven Bridges trail with band friends during a stop in Colorado Springs on last year’s tour.

**FUTURE PLANS:** Working in materials engineering.

Caleb Goss ’18 • baritone saxophone

**Hometown:** Monaca, Pennsylvania

**Majors:** Music Composition, Mathematics, and Physics

**ACTIVITIES:** Jazz II Ensemble member, soccer player, rock climber

**OPENING DOORS:** Goss chose St. Olaf because he wanted to pursue music as well as engineering related fields, and the college offered the possibility of interdisciplinary learning. He’s particularly intrigued by music technology and has built a monophonic step sequencer — a 4x4 grid of LED push buttons powered by a programmable microcontroller. He hopes to convert it to a polyphonic version, so that a user can program chords instead of single pitches. Goss played on the St. Olaf men’s soccer team as a freshman, but now focuses on rock climbing, assisting other students on the wall in the Triistad Center.

“Climbing is unique in that your progress is very visible,” he says. “If you put in a solid effort for a couple of weeks, you’ll climb routes you used to think were impossible.”

**FAVORITE BAND MOMENT:** “Dr. Mahr jokingly calling out Derek Smith for smoking cigarettes whenever he didn’t have the break support to sustain a long note during a soprano sax solo.” (Mahr knows that Smith does not smoke cigarettes.)

**FUTURE PLANS:** Attending graduate school to study mathematics, engineering, or music technology.
The St. Olaf Band, first organized as an all-male brass band by students during the 1890-91 school year, celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2015-16 as the college’s oldest performing music ensemble. In its earliest days, the band practiced four days a week under student leadership, appearing on occasions such as Decoration Day and Commencement, held at a city park in Northfield. The ensemble undertook its first tour in 1895, traveling just 20 miles to Kenyon, Minnesota, via a large wagon to present a concert in that community.

By 1896, the band was performing indoor concerts and that year shared its music over the wires with subscribers to the new telephone service.

The band remained a student-led ensemble until 1899, when the college hired St. Olaf graduate Andrew Onstad to lead the group. As a clarinetist, he made the decision to add woodwind instruments, thus transforming the St. Olaf Band into a concert band. Under Onstad’s leadership, the band’s prominence increased and membership continued to rise, eventually reaching 50 members. Onstad was only paid a small stipend for his dedication to the ensemble.

In 1903, F. Melius Christiansen, founder of St. Olaf’s newly formed music department, became the first music faculty member to conduct the St. Olaf Band. Under his direction, the ensemble developed more discipline, admission standards were raised, members were expected to understand the theory of music and to practice individually on their instruments, and more advanced literature was performed. In 1905, Christiansen led the band on an ambitious performance tour of several small cities in southern Minnesota and Iowa.

The year 1906 was a monumental one for the St. Olaf Band, as it marked the beginning of its long tenure of touring internationally. Its visit to Norway that year earned the ensemble the distinction of becoming the first American collegiate instrumental music organization to tour abroad. Traveling by sea aboard the ship, the Andenæs, to cities along the Norwegian coastline, the St. Olaf Band was greeted by thousands of cheering Norwegians and dignitaries at each stop. The band performed for Norway’s King Haakon and gave 30 concerts to capacity crowds, with the trip marking the first of six tours the ensemble would eventually take to Norway.
The St. Olaf Band traveled by train across the western states in 1909, performing more than 100 concerts in 12 weeks, with the highlight being a performance at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle (Washington’s first World’s Fair). By this time, the band had grown in numbers and musical ability, so a second band was formed, known as the Junior Band. Today, that band is the 75-member Norseman Band and no longer holds junior status.

Over the course of its 125-year history, the St. Olaf Band has greatly expanded its reach through annual concert tours across the United States. Its worldwide recognition has grown as well, as members undertook significant artistic and cultural tours to Norway, Europe, Great Britain, Ireland, and Mexico. In recent years, the band has brought its music to new audiences in Japan, Spain, Italy, and France.

Between 1919 and 1957, the St. Olaf Band had three conductors: Johan “Jack” Arndt Bergh, who in 1921 welcomed the first female members to the band, and Donald Berglund and Bruce Howden, each of whom propelled the band forward in a distinctive way. A grand epoch in the organization’s history began in 1957 when Miles “Mity” Johnson, an accomplished French horn recitalist and master conductor and teacher, assumed leadership of the band for 37 years until his retirement in 1994. Under Johnson’s baton, the St. Olaf Band grew into a nationally and internationally acclaimed ensemble, known for its fine musical quality and unique programming. The size of the band grew to between 90 and 95 members each year, and the quality of the musicians improved immensely. The brass, percussion, and woodwind areas of St. Olaf’s music department expanded to include four additional full-time professors and eight more part-time professors.

Band members learned a vast amount of symphonic band and wind ensemble repertoire under Johnson’s direction. The most profound influence he had on the St. Olaf Band and its audiences was his expertise in programming that literature, gaining the admiration of countless colleagues the world over for his creativity and his courageous choices. In 1974, Johnson established the band’s annual Cathedral Concert tradition with a performance inside the ruins of the 1918 cathedral of Coventry, England, which had been bombed during World War II. The band continued to give a Cathedral Concert every year until 2003.

In 1987, former band members established the Miles Johnson Endowment Fund, which continues his legacy by providing funds for scholarships, composer commissions, musical instrument purchases, and extensive band-related acquisitions for St. Olaf’s music library. The fund helped produce a CD titled The Legacy of Miles H. Johnson.

The St. Olaf Band’s tradition of excellence has been further bolstered by performances at the national conventions of the American Bandmasters Association (1957), the Music Educators National Conference (2005), and the College Band Directors National Association (1987 and 2013). International honors include being the only American college or university band to that date ever to perform in concert with the Kneller Kneller Hall Musicians in London (1977) and for Norway’s King Harald V and Queen Sonja during their royal visits to the St. Olaf campus (1995 and 2011).

Current conductor Timothy Mahr ’78, who succeeded his mentor Johnson in 1994, has taken the St. Olaf Band in new directions. Like his former mentor, Mahr selects challenging and adventurous repertoire for the band, including material by great composers old and new. He has led the group on return trips to Norway and the United Kingdom, as well as on tours of Europe, Mexico, and Japan.

This year, Mahr leads the St. Olaf Band in celebrating its 125th anniversary with a nine-concert tour of cities in Midwestern and Eastern states, culminating in the ensemble’s first-ever appearance at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

“We have a rich heritage that spans more than a century of performance, creation, and understanding. It’s a vital legacy to be entrusted to future generations,” Mahr says. “We have an incredible responsibility to not only carry the torch that was lit 125 years ago, but to fan its flames ever brighter.”

The band at Orchestra Hall, home of the Minnesota Orchestra, in 2014.
In the Spotlight

Members of the St. Olaf Band go on to careers in music performance and education, showcasing the strength of the St. Olaf instrumental program. Recent alumni include:

Lauren Cook ’09
Musician First Class and clarinetist, United States Navy Band

Micah Wilkinson ’06
Principal trumpet, San Diego Symphony Orchestra

Matthew Nudell ’05
Master sergeant and trombonist, United States Air Force Band

James Bobb ’04
The Douglas Ninno Conductor of the Wind Orchestra, Gustafson/Aldrich College

Travis Cross ’99
Associate professor of music and conductor of the wind ensemble, University of California, Los Angeles; published composer

Ken Hakoda ’96
Associate professor of music, Kansas Wesleyan University; conductor, Salina Symphony Orchestra; award-winning published composer
One of the nation’s leading liberal arts colleges, St. Olaf College offers a distinctive education grounded in academic rigor, residential learning, global engagement, and a vibrant Lutheran faith tradition.

Many excellent colleges provide one, two, or even three elements of the St. Olaf experience. What makes St. Olaf unique is the combination of so many distinguishing features working together at the highest level: an intense academic program that sharpens minds and an emphasis on a global perspective that broadens them; the vitality of a residential community that engages thoughtful people across the full range of human experiences; and a faith tradition that encourages reflection and honors different perspectives.

By cultivating the habits of mind and heart that enable graduates to lead lives of financial independence, professional accomplishment, personal fulfillment, and community engagement, St. Olaf College provides an uncommon educational experience that fully prepares students to make a meaningful difference in a changing world.