

10 Works That Will Make You Fall in Love With Wind Band Music

Here is a curated list of 10 works for wind band with cinematic power, infectious rhythms, and deep emotional expression. These pieces range from modern "megahits" to evocative staples.

I've chosen high-quality video recordings of top-tier ensembles playing these pieces. You simply must see the sweat and the passion of the performers—it makes the "art form" feel like a living, breathing sport rather than a museum piece. I hope you are inspired by this music over the summer months!

1. [Angels in the Architecture \(Frank Ticheli\)](#)

If any piece will hook you on wind band music, it's this one. It opens with a lone soprano voice (or instrument) singing a Shaker hymn, creating a "divine" atmosphere that is suddenly shattered by a massive, dissonant wall of sound representing "the darkness." The dramatic conflict between light and dark is visceral. Audiences love the theatricality, the "whirly-tubes," and the sheer power of the brass fanfares.

2. [Aurora Awakes \(John Mackey\)](#)

If you like the feeling of a sun rising or a film score reaching its climax, this one's for you. It transitions from a shimmering, ethereal opening into an explosion of rhythmic joy. The music feels modern and "expensive." The technical challenges of playing this music are rewarding because the final result sounds like a professional cinematic score.

3. [SITRUHS \(Katahj Copley\)](#)

Katahj Copley is the current "rockstar" of the wind band world. SITRUHS is high-octane, funk-inspired, and unapologetically cool. It speaks the language of modern rhythm. It's vibrant, high-energy, and lets the percussion and brass sections really "drive the bus."

4. [Give Us This Day \(David Maslanka\)](#)

This is a "soul" piece. It is deeply spiritual and emotionally demanding, featuring a powerful setting of a Bach chorale that builds to one of the most satisfying "wall of sound" endings in the repertoire. Musicians often fall in love with the feeling of playing this piece. It's an emotional journey that makes the ensemble feel like a single breathing organism.

2026-2027 Honors Symphonic Band

Recommended Listening & Summer Resources

5. [A Mother of a Revolution! \(Omar Thomas\)](#)

Written to honor LGBTQ+ icon Marsha P. Johnson, this piece is a celebration of strength and defiance. It's soulful, groovy, and incredibly powerful. It has a "backbeat" feel in sections that feels more like a protest march or a celebration than a traditional concert piece. It's socially relevant and musically infectious.

6. [Machu Picchu: City in the Sky \(Satoshi Yagisawa\)](#)

This is a programmatic masterpiece that tells the story of the "Lost City of the Incas." It features sweeping melodies, bird-call effects, and a thrilling finale. It's "epic" in the truest sense. It sounds like the soundtrack to a high-fantasy adventure game or movie.

7. [Danzón No. 2 \(Arturo Márquez, arr. Oliver Nickel\)](#)

Originally for [orchestra](#), this arrangement has become a staple because it's impossible to sit still while playing it. It's a masterclass in building tension and release. The solos are sultry, the rhythms are syncopated and danceable, and the ending is a wild, joyful sprint to the finish.

8. [October \(Eric Whitacre\)](#)

Everyone should experience the "Whitacre Wash"—those lush, cluster-chord harmonies that feel like a warm hug. This piece proves that "slow and soft" can be just as intense as "loud and fast." It's often a piece that people cite as the moment they realized wind music could be beautiful, not just noisy.

9. [Dancing Fire \(Kevin Day\)](#)

This piece is a literal spark. It's short, punchy, and filled with syncopated "fire" that moves through every section of the band. It's technical but fun. It gives the audience a sense of "velocity" that makes it a great example of modern wind band writing.

10. [Symphony No. 1: The Lord of the Rings \(Johan de Meij\)](#)

Even if you only hear a movement like *Gandalf* or *Hobbits*, this work bridges the gap between "classical" symphonic form and pop culture. The familiarity of the lore combined with the massive, multi-movement symphonic scale makes audiences feel like they are part of something "legendary."

2026-2027 Honors Symphonic Band

Recommended Listening & Summer Resources

Summer Resources

Practice - There's ALWAYS something new to learn! Students should continue to practice method book music, scales, and TPSMEA All-State Audition music or get a head start on the [required textbooks for next year](#).

Private Lessons - Summer is a great time to take private lessons to level up your instrumental skills. Lessons aren't just for advanced students or those that need remedial work. ALL musicians benefit from individualized instruction. There are several fantastic teachers in the greater Austin area that offer lessons throughout the summer months. If this is something that interests you, please send me an email (rpalese@sasaustin.org) and I'll work to connect you with a teacher.

Music Camps - Summer music camps afford students an opportunity to continue making music with other musicians while school is out. [HERE](#) is a short list of camps from the Lake Travis High School Cavalier Band website. If you'd like additional recommendations, or need guidance, please send me an email (rpalese@sasaustin.org) and I'll be happy to help out.

- [Concordia Texas Music Camp](#)
- [Austin Soundwaves Summer Music Camp](#)
- [Birch Creek Summer Music Academy](#)

Routine Instrument Maintenance - Instruments are like any other machine. Preventative maintenance goes a long way towards keeping it functioning in tip top condition. I highly recommend all students bring their instruments into a reputable repair shop, such as [Strait Music](#), for a tune up.

Instrument Upgrades - Beginner instruments, appropriate for middle school students, typically do not meet the needs of the student musician at the high school level, unless an advanced model was purchased initially. Better quality instruments allow students to learn more quickly and with greater ease. Summer is a wonderful time to audition and shop upgraded instruments. Following is a recommended instrument list. Please consult with me (rpalese@sasaustin.org) before making a purchase.

- **Flute** - Altus, Miramatsu, Miyazawa 95SR or other approved models
- **Clarinet** - Buffet R 13
- **Alto Saxophone** - Selmer SA-80; Yamaha Custom EX, Yamaha YAS-62III
- **Trumpet** - Bach Stradivarius 180-S37, Schilke i33, Yamaha Xeno Silver, Shires
- **Tenor Trombone** - Bach Stradivarius 42-BO; Getzen 3047AR, Yamaha Xeno, Shires, Edwards
- *If you are interested in purchasing an instrument that is usually provided by the school (i.e. Tenor Sax, Bari Sax, Euphonium, Tuba) please consult with me (rpalese@sasaustin.org) to ensure an appropriate model.*

2026-2027 Honors Symphonic Band

Recommended Listening & Summer Resources

I will reach out in the weeks before school starts with more specific information to start the year, including required materials and music to start the year. Until then, have a fantastic summer!