

Kansas State University
Wind Ensemble

Dr. Frank Tracz, Conductor

April 26, 2026
3:00 PM
McCain Auditorium



Wind Ensemble
Dr. Frank Tracz, Conductor

Bright Gleams a Beacon (2012).....David Gillingham (b. 1947)

Sounds, Voices, and Dreams from Ukraine (2025).....Kevin Poelking (b. 1988)

The Solitary Dancer (1970).....Warren Benson (1924 – 2005)
Lucy Vitug, Guest Dancer

Hold Fast Your Dreams (2010)..... Eric Ewazen (b. 1954)
1. Andante con moto
2. Allegra energico
3. Andante espressivo

Dr. Kelley Tracz, Oboe Soloist

Stormworks (1990).....Stephen Melillo (b. 1957)
1. Timestorm: A Dance of the Wu Li Master
2. Before the Storm
3. Into the Storm!

Danzon No. 2 (1994).....Arturo Márquez (b. 1950)

Slava! (1977)Leonard Bernstein (1918 – 1990)

Wind Ensemble Program Notes

***Bright Gleams a Beacon* (2012).....David Gillingham (b. 1947)**

Bright Gleams a Beacon, commissioned by Kansas State University and Kansas State University Bands, honors Frank Tracz in his 20th year as Director of Bands and the 150th year celebration of Kansas State University. The title is taken from the first line of the third verse of the Kansas State University Alma Mater by H. W. Jones ("Bright gleams a beacon across life's sea..."). Professor Tracz has been a "beacon" as a mentor to hundreds of music students over the past 20 years, and the University has been a "beacon" of knowledge to thousands of students over the past 150 years.

The work celebrates the achievements of both the University and Frank Tracz by using the Kansas State Alma Mater as the centerpiece of thematic material supplemented with other celebratory motives by the composer.

***Sounds, Voices, and Dreams from Ukraine* (2025).....Kevin Poelking (b. 1988)**

I. Sounds: The Beaten Path. This movement draws inspiration from a brief quote from Ivan Mazepa (Іван Мазепа), leader and patron of the arts who portrayed Ukraine's tumultuous history as: "O woe to the poor little seagull that hatched her babies by the beaten path."

While mostly original material, this movement uses the well-known Ukrainian folk song "A Moonlit Night" which is emphatically stated and thoroughly explored less than a minute into the work. The final four notes of this song (sol-re-medo/ 5-2-3-1) are used as a recurring motif in this movement and throughout the entire work. These notes are presented both sequentially and in unison (creating clustered "chords"), while also being varied throughout.

Throughout my research and personal interactions, the theme of Ukraine being "small but mighty" was recurrent. In measure 19, the piccolo -- the smallest but perhaps the most acoustically prevalent instrument in the ensemble -- calls out and the ensemble responds with strength and unity. The piccolo continues to serve as this "rallying cry" and source of strength for the rest of the ensemble throughout the movement.

Near the end of the movement the audience will hear a brief quote of the Ukrainian national anthem, whose lyrics begin: "Ukraine's freedom has not yet perished, nor has her glory..." Overall, this movement attempts to represent a proud and resilient people, even in the face of hardship and chaos.

II. Voices: Cherez Pole Shyrokeye ("Across the Wide Field"). Most famously arranged for choir by Ukrainian composer Mykola Leontovych, *Cherez Pole Shyrokeye* serves as a moment of healing and reflection. During the attack on Kyiv and throughout Ukraine, many citizens were forced to take shelter, often in underground bunkers. While waiting for the danger to pass, many Ukrainians found comfort and strength in singing and performing music. The resonant, echo-like sounds at the beginning of this movement attempt to convey the acoustics of the concrete underground shelters. In the distance, echoes of distorted trumpets perform a brief quote of the Ukrainian National Anthem, representing the many musicians who performed impromptu concerts in public areas throughout the city to raise the spirits of their fellow citizens.

Connecting the two movements, the four-note motif constructed from the final notes of *A Moonlit Night* (5-2-3-1) sounds on resonant keyboard instruments. These four pitches are presented in this order in a seemingly random rhythm. It is not until *Cherez Pole Shyrokeye* finds a steady pulse in the trumpet solo that we see how these four pitches fit within this melody.

The most profound moment of this work occurs just a few minutes into the music, as the "voices" of the Ukrainian people are represented by the ensemble singing. At the same time, the audience will hear an audio track that was recorded by the NASB of Ukraine in their concert hall on May 30, 2025. This recording is the voice of Pavlo Vysheba, a poet turned soldier who was sending communication on this project from the frontlines. He was eventually assigned to duty in Kyiv where they were able to create this recording.

The music builds in strength, representing the resilience and bravery of the Ukrainian people as they come together to support one another. There is a sense of hope when the percussion and piano enter, presenting an inversion of the four-note motif slightly altered to a major mode. The movement ends on a quiet, tense dissonance, as if asking "Was my prayer heard?". The glockenspiel answers optimistically to end the movement.

I find the spirit of this music is exceptionally summarized from the program notes of another arrangement of *Cherez Pole Shyrokeye* by Women's Bandura Ensemble of North America: "This piece embodies the eternal themes of spring, rebirth and redemption, and serves as a reminder that new beginnings are not always without pain."

Wind Ensemble Program Notes

Sounds, Voices, and Dreams from Ukraine continued.....

III. Dreams. This movement represents peace and hope for Ukraine: dreams of loved ones coming home and a bright future. During the time I wrote this music, Ukraine faced immense pain and difficulty, yet there are so many instances of beauty because of the people. There are weddings, art is being made, people gather together to support each other and give one another strength, and concerts (like the one this piece is written for) continue to draw crowds.

The opening chords are the four-note motif inverted (up P4, down m2, up m3) harmonized in quartal and quintal harmony. The sixteenth-note run in measure 4 is also completely constructed on this variation of the motif.

After the celebratory beginning, the music takes on a modern “groove”, inspired by the thriving popular music culture and artists in Ukraine. The music quickly becomes more contemplative, as we hear Pavlo’s poem (the final lines) return once more. Material from both movements is presented here and acknowledges the heroes, strength, tragedy, and loss.

The final minutes of this music display immense power and pride. In victory, the horns raise their bells and, once more, the ensemble cries out a small snippet of the Ukrainian National Anthem once more, inspired by the lyrics: “Upon us, fellow Ukrainians, fate shall smile once more.”

The timpanist brings the work to a commanding conclusion by emphatically stating the four-note motif that anchored the work. The final tempo marking in the conductor’s score is in Ukrainian:

The Solitary Dancer (1970).....Warren Benson (1924 – 2005)

Benson described *The Solitary Dancer* as “the quiet, poised energy that one may observe in a dancer in repose, alone with her inner music.” He also encouraged young composers to

“Take a look at the repertoire and see what’s not there that is present in life. That thought is one of the reasons why I wrote *The Solitary Dancer*. There just wasn’t any work that was fast and exciting and quiet. Like when a group of people get together and whisper, there is a lot of intensity and excitement, but it never gets loud. It never goes anywhere in that sense. It may bubble and cook but it never really blows the lid off. There are a lot of situations in life like that — just quiet moments.”

Hold Fast Your Dreams (2010)..... Eric Ewazen (b. 1954)

Hold Fast Your Dreams (Oboe Concerto No. 2) was written for Linda Strommen, a cherished colleague, for whom I also wrote my first oboe concerto, *Down a River of Time*. My second oboe concerto is dedicated to Ellen Strommen, Linda's mother, who was the inspiration for this piece. Her loving spirit, delightful sense of humor, and her wisdom, allowed me to present a musical portrait of this dear person.

The music is often lyrical and singing, but the tribulations of life also appear in each of the moments, only to lead once again to feelings of love and contentment and peace. *Hold Fast Your Dreams* is the name of a powerful poem by Louise Driscoll which was also an inspiration for this work.

Stormworks (1990).....Stephen Melillo (b. 1957)

“Wu Li” has many meanings... one is “patterns of Organic Energy”, another is “emptiness”. One of our greatest and most interesting storms is the one that dances in our imaginations as we instantly hurl ourselves through past, present and future thought. Here we were, there we are... somewhere is where we could be, and so runs the storm of time.

Before the STORM ... Before the storm there is quiet, mystery, hopeful anticipation and uncertainty. This movement is the “eye” of the STORMWORKS trilogy. What is it like before the storm... before life?

Into the STORM! In front of us, always raging, either obviously swirling or mysteriously quiet is a storm. That storm is within us. It is outside of us. This piece is about the heroic charging forward of the individual, the on-purpose clenching of fists and the determination to move in to that storm, facing life, good and not-so-good with head-on clarity. This is a theme for US, not for some movie hero, but for the real and true-to-life individuals who embrace each day ... storming.

Stormworks was premiered by the United States Air Force Band of the East on 26 August 1990. I would like to dedicate this work to the members of this fine ensemble and to Captain Robert Pouliot, whose love and energy bring life to it. It is also dedicated to those represented by the Band of the East, the defenders of our country, past, present and future, the greatest Storm-Facers of all.

Wind Ensemble Program Notes

***Danzon No. 2* (1994).....Arturo Márquez (b. 1950)**

The idea of writing the *Danzón No. 2* originated in 1993 during a trip to Malinalco with the painter Andrés Fonseca and the dancer Irene Martínez, both of whom are experts in salon dances with a special passion for the *danzón*, which they were able to transmit to me from the beginning, and also during later trips to Veracruz and visits to the Colonia Salon in Mexico City. From these experiences onward, I started to learn the *danzón*'s rhythms, its form, its melodic outline, and to listen to the old recordings by Acerina and his Danzonera Orchestra. I was fascinated and I started to understand that the apparent lightness of the *danzón* is only like a visiting card for a type of music full of sensuality and qualitative seriousness, a genre which old Mexican people continue to dance with a touch of nostalgia and a jubilant escape towards their own emotional world; we can fortunately still see this in the embrace between music and dance that occurs in the state of Veracruz and in the dance parlors of Mexico City.

The *Danzón No. 2* is a tribute to the environment that nourishes the genre. It endeavors to get as close as possible to the dance, to its nostalgic melodies, to its wild rhythms, and although it violates its intimacy, its form and its harmonic language, it is a very personal way of paying my respects and expressing my emotions towards truly popular music. *Danzón No. 2* was written on a commission by the Department of Musical Activities at Mexico's National Autonomous University and is dedicated to my daughter Lily.

***Slava!* (1977)Leonard Bernstein (1918 – 1990)**

For the second week of his first season as music director of the National Symphony Orchestra, in October 1977, Mstislav Rostropovich invited Leonard Bernstein for a program of his own works, in which the two musicians shared the podium and Mr. Rostropovich performed also as soloist in a work composed for him. In addition to the well-known suite from the music for the movie *On the Waterfront*, conducted by Mr. Rostropovich, there were three premieres: Bernstein conducted his new *Songfest* (settings of thirteen American poems, for six solo singers and orchestra, which he recorded here following the concerts), and, with Mr. Rostropovich as soloist, *Three Meditations from "Mass,"* for cello and orchestra.

The third premiere, actually the work that opened the program, was the piece Bernstein composed especially for that occasion, and in fact so close to the concert date that it had to be listed in a separate insert in the program booklet: the "political overture" *Slava!* That title, as listeners familiar with Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* know, is the Russian word for "glory"; for that opera's coronation scene, Mussorgsky set that word to the old traditional tune known as "the Slava," a tune quoted earlier by Beethoven in the scherzo of his *String Quartet in E minor*, Op. 59, No. 2 (the second of his three "Razumovsky" quartets), and subsequently by Rimsky-Korsakov and other Russian composers. "Slava" is also a nickname given to men with such names as Miroslav, Vladyslav and Vyacheslav, and by far the best known bearer of that sobriquet is Mr. Rostropovich himself, who is "Slava" to friends, family, colleagues -- and indeed everyone who knows him or speaks of him.

That is the context in which Bernstein's overture is titled, but there is a reference to the traditional musical "Slava" as well, very brief and in an altered rhythm, at the end of the piece. When Bernstein received our Slava's request for a "rousing new overture," he took his basic materials from his musical play *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, which had been introduced in Philadelphia the previous year; although that show was unsuccessful, its setting seemed to point to it as an apt source for welcoming Slava to Washington, and the exuberance of the themes definitely met his expressed specification. The score is marked "Fast and flamboyant." Jack Gottlieb, in his notes for the premiere, wrote that the first theme is "a vaudevillian razzma-tazz tune filled with side-slipping modulations and sliding trombones. Theme II comes from the opening of the show, a canonic tune in 7/8 time. Instead of a conventional development section, there follows another kind of development, heard on tape, which will literally speak for itself [a parody of political oratory]. The two themes recur in reverse order. Near the end of the piece the two themes are presented together with the fleeting citation of the Russian Slava theme as noted above. The other "new material" at the end is the chanting of the name "Slava" itself by members of the orchestra. The first performance of this piece, in October 1977, was actually the first world premiere Slava conducted as music director of the NSO. The Bernstein performance included in the orchestra's 75th-anniversary set of commemorative recordings is the only item in that collection performed under a conductor who was not the orchestra's music director.

Kansas State University - Wind Ensemble

Spring 2026

FLUTE

Sienna DelBorrell
Jessica Minnich*
Anna Peery

CLARINET

Lexi Brown
Chloe Crooks
Wesley Janssen
Carter Meerpohl
Madeline Murnahan*
Theresa Wood

BASS CLARINET

Jordan Culton*
Caleb Kissoon
Isabelle Mullinax

OBOE

Jeanna Eshelman
Kelsey Farr*
Lucas Reed

BASSOON

Ryan Katzer
Grace Maxwell
Tom Stark*

ALTO SAX

Diego Umaña Conejo*
Jordan Somers

TENOR SAX

Keith Carter
Sara Schieferecke

BARITONE SAX

Jarrett Peabody

TRUMPET

Kay Carson
Owen Genereux*
Kiersten Glass
Karson Griffin
Ethan Oppold
Paige Roberts
Preston Schuetz
Brett Wyckoff*

FRENCH HORN

Nathan Dembski
Kendan Powers*
Maddie Renner
Aspen Tallent
Sharyn Worcester

TROMBONE

Mason Burnett
Jared Eck*
Adrian Rodriguez
Aidan Torkelson
Trek Wedel

EUPHONIUM

Joseph Horne*
Drake Thompson
Sydney Smith

TUBA

Camdon Findlay
Asmodeus Hull
Chase Wassom*

PERCUSSION

Devon Autry
Javi Garza*
Mark McKinley
Brenden Scaglione
Jessi Solorzano
Chris Wells
Jessie Whelan
Ryan Woodruff

STRING BASS

Rawlan Cave

PIANO

August Siefkes

* Co-Principal/Co-Section Leader



Wind Ensemble Conductor

DR. FRANK TRACZ is Professor of Music and Director of Bands at Kansas State University. He earned his B.M.E. from The Ohio State University, M.M. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Ph.D. from the Ohio State University. He has public school teaching experience in Wisconsin and Ohio and has also served as Assistant Director of bands at Syracuse University and Director of bands at Morehead State University. Dr. Tracz has served as an adjudicator, clinician, speaker in various schools and conferences and has conducted All-State and Honor bands across the United States as well as in Canada, Singapore, South Africa, Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand.

At Kansas State, he directs the Wind Ensemble and the Marching Band, teaches graduate conducting, acts as an advisor to the Band Ambassadors, and administers and guides all aspects of a large BIG XII comprehensive band program. Ensembles under his direction have been invited to perform at numerous State conferences, MENC, two CBDNA regional conferences, The Larry Sutherland Wind band Festival at Fresno State, Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, and the American Bandmasters Association Conference. The marching band was awarded the prestigious Sudler Trophy in 2015. The Wind Ensemble has also performed at the International Convention of the American Bandmasters Association in 2019 in Loveland, CO.

Dr. Tracz is on the faculty of the Conn-Selmer Institute, on the adjunct faculty of the American Band College, is a past member of the Music Education Journal Editorial Board, is a contributor to the Teaching Music Through Performance In Band series, and is past Chair of the Sudler Trophy Project of the John Philip Sousa Foundation. His honors include the Stamey Award for outstanding teaching, Kansas Bandmasters Outstanding Director award, Wildcat Pride Alumni Association award, the Tau Beta Sigma Paula Crider Outstanding Band Director award, being named a Lowell Mason Fellow, and membership in the Phi Kappa Phi Honorary Fraternity. He has also received the Conn- Selmer Institute Hall of Fame award, the Kansas State Professorial Performance award, and was elected to the prestigious American Bandmasters Association. Dr. Tracz was awarded an honorary doctorate from Doane University in May 2021. Dr. Tracz also led a very successful fundraising campaign raising over five million dollars for a new hall for the athletics band program. The “Tracz Family Band Hall” was dedicated in September of 2023, and is in full operational mode! Recently Dr. Tracz was appointed at the state coordinator and conductor of the Heartland Musicians Abroad Ensemble that will tour Europe in the summer of 2026.

Dr. Tracz is married to GERALYN, and has three daughters, Jessica Tracz Kelly, Kelley Tracz, and Carly Tracz Morris, and one grandson, Caden Tracz Kelly!



Guest Soloist

DR. KELLEY TRACZ is an active performer and educator currently based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Kelley is Associate Principal Oboe of the South Dakota Symphony, and also serves as Assistant Professor of Oboe at Concordia College. She frequently performs with the Minnesota Orchestra, having also appeared with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, New World Symphony, Quad City Symphony, Sioux City Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle, Ohio Light Opera Orchestra, Greensboro Symphony, Central Texas Philharmonic, and more. She can be heard on the Minnesota Orchestra's recent release of Mahler 3 with Osmo Vänskä, as well as multiple world premiere recordings with the South Dakota Symphony. As a chamber musician, Kelley has performed in various festivals including Lakes Area Music Festival (Brainerd, MN), Festival of the Lakes (Alexandria, MN), Bay View Music Festival (Petoskey, MI), and other independently produced recitals around the country. Kelley has been a featured soloist with the Concordia College Wind Ensemble, Concordia College Symphonic Band, UNC Greensboro University Band, Austin Symphonic Band, Kansas State University Wind Ensemble, Packard Wind Band, and is also a past winner of the Midwest Double Reed Society Young Artist Competition.

Kelley has performed at the International Double Reed Society Conference in Boulder, CO, and most recently premiered Alyssa Morris' new double oboe concerto alongside the composer at the 2023 conference in Bangkok, Thailand. As a clinician, she presented at the 2023 Minnesota Music Education Association conference and Minnesota Band Directors Association, the focus of the presentation aimed at helping band directors in both urban and rural communities successfully start a student on oboe or switch them over from another instrument, when resources such as reeds, lessons, and repair may not be easily accessible due to financial or geographical challenges. As a passionate and dedicated educator, Kelley has given masterclasses and served as a clinician to young oboists and fellow music educators across the country. Students of Kelley's have advanced to Region, Area, and All-State ensembles in Texas and Minnesota, and have also been accepted into various music programs, including The Eastman School of Music, UT Austin, UMKC Conservatory, and Southern Methodist University. Kelley has served as a faculty artist for the national double reed camp, Bocal Majority, also serving as the premier instructor for the camp in Austin, TX. She has taught double reeds at Camp Bernstein of Blue Lakes Fine Arts Camp in Twin Lake, MI, Kansas State University Music Camp, and Cobb Summer Music Camp held on the Kennesaw State University campus in Georgia. Kelley has also been Oboe Section coach with the Minnesota All-State Orchestra and Band camp for three years.

Kelley received her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Oboe Performance and Post Baccalaureate Certificate in Ethnomusicology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. During her time at UNCG, Kelley studied with Dr. Ashley Barret and served as the Teaching Assistant for the Oboe Studio. Kelley also served as a Teaching Assistant for the Ethnomusicology Department. Kelley holds her Masters of Music degree from the University of Minnesota, where she studied with former Principal Oboe of the Minnesota Orchestra, John Snow. She completed her Bachelors of Music degree at Kansas State University, studying with Dr. Nora Lewis. Additionally, she has studied with Dr. Andrew Parker of UT Austin, as well as extensive English horn study with Carolyn Hove of the Los Angeles Philharmonic.



Guest Dancer

Lucy Vitug is a student at Kansas State University studying marketing. She is a 4th-year member of the Kansas State Classy Cats Dance Team and has served as a section leader her junior and senior year, where she has built strong leadership, teamwork, and dedication at the Division I level. Outside of Classy Cats, Lucy is involved in her family's businesses, including a dance studio, dance competition, and a wellness beverage brand, where she has gained experience in mentorship, communication, and daily operations. She is passionate about supporting others, continuing to grow as an individual, and being part of a positive and driven team environment.

A TRIBUTE TO DR. FRANCIS CARL TRACZ, JR.
...in Honor of a Legendary Director and Educator...
By Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

There are many heroes in our band directing community. Among those who have distinguished themselves as the premier conductors, leaders, creators, and authors of remarkable band programs, Dr. Frank Tracz stands alone as the ultimate exemplar reflecting the well-known adage:

ONE PERSON MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

The baton of Dr. Frank Tracz is far more than a teacher-of-musical skills, but a teacher of life skills. As he concludes his extraordinary career, stepping down from the podium after decades of unparalleled service, we celebrate his legacy as one of the most successful and transformative college band directors in our profession. This tribute is offered not merely as a fond farewell, but as a permanent record of the enduring impact of a truly visionary leader.

From the moment Dr. Tracz took the helm, he set a new standard. His relentless pursuit of excellence was always tempered by an infectious enthusiasm and deep belief in the potential of every student. Under his direction, the Kansas State University band program became a reflection of his first-class leadership, earning national acclaim and becoming a benchmark for collegiate bands across the country.

His success, however, cannot be measured solely by awards, packed stadiums, or countless standing ovations. The true measure of Dr. Tracz lies in the thriving careers and fulfilled lives of the thousands of students who are forever draped in the trademark purple that was (and will always be) the signature color of the band family. He was not just a conductor; he was a master educator in leadership, discipline, and dedication. He taught young musicians that the commitment required to achieve musical precision was the same commitment needed to achieve success in any and every aspect of life. He instilled the values of teamwork, resilience, and the power of shared passion, forging a signature bond among band members that lasts long after graduation...in truth, for a lifetime.

One need go no further than his own students to learn about Dr. Tracz's one-of-a-kind ability to inspire the process of becoming a tried-and-true K-State band member. His teaching methodology was challenging, focused, and yet always punctuated by moments of humor and profound realization. He pushed the boundaries of performance, and ensured that the band experience was a rigorous and deeply enriching component of the university's cultural landscape.

Dr. Tracz is a master teacher, far more than just an instructor, but truly a visionary architect of growth and collaborative achievement. While possessing a rich depth in the discipline of music, the true mastery lies in the ability to cultivate a climate where every member of the organization is inspired to pursue and achieve their highest potential. It's not just about transmitting knowledge, but modeling intellectual curiosity and a relentless devotion to inquiry turning the learning process into a space generating new and exciting ideas. Master educators remind students that quality is not an innate gift, but a shared, attainable outcome of deliberate practice and collective accountability. This is recognized in everything with the Dr. Tracz signature on it.

"With Passion and Pride," composed by one of his own students, Grace Baugher Dunlap, is a musical tribute to the immeasurable contribution Dr. Tracz has made to the world of bands. The piece's title perfectly captures the spirit of this occasion and the legacy of a beloved band director, teacher, mentor, friend. The music reaches a part of one's heart-and-soul generating a moving experience for everyone - students, alumni, and the entire community who were the benefactors of the "Dr. Tracz-effect." From the first note, it is an absolute affirmation of a long and inspiring career reflecting the many facets of a exemplary pathway of commitment and dedication.

As the curtain closes on this chapter of his life, Dr. Tracz leaves behind a program structurally and artistically stronger than ever, a powerful testament to his vision and decades of stewardship. While his absence on the podium will be noticeable, the echo of his dedication will resonate forever in the halls of the Dr. Frank Tracz Family band building named in his honor... and, more importantly, in the hearts of his students.

Thank you, Dr. Tracz, for setting the tempo for success. May your retirement be filled with the harmony and success you have selflessly shared with all who have been influenced by YOU.

"STRIKE UP THE BAND!"

Dear Wildcat Band Family,

It was February of 1993 when I got the call with the job offer to come lead the band program at Kansas State University. It was a decision that would change my life, and that of my family. I had no idea how long this would last, but here we are 33 years later, and the ride of my life is coming to an end. A transition to the next chapter is here; my family and I are ready and excited for this next chapter.

My heart is filled with gratitude, respect, love, and appreciation for all the people we have developed a relationship with - students, colleagues, donors, supporters, friends, and all who carry the banner high. This is a very special place indeed. I have traveled the country and world and have not found a friendlier, more comfortable, and more lovable place than the Little Apple. Home is where the heart is, and Kansas State University is our home. My family and I found our home here, and we will be staying here during our retirement years.

I want to thank all the past, present, and future band members of this fantastic program. YOU have made a profound difference in so many lives by playing/marching/dancing/twirling/flagging with great spirit, energy, and purple enthusiasm. To all the band graduate students that have worked so diligently and profoundly to further your own careers, as well as the quality and continual growth and development of this program - I thank you so very much. To the many directors that have started their journey with us - I am forever grateful for all you have meant to me and my family and to this band program. To the many, many supporters and donors who believed in us and our mission, and who built the Tracz Family Band Hall, bought uniforms and instruments, provided scholarships and support for our students and staff - thank you from the bottom of my purple heart. To the Athletic program family - your support, encouragement, and respect kept us alive and moving forward. To the K-State Family and the Manhattan Community - there is no one or no place that compares to you and your unique abilities to bring us all together and put the "WE/US" back in our lives.

Of course, great leadership is everything. I was so extremely fortunate to be here during this incredible time. It all started with Dr. Jon Wefald, no one did it or will do it better than he and Ruth Ann did. Dr. Pat Bosco and Dr. Susan Bosco, true purple leaders of an era, Amy Button and Allen Renz, the deepest purple people anywhere, and then there is the legendary greatest football coach of all-time, Coach Bill Snyder, who summed it up the best when he stated "we came here because of the people, and we stayed because of the people". These four incredible thinkers, movers, shakers, and leaders truly made a difference to us all, but especially to me and my band and personal family. Right place, right time, right people.....what a ride!

I would also like to express my sincere love, respect, and gratitude to all of my secretaries/administrative assistants/program coordinators that ran the program through the years: Bev McGee and Deb Marshall - thank you very much. Then there is Courtney Grecu who has taken the level and quality of work as program coordinator to a level of success, organization, efficiency, and accomplishment that will not be matched by anyone at any time. Courtney leaves it better than she finds it every day - she is the heartbeat of the K- State Band program!!! I am eternally grateful to Courtney.

Finally, my wife GERALYN whose patience, understanding, love, and support made it all possible. My daughters Jessica, Kelley, Carly, and son-in-law Blake - thank you. And my best little buddy in the world, my grandson Caden - you are my hero! It is not an easy road to be the wife and children of a D.O.B. in the BIG XII with bowl trips, tournaments, concert tours, busy weekends and summers, gone for holidays, and the list goes on and on.....my family is my rock.

I wish Dr. Wimmer, Josh Cook, and the two new directors the patience, motivation, drive, grit, and the wisdom to develop their own wings and fly to higher highs with this program. With this new era and new team I am sure that the future is bright and it will indeed "Be A Good day For The Good Guys"! Enjoy the ride, it goes fast!!!

GO CATS, GO BAND, ALWAYS BEAT KU!!!!

Happy Trails, my friends, I will miss you very much, and please continue to leave it better than you found it

DT