

the houston★pride★band presents

PRIDE

AND

Passion

**JOIN US IN A RAINBOW REVELRY
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Sunday, June 21, 2026 • 6PM

This event is being performed at the
Hobby Center for the Performing Arts,
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy **PRIDE** everyone! The **Houston Pride Band** welcomes you to **Pride and Passion**. It's been an amazing season, and what better way to finish than with a summer concert celebrating joy, love, and unequivocally living your truth.

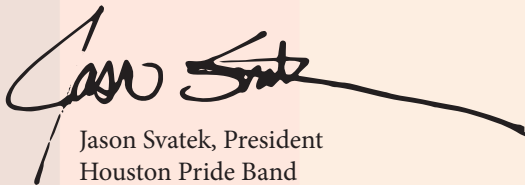
While Houston Pride has technically come and gone, Pride Month is still in full swing, and we're excited to keep the celebration going! Pride is an opportunity to show our unity and visibility peacefully through love, joy, and music. I hope everyone continues to find ways to show their pride in fun and expressive ways, much like the band is doing tonight. Be sure to take in the fabulous looks on stage, as each band member celebrates what Pride means to them!

We are also excited to announce our concert dates for the upcoming **2026-2027 Season!** **Season ticket packages** will be available this summer – be sure to follow us on **Facebook** and **Instagram** and go to our website to subscribe to email updates about our upcoming events and performances!

The Houston Pride Band appreciates your generous support. Your contributions help the band bring music and joy to our community throughout the year. Your ticket purchase tonight is just the beginning – be sure to go to **donate.houstonprideband.org** to make additional contributions and check out the other giving opportunities within this program for ways to support our organization.

Wishing you a safe and happy **PRIDE** and a wonderful summer!

Yours in **PRIDE**,



Jason Svatek, President
Houston Pride Band



SUBSCRIBE TO OUR MAILING LIST

To learn more about upcoming concerts and events, subscribe to our mailing list. Houston Pride Band will not share your contact information with other organizations. Visit houstonprideband.nationbuilder.com/subscribe.



SUBSCRIBE

PRIDE AND *Passion*

DEBORAH HIRSCH & ANTHONY MORRIS, CONDUCTORS

PROGRAM

Rise: A Gay Games Anthem _____ Rossano Galante

Big City Lights _____ Marie A. Douglas

Passion from "Kingdom Hearts II" _____ Yoko Shimomura
arr. Arnold Morrison

A Little Tango Music _____ Adam Gorb

American Hymnsong Suite _____ Dwayne S. Milburn
II. Ballad on "Balm in Gilead"
IV. March on "Wilson" arr. Joe Utterback

Nessun Dorma from "Turandot" _____ Giacomo Puccini
arr. Merlin Patterson

Breaking through... _____ Chandler L. Wilson
Billy Skembos, guest conductor

- INTERMISSION -

A Mother of a Revolution! _____ Omar Thomas

Habanera from "Carmen" _____ Georges Bizet
arr. Justin Williams

Stay _____ Randall D. Standridge

I've Made My Plans for the Summer _____ John Philip Sousa
Veronica Mae DeWitt, guest vocalist arr. Brion/Schissel

The Great Rubber Chicken Galop _____ Randall D. Standridge

Dancing Queen _____ arr. Jerry Brubaker

houston★pride★band

PERFORMING MEMBERS

FLUTE/PICCOLO

Lisa Brown
Rocky Gonzales
Theo Harrison*
Jadie Marshall
Hannah Rae Melis
Zoë Myers
Huy Nguyen
Gabe Rodriguez

OBOE

Michael Moreau-Monier
Lupe Ybarra-Regan

BASSOON

Tyler Alderberry
Fernando Alvarez
Alejandro Cruz
David DiCamillo
Sam Hardcastle
Becky Schlembach*

CLARINET

Myra Bozeman
Delvin Coleman
Hayden Forsythe
William Fu*
Juan Guerrero
Malkia Hutchinson
Adam Jones
Kamah Asha Lovelle
Jordan Raabe
Hannah Robertson
Steven Scott
Billy Skembos
Eric Weidner

BASS CLARINET

Nicolas Droger
Jackia Green
David Haven

ALTO SAXOPHONE

Christina De Leon
Brianna Hemeyer-Taylor
Travis Howell*
RaVon Rhone
Daniel Stover
Kevin Taylor
Grant Thumann
Chris Wheeler

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Anthony Fernandez
Brian Hairston

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ARTISTIC DIRECTORS



DEBORAH HIRSCH
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Deborah Hirsch, originally from Baltimore, Maryland, earned her bachelor's degrees in music therapy and music education from the University of Kansas, followed by a master's degree in music from Texas A&M University–

Commerce. Prior to moving to Texas, she proudly served as a member of the 312th Army Band in Lawrence, Kansas.

After a distinguished 37-year career, Deborah retired from the Pasadena Independent School District, where she was honored as “Teacher of the Year” in 2014. Throughout her career, she was known for her dedication to student success, musical excellence, and community engagement.

In retirement, Deborah remains an active and passionate musician and conductor. She continues to clinic and conduct Region and Honor Bands across the area and has participated in conducting symposia at the University of Colorado Boulder and the University of Missouri–Kansas City Conservatory. At the Conn-Selmer Institute, she had the opportunity to study, collaborate, and consult with many esteemed leaders in music education, including Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser, Dr. Paula A. Crider, Frank Troyka, Michael Sweeney, and Richard Saucedo.

Always eager to embrace new opportunities, Deborah has performed in World Pride parades in New York City and Washington, D.C., as well as the National Cherry Blossom Festival Parade. She is honored to make her third appearance on the podium at a Pride Bands Alliance Conference this May in Philadelphia and looks forward to marching in the Rose Parade in January.

Deborah is an active clinician, mentor, and adjudicator. She maintains professional memberships in the Texas Music Educators Association, Texas Bandmasters Association, Women Band Directors International, and the Texas Music Adjudicators Association.

In addition to her musical endeavors, Ms. Hirsch is a member of the chancel choir and bell choir at Bering Memorial United Church of Christ and a member of Pasadena Little Theatre.



ANTHONY MORRIS
ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Anthony Morris is a conductor, educator, and advocate. He is the Associate Artistic Director of the Houston Pride Band and the Assistant Director of Bands at Null Middle School in Houston, Texas.

Before joining HPB and NMS, he was a Master's Conducting Associate at the University of Georgia, where he assisted in teaching beginning and advanced conducting courses, conducted the five performing ensembles, and served as a teaching assistant for the Redcoat Marching Band. He has received the opportunity to conduct the United States Air Force Band as a United States Air Force Conducting Fellow. He has also appeared as a guest conductor with the United States Army Band "Pershing's Own" and was named a Conducting Fellow for the H. Robert Reynolds Conducting Institute at the 76th Annual Midwest Clinic in Chicago, Illinois.

His passion for music education has led him to create the Relative Pitch Podcast, which discusses modern issues regarding music education and helps pave the way for much-needed change to make a more diverse, enriching, and equitable music community. Through his advocacy efforts, he has presented sessions at the Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic, the College Band Directors National Association Conference, the Georgia Music Educators Association In-Service Conference, and the Florida Music Education Association Conference.



PROGRAM NOTES

COMPILED BY THEO HARRISON

RISE: A GAY GAMES ANTHEM

Rise: A Gay Games Anthem by Rossano Galante is a powerful and uplifting work, commissioned by the Federation of Gay Games to accompany the ceremonial raising of its official flag. Composed in 2019, the piece embodies the core values of the Gay Games—participation, inclusion, and personal best—through its heroic and evocative musical language. Galante, renowned for his cinematic and emotionally charged compositions, channels these ideals into a sweeping and reverent soundscape. The music unfolds with soaring melodies, rich harmonies, and dramatic crescendos, creating a sense of triumph and unity that resonates with audiences worldwide.

BIG CITY LIGHTS

Big City Lights draws inspiration from the hip-hop subgenre known as trap music, which originated in the composer's hometown of Atlanta, Georgia. Blending traditional wind band instrumentation with electronic elements, the work incorporates rhythmic grooves, layered textures, and production techniques commonly found in contemporary hip-hop. Douglas uses the ensemble to emulate synthesized sounds, studio effects, and the energy of city life, creating a musical portrait of Atlanta's vibrant culture. From the bustle of busy streets to the glow of nightlife, *Big City Lights* offers an exciting and innovative concert experience.

PASSION

Passion was composed by Yoko Shimomura as the theme song for the acclaimed video game *Kingdom Hearts II*. Originally performed by Japanese singer Hikaru Utada, the song serves as an emotional centerpiece for the game's story, reflecting themes of friendship, memory, loss, and hope. Its expressive melody and rich harmonic language have made it one of the most beloved pieces in the *Kingdom Hearts* series.

A LITTLE TANGO MUSIC

A Little Tango Music by Adam Gorb is a spirited and engaging work inspired by the passion and energy of the Argentine tango. The piece captures many of the

distinctive characteristics of the dance, including driving rhythms, dramatic contrasts, and expressive melodic lines. Gorb combines these elements with colorful scoring and playful musical interactions between sections of the ensemble. Full of character and flair, *A Little Tango Music* introduces audiences to the vibrant world of tango through a fresh and entertaining musical experience.

AMERICAN HYMN SONG SUITE

American Hymn Song Suite is deeply connected to composer Dwayne Milburn's family heritage as church musicians. Growing up, Milburn was immersed in the rich tradition of congregational hymn singing and instrumental church music, including the four hymn tunes featured throughout this work.

II. Ballad on "Balm in Gilead" is based on the African American spiritual *There Is a Balm in Gilead*, a hymn of hope, healing, and comfort. Milburn presents the familiar melody in a warm, expressive setting filled with rich harmonies and flowing musical lines. The music unfolds with a reflective and soulful character, inviting listeners to pause and consider the hymn's message of resilience and renewal.

IV. March on "Wilson" is built on the hymn tune *Wilson*, best known as the melody for *When We All Get to Heaven*. Milburn transforms the tune into a lively and spirited march, combining traditional American band sounds with contemporary harmonies and rhythmic energy. Bright colors, playful musical gestures, and driving momentum create an atmosphere of celebration and joy.

NESSUN DORMA

Nessun Dorma is one of the most celebrated arias in all of opera, drawn from the final act of *Turandot* by Giacomo Puccini. The aria is sung by Prince Calaf as he confidently declares that he will win the heart of Princess Turandot, culminating in the triumphant phrase "Vincerò!" ("I will win!"). Known for its soaring melody and emotional intensity, *Nessun Dorma* has become a beloved concert favorite around the world. In this arrangement by Merlin Patterson, the grandeur and beauty of Puccini's masterpiece are brought to life through the rich colors and expressive power of the concert band.

BREAKING THROUGH...

Breaking Through... was composed in response to the challenges faced by students during the COVID-19 pandemic. With milestones such as graduations, performances, proms, and senior celebrations disrupted or altered, the work reflects the resilience required to overcome unexpected obstacles. Through moments of tension, determination, and triumph, the music portrays the struggle to move forward in uncertain times. Ultimately, *Breaking Through...* serves as a musical reminder that with the support of family, friends, and community, barriers can be overcome and brighter days can emerge.

A MOTHER OF A REVOLUTION!

A Mother of a Revolution! is a celebration of the courage, resilience, and enduring impact of transgender women, particularly LGBTQ+ activist Marsha P. Johnson. Widely recognized for her role in the 1969 Stonewall Uprising, Johnson became a symbol of authenticity, advocacy, and hope within the LGBTQ+ community. The work honors those who have bravely lived as their true selves despite discrimination and adversity. As the music unfolds, moments of determination and triumph give way to an energetic disco-inspired section, paying tribute to LGBTQ+ club culture—a space of community, healing, celebration, and self-expression. Through its powerful message and vibrant spirit, the piece serves as both a tribute and a celebration of courage in the face of injustice.

HABANERA

Habanera is one of the most famous selections from the opera *Carmen*, composed by Georges Bizet and first performed in 1875. Sung by the title character, the aria introduces Carmen as a free-spirited and independent woman, comparing love to a wild bird that cannot be tamed. Its distinctive rhythm, memorable melody, and passionate character have made it one of the most recognizable pieces in all of opera.

STAY

Stay by Randall Standridge is a lyrical and emotionally expressive work that explores themes of connection, remembrance, and the desire to hold on to meaningful moments. Part of Standridge's "unBroken Project," the

piece is intended to be an anthem of hope, love, and understanding for those who find it challenging to go on in the face of adversity and for those who sometimes feel that the weight of the world is too much to bear. Inspired by a message of encouragement, the work reflects the sentiment, "Hey you, the one reading this. The world is better with you in it." As the work unfolds, moments of tenderness are balanced with powerful emotional climaxes, inviting listeners to consider the people, places, and experiences that leave a lasting impact on our lives. *Stay* is a moving musical journey that celebrates resilience, compassion, and the enduring bonds that continue to shape and inspire us.

I'VE MADE MY PLANS FOR THE SUMMER

I've Made Plans for the Summer is a lighthearted march by the legendary American bandmaster and composer John Philip Sousa. Originally written as a popular song, the piece reflects the optimism and excitement associated with the arrival of summer. This arrangement by Brion and Schissel brings Sousa's charming melodies and spirited rhythms to the concert band stage, showcasing the wit and craftsmanship that earned him the title "The March King."

THE GREAT RUBBER CHICKEN GALOP

The Great Rubber Chicken Galop by Randall Standridge is a lighthearted and humorous work that embraces the playful side of music-making. Inspired by the classic novelty prop, the rubber chicken, the piece combines lively rhythms, unexpected musical twists, and a healthy dose of comedy. Throughout the work, familiar march and galop-style elements are mixed with musical surprises that keep both performers and audiences entertained.

DANCING QUEEN

Dancing Queen is one of the most beloved hits by the Swedish pop group ABBA. Released in 1976, the song quickly became an international sensation, reaching the top of the charts in numerous countries and remaining a timeless favorite for generations of listeners. In this energetic arrangement by Jerry Brubaker, the iconic melody, infectious rhythms, and vibrant harmonies are brought to life for concert band.

GUEST ARTISTS

VERONICA MAE DEWITT, GUEST VOCALIST

Veronica Mae DeWitt makes her stage debut this evening with the Houston Pride Band.

New to drag but no stranger to the stage, Veronica arrives after borrowing years of experience from her alter ego, Ron: a music degree, 28 years in music education, and hundreds of performances as a director, singer, actor, and professional overcommitter.

Veronica herself is still revealing who she wants to be, but early reports describe her as fun, flirty, musically inclined, fiercely supportive of underdogs, and always ready for a good meal. Those who know her best insist that beneath the rhinestones and hairspray is a heart of gold.

After nearly three decades of teaching music, Veronica has finally decided to pursue the only promotion that made sense: Drag Queen.

Special thanks to Iris Russell (Tomas Turrubiates Jr.) for lending her expertise in styling and makeup for tonight's debut.

Disclaimer: Iris Russell is in no way responsible for the canvas she was asked to work with, nor for any talent, choices, decisions, or presentation Ms. DeWitt may or may not exhibit this evening.



BILLY SKEMBOS, GUEST CONDUCTOR

Billy Skembos is a Houston-based conductor and woodwind performer who performs on clarinet and saxophone in the Houston Pride Band. Originally from Fort Wayne, Indiana, he began his band directing career in Las Vegas before earning his Master of Music in Instrumental Conducting from Sam Houston State University (Eat 'Em Up!) and continuing his teaching career in the Houston Metro.

With 15 years on the podium, Billy has led ensembles to consistent superior ratings and is known for his high energy and musical precision. After recently stepping away from the classroom to pursue a new career with a local STEM curriculum company, he's found even more joy returning to the podium in new and meaningful ways.

A member of the Houston Pride Band since 2020, Billy is incredibly excited to make his conducting debut with HPB at the *Pride and Passion* concert.

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Patrice French
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BREAKING THROUGH...

David DiCamillo

DANCING QUEEN

Ellen Winters

THE GREAT RUBBER CHICKEN GALOP

Bob & Linda Hirsch - Dedicated to the love of music.

HABANERA

Sharon Prince - In honor of Jennifer and Myra.
Thanks for making my birthday special. -Ms. P

I'VE MADE MY PLANS FOR THE SUMMER

Doug Goff

A LITTLE TANGO MUSIC

Kevin Taylor & Michael Moore

NESSUN DORMA

Georges Detiveaux

PASSION

Andrew Christian

RISE: A GAY GAMES ANTHEM

Crawford Howell
Jennifer Pascoe & Myra Bozeman - In honor
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Nate Jones
William Fu

STAY

Sharon Prince - In honor of Deborah Hirsch.



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SEASON**

INTO THE VOID

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HOUSTONPRIDEBAND.ORG

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our story

Serving as a community band in Houston's LGBTQ+ community, the Houston Pride Band has several groups that perform at local events throughout the year as well as concerts and parades. We also provide a fun social experience for musicians.

The Houston Pride Band has a proud history spanning over four decades. Originally known as the Montrose Marching Band, the organization was formed by a small group of musicians in 1978 as a way to make new friends and to provide entertainment for Houston's gay and lesbian community.

The Houston Pride Band is a member of the Pride Bands Alliance, a national musical organization made up of over thirty bands across the nation and around the world. With Pride Bands Alliance, members of the Houston Pride Band have been able to participate at every Gay Games, several Presidential Inaugurations, and conferences throughout the world.

mission

The mission of the Houston Pride Band is:

1. To provide a welcoming, comfortable and safe musical outlet for LGBTQ+ and allied musicians to participate in a community band setting.
2. To encourage interest in public and private music education through concerts and events that uplift and inspire musical interest in people of all ages.
3. To use musical performances to support local community organizations and events.
4. To host and participate in local, state, national, and international conferences that foster the continuing participation of all individuals in community musical programs.

membership & rehearsals

The Houston Pride Band is open to all brass, woodwind, and percussion players of all skill levels. The band rehearses on Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 PM. For additional details, please visit our website at houstonprideband.org or email info@houstonprideband.org.

houstonprideband.org • facebook.com/houstonprideband



PROUD MEMBER OF THE PRIDE BANDS ALLIANCE

Formerly the Lesbian and Gay Band Association, the Pride Bands Alliance is a membership organization comprised of concert and marching bands from cities across the United States and the world.

Great performances are the most visible manifestation of the lesbian and gay band movement. Member bands across the country appear in hundreds of concerts, parades, and community events every year. For more information, visit www.pridebands.org.

AND THE ASSOCIATION OF CONCERT BANDS

The Houston Pride Band is also a member of the Association of Concert Bands. The mission of the Association of Concert Bands is to foster excellence in Concert Band music through performance, education, and advocacy. ACB has formed Blanket Performance Licensing Agreements with both BMI and ACSAP for performance rights for its members.

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