

**READING MUSICAL FOUNDATION**  
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### **Commissioned Composition to Celebrate 80th Anniversary of Reading Musical Foundation**



**June 18, 2007** - To celebrate the Reading Musical Foundation's 80<sup>th</sup> year of funding music education, performance and advocacy in Berks County, former board chair C. Thomas Work has commissioned nationally known composer Paul W. Whear to compose a substantial work for concert band to be premiered next April by Reading's own Ringgold Band. In Mr. Work's words, "This is a gift to RMF's staff, trustees and honorary trustees, who courageously expanded the Foundation's programs to benefit underserved children, while at the same time increasing the Foundation's support of excellence in music performance and education."

Foundation president Tammy K. Mitgang responded: "Only through the creation of new music can the musical art continue. This project will add to the body of musical literature available for symphonic band. The performance of new music is an especially exciting event. Many times we forget that those beloved concertos, arias, and even popular 'standards' were once unknown works. This is a wonderful opportunity for our community to have front row seats for the premiere of great band music! It is also a touching, essentially personal gift to Tom's friends at the Foundation and a resounding personal endorsement of the Foundation's renewed impact upon our community."

Awarded a Ph.D. in music composition from Case Western Reserve University, Dr. Whear is only the second person to receive an honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from Marquette University in the University's 126-year history. The first was awarded to John Philip Sousa in 1923. Dr. Whear received his undergraduate degree from Marquette. His compositions, which include major works for orchestra, chorus and concert band, have been performed throughout the United States, Canada, Japan and Europe. Dr. Whear is an honorary member of the U.S. Navy Band, an Honorary Conductor of the U.S. Naval Academy Band at Annapolis, and a Navy veteran of World War II. He will conduct The Ringgold Band in the premiere of his new work.

Originally organized in 1852, The Ringgold Band is the third or fourth oldest continuously performing professional concert band in the country. It is the last band ever conducted by John Philip Sousa, who died in Reading on March 6, 1932, on the eve of the Band's spring concert, for which he was to serve as guest conductor.

This is The Ringgold Band's second premiere of a composition commissioned by the Reading Musical Foundation. On April 9, 2006, the Band premiered "***Music in the Wings***," a one-movement trumpet solo with concert band accompaniment written by Robert Maggio of West Chester University on an RMF commission to honor James S. Seidel, the Ringgold Band's conductor of 25 years and chair of the Exeter Township School District's music department. "***Music in the Wings***" is a series of variations on the *alma mater* melody of Exeter High School, from which Mr. Seidel graduated. The trumpet solo was performed by Kenneth Laudermilch, Mr. Seidel's friend and trumpet teacher in graduate school at West Chester University. That composition was professionally recorded by The Ringgold Band several weeks ago.

Another commission of new music by the Foundation will receive its premiere next spring. Robert Maggio is completing song settings of several poems that were written and published by Berks County native Peter V. Fritsch in a book, *Der Haahne Greht*, decorated with the poet's Scherrenschnitte (intricate patterns cut into paper). To be performed by the Berks Classical Children's Chorus next May 4 in the original Pennsylvania German dialect, the song settings were conceived and funded by Mr. Work in memory of three elderly neighbors who made a profound impact upon his family while he was a child in Hamburg, Pennsylvania. The performers will learn directly from the poet and composer how poetry is conceived and set to music.

Last year, the Foundation underwrote a musical score by local composer David Himes to accompany the silent film *“Don Juan,”* starring John Barrymore, for a screening at the GoggleWorks theatre as part of the Berks Movie Madness Film Festival. Furthering the Foundation’s education-centered mission, that project gave several student musicians from Berks County the chance to rehearse and perform under the composer’s baton.

The Reading Musical Foundation is an umbrella funding resource for music in Berks County. From music education programs in the county’s public and parochial schools and an extensive program of scholarships on merit and financial need, to community outreach in music for the underserved and youth at risk, RMF supports the lifelong benefits of music education for all ages. To learn more about the Reading Musical Foundation, visit – [www.readingmusicalfoundation.org](http://www.readingmusicalfoundation.org), or call 610-376-3395.