

# Introducing *Gateways*, a new piece for two soloists and band

~ Authors: Lauren B. Collister and Brian Balmages

## Introduction

A unique new piece of music by Brian Balmages, *Gateways*, features a duet of any pair of instruments with concert band. In this article, we share the story and vision of the piece, and hope that readers will enjoy learning about this new work and consider it for future performances.

## The story of the piece, by Lauren Collister

My husband Jon and I are not exactly the types to throw a party. So when we got married, we avoided the big ceremony and reception and decided to commission a piece of music to celebrate.

We did not want the piece to be just about us, however; we met in a community band (the East Winds Symphonic Band in Pittsburgh, PA) and wanted to celebrate how bands like this bring people together from all backgrounds and circumstances. Making music together creates relationships that might not have existed otherwise. Friendships are forged when people with very different lives and careers meet each other through music, and every band seems to have a couple or two who met in rehearsals and concerts. Even those who already know each other find their interactions enriched through participation in a band -- parents and children, coworkers, or schoolmates have something new to experience together to deepen their connections. This is what we wanted to celebrate with our commission.

Jon and I are both trombonists, but in order to fully realize our idea for the piece, we wanted the duet to be playable for any pair of featured instruments. When thinking about a composer to approach for this work, one name kept coming up: Brian Balmages. Not only did we love the trombone parts in his pieces that we had played, but others that we talked to made the same remark, no matter the instrument they played. Brian understood where we were coming from, and from our idea he created *Gateways*.

## The vision for the piece, by Brian Balmages

I have always had a soft spot for community bands. Growing up, I played in a community band with my father (we both play trumpet).

My first commission was from another community band that my father played in. It certainly is a special type of ensemble, and is very unique in that every single person in the group is there purely because they *want* to be there. They love music. There is nothing quite like it. So when Jon and Lauren approached me with the idea, it definitely hit that soft spot.

As to the concept, the word “gateways” immediately came to me. A gateway often takes us from one place to another – in this case, it was one place in life to another place. It became clear to me that the vision for the piece could extend in countless directions. Band directors could use it to feature graduating seniors, who are getting ready to go through their own gateway into life. Mixed instrument duets could be featured or even entire sections. The goal was to have a piece that could celebrate any group of individuals crossing that threshold. I was thrilled with the result, and was so honored that Jon and Lauren trusted me with something so incredibly personal to them.

## Conclusion

The work of practicing the duet parts for *Gateways* was a delightful challenge -- not technically, but musically. We practiced it hundreds of times to experiment with the flow and the balance, and it was a joy to play together. The performance was a thrill; there was not a dry eye in the audience, not even on the stage.

For those bands who want to celebrate the power of music to bring people together, we can recommend *Gateways* for your repertoire. Find it online from JW Pepper here ([https://www.jwpepper.com/Gateways/10907712.item#](https://www.jwpepper.com/Gateways/10907712.item#/)).



Photo credit [www.brianbalmages.com](http://www.brianbalmages.com)

*Brian Balmages (b. 1975) is an award-winning composer, conductor, producer, and performer. He holds a bachelor's degree in music from James Madison University and a master's degree from the University of Miami in Florida. His compositions have been performed worldwide at the state, national and international level.*



Lauren and Jon premiere “Gateways” with the East Winds Symphonic Band



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