Wind Ensemble to Charleston

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WKU’s wind ensemble will be on a national stage next month at the College Band Directors National Association conference in Charleston South Carolina.

A special tribute is planned for the victims of a tragic shooting in that city as Amy Bingham explains in this week’s View form the Hill.

WKU’s wind ensemble received the prestigious invitation to perform in Charleston last summer, just two weeks after a shooting rampage claimed nine lives. Now the band is gearing up for a performance that will include a piece of work dedicated to those innocent victims.

Amber Lamastus \ Sophomore Trumpet Player

Dr. Gary Schallert \ Music Professor, Dir. Of Bands

Dr. Scott Harris \ Music Department Head

 “I did not know this would be even close to anything we would do.”

Trumpet player Amber Lamastus is talking about performing next month at the College Band Directors National Association conference in Charleston.

 “Just to be invited is an extreme honor.”

After all, it’s what all college bands strive for.

 “For college concert bands, college wind ensembles and wind symphonies, this is our bowl game so to speak.”

 “As a percussionist as well as Department Head it is an extreme pleasure for me to be physically going on this trip, performing with the ensemble and sharing the stage with my colleagues , Dr’s Berry Bright and Schallert as well as our outstanding students.”

The ensemble will perform here at the new Gaillard Center, the 142 million dollar facility in downtown Charleston.

 “Where the conference is taking place is a block and half to two blocks from Mother Emanuel AME church where the shooting took place last summer on June 17th.”

 Schallert said he felt compelled to have a piece of music commissioned to honor the victims.

 “I reached out to Omar Thomas who is a black American composer at the Berkley school of music in Boston to see if he would be interested in writing a piece of music that would pay homage to those who died in the tragic shooting.”

The students, who have already begun rehearsals , say they are honored to debut the music.

 “You want to be perfect, especially with a piece like Omar’s. It’s something that’s affected our country and will for the forseeable future.”

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Thomas says the 10 and ½ minute piece strikes a balance between his reverence for the victims and their families and his bitter feelings about the perpetrator.

Schallert organized a consortium of 37 university, professional and high school bands from across the country to commission the work. The performance is scheduled for February 20th.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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