

Lee instructor to premiere original symphony at BSO concert

BAYTOWN, TX — A few years ago, Ken Booker — director of instrumental music at Lee College — reached a point where he began to consider no longer writing music.

This Saturday, the Baytown Symphony Orchestra (BSO) will premiere the first original work Booker created after emerging from that season of questioning and self-discovery: “Second Symphony,” a musical exploration of change and rebirth.

“Change is constant. There is a gradual feeling of change from the beginning to the end of the piece,” Booker said of his composition, which he shared with Lee College music students in an advance sneak peek and discussion session before the upcoming performance. “It is a slice of time, during which we change whether we realize it or not. With change comes rebirth. I had to rebuild myself, and I feel that this piece represents a new era for me.”

Renewal and awakening will be hallmarks of the BSO “Spring Tribute” concert, which is set for 7:30 p.m., Saturday, March 12, at the Lee College Performing Arts Center. Tickets are available for purchase online at www.lee.edu/pac, or by calling the Box Office at 281.425.6255.

A Nederland native who attended Lamar University and the University of Houston, Booker earned a doctorate in musical composition from the University of Texas. After starting his composing career with big band pieces, he expanded his repertoire and wrote and published across multiple musical genres. He describes Second Symphony as a 21-minute journey through a series of landscapes, each appearing to the listener in the form of musical episodes.

“Each episode leads directly into the next,” Booker said. “Usually when a person thinks person thinks of a symphony, they expect three or four movements. This piece is in one large movement, but because of the series of episodes, there is a sense of movements through the course of the piece — a sense of constant change. As the piece progresses, there is an intensification from episode to episode. In a few places, the intensity drops in order to begin a new build-up. Eventually there is a climactic fanfare section, and after the climax, there is a rhythmic finale.”

Booker wrote “Second Symphony” at the behest of BSO conductor and musical director Dennis Eichler, who had long been an admirer of his work. Their respect for each other and excitement for the upcoming concert and debut of his latest piece is mutual, Booker said.

“I am very honored to have this piece performed by the Baytown Symphony Orchestra,” he said. “The community, the college and the orchestra are very fortunate to have one another.”