

TARA WINDS PERFORMANCE
GMEA District 12 Honor Band
North Cobb High School
February 8, 2020

Program Notes

FESTIVE OVERTURE, Op. 96.....Dmitri Shostakovich/Trans. Donald Hunsberger

Festive Overture, Op. 96 was composed in November 1954, for the celebration of the 37th anniversary of the Russian October Revolution. The work was commissioned by the Bolshoi Theater. The conductor of the orchestra, Vasili Nebolsin, realized that he had no appropriate piece with which to open the concert. Dmitri Shostakovich was the musical consultant of the Bolshoi Theater, and Nebolsin asked Shostakovich for an opening selection. The overture was completed in three days and the score was sent to the Bolshoi copyists to create the individual parts.

A Russian band version of the overture was released in 1958 and included the standard instrumentation of a Russian military band—a complete orchestral woodwind, brass, and percussion section plus a full family of saxhorns, ranging from the Bb soprano down through the Bb contrabass. The Donald Hunsberger edition has been scored for the instrumentation of the American symphonic band.

In this edition there are technical woodwind lines, extended melodies, and exposed brass fanfares. The fourth trumpets and euphoniums are assigned a formidable part, doubling an upper woodwind melody that requires technique, facility, and range. There are also examples of staccato rhythmic sections which contrast with the flowing line and the variant fanfares—truly a “festive overture”.

~<https://www.windrep.org>

SUITE FRANCAISE.....Darius Milhaud

Suite Française was written in 1944 on commission by the publisher, Leeds Music Corporation. This composition was a part of a proposed series of original works for band by outstanding contemporary composers. It was Milhaud’s first extended work for band and was premiered by the Goldman Band in 1945.

Darius Milhaud writes: “For a long time I have had the idea of writing a composition fit for high school purposes, and this was the result. In the bands, orchestras, and choirs of American high schools, colleges, and universities where the youth of the nation is found, it is obvious that they need music of their time, not too difficult to perform, but nevertheless keeping the characteristic idiom of the composer.

“The sections of the piece are named after French Provinces, the very ones in which the Americans and Allied armies fought together with the French underground of the liberation of my country.

“I used some folk tunes of these provinces. I wanted the young Americans to hear the popular melodies of these parts of France where their fathers and brothers fought to defeat the

German invaders, who in less than seventy years have brought war, destruction, cruelty, torture, and murder three times to the peaceful and democratic people of France.”

Normandie: Two lively folk songs are used: *Germaine*, about a warrior coming home as seen through the eyes of a young woman, and *The French Shepherdess and the King of England*, about a comic meaning between the two title characters. Some original material was added to help depict the region where so many American servicemen landed in France during World War II.

Ile-de-France: A lively folk song depicts the bustle of Paris. It begins with a children’s round that alternates bars of 3 beats and 2 beats. Milhaud sets the song in 4/4 time while still retaining the accents of the original. The lyrical melody that follows also reflects the bubbly attitude of the City of Light.

Alsace-Lorraine: Here, Milhaud takes a dark turn, with material suggesting distant artillery fire around a solemn funeral procession, fitting for a region that borders Germany and was taken over during the war.

Provence: Reflecting on his home region, Milhaud utilizes a rondo with a fast main theme, alternating with a fife-and-tambor segment typical of the French Provinces countryside and a slightly more romantic subject—both of these interludes derived from the principal melody.

~<https://www.windrep.org>

SYMPHONY FOR BAND (Symphony No. 6, Op. 69.....Vincent Persichetti

Symphony for Band was composed by Vincent Persichetti during a time when band directors actively sought repertoire that distinguished bands as serious performance groups. The symphony was commissioned and premiered by Clark Mitze and the Washington University Band at the MENC Convention in St. Louis on April 16, 1956. The work could have been titled *Symphony for Winds*, but Persichetti did not wish to avoid the word “band”, which he felt no longer had the connotation of poor quality music. In the Autumn, 1964 *Journal of Band Research*, he wrote, “Band music is virtually the only kind of music in America today (outside of the ‘pop’ field) which can be introduced, accepted, put to immediate and wide use, and become a staple of the literature in a short time.”

The slow second movement, *Adagio sostenuto*, is based on “Round Me Falls the Night”, from Persichetti’s *Hymns and Responses for the Church Year*. The symphony is based on relatively short, rhythmic motives that are manipulated in a variety of ways. Persichetti tends to preserve distinct instrumental families, so woodwind, brass, and percussion function as independent groups.

~<https://www.windrep.org>

COMRADES OF THE LEGION.....John Philip Sousa/Arr. Frank Byrne

Comrades of the Legion. Captain Edwin B. Hesser of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces wrote to John Philip Sousa on May 16, 1916 and asked him to compose a march recognizing Canada’s entry into World War I. He pointed out that both Canada and the United States uphold the sacred principles of liberty. He stated that if the greatest of all American composers were to write “The American Legion March” it would aid the cause.

At the time, Sousa was unable to honor the request exactly as made, but he did honor it indirectly, with compositions such as “Flags of Freedom” during the World War I era. The march for the American Legion was written in 1920. On one manuscript, Sousa used the title suggested by Captain Hesser in 1916, but when the march was published it was entitled “Comrades of the Legion”.

Sousa was very much in sympathy with the stated purposes of the American Legion: “To promote 100% Americanism. Financially, this march was rewarding. A recording by the Victor Talking Machine Company gained immediate popularity and 500,000 copies were sold before the record’s official release. “Comrades of the Legion” became the featured march of the Sousa Band’s 1920 tour.

~https://www.marineband.marches.mil/Portals/175/Docs/Audio/Educational_Series/semper/semper_fidelis.pdf

POLKA AND FUGUE.....Jaromir Weinberger/Trans. Glenn Cliffe Bainum

Polka and Fugue from “Schwanda, the Bagpiper” was composed by Jaromir Weinberger (1896-1967) who was born in Austria-Hungary. He started playing piano at age 5 and composing/conducting at age 10. He became a student at the Prague Conservatory at age 14 as a composition student and later studied counterpoint with Max Reger at Leipzig. He moved to the United States in 1922 and taught composition at Cornell University and Ithaca Conservatory until 1926.

Weinberger returned to Czechoslovakia in 1926 and was appointed director of the National Theater in Bratslava and completed the opera, *Schwanda, the Bagpiper* (*Švanda Dudák*) in the same year. He continued to compose until 1939 when he left Czechoslovakia to return to New York in order to escape the Nazis. He continued to compose and became a United States citizen in 1948.

During the 1950’s, Weinberger moved to St. Petersburg, Florida where he continued to teach and compose. Eventually his health began to grow worse and he died of brain cancer in 1967.

Weinberger began to seriously work on the opera *Schwanda, the Bagpiper* in 1924. The opera was first performed in Prague in 1927. The premier was not noteworthy, but the revival in German (as *Schwanda, der Dudelsackpfeifer*) in 1928 was a sensation. Over 2,000 performances were presented between 1927 and 1931.

Polka and Fugue was introduced to American orchestra audiences by the Austrian-German conductor, Erich Kleiber. The band transcription was written by Glenn Cliffe Bainum in 1928.

The opera libretto was based on a Czechoslovakian folk tale. The story involves Schwanda, the master bagpiper and Babinsky, a robber who leads Schwanda on a series of adventures. The polka is taken from a scene in which Schwanda plays for Queen Iceheart, who is waiting for someone who can melt her heart. His irresistible playing does the trick, and the queen and Schwanda decide to get married, sealing their vow with a kiss. However, Schwanda is already married to Dorota, so the marriage to the queen is canceled. In response to his wife’s questions of his fidelity, he cries, “If I have given the queen a single kiss, may the devil take me”—and the devil does. Schwanda is rescued from hell, however, by Babinsky, who plays cards with the devil and wins all the devil owns. Babinsky returns it all in exchange for Schwanda, who plays the fugue

on his bagpipe before he leaves, so that the servants of hell may hear the playing of a master bagpiper.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaromir_Weinberger

<https://www.windrep.org>