

In Concert with the University of Illinois Symphonic Band

The Begian Years • Vol. X

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2. Symphony for Band.....Jerry Bilik (15:46)
- Four Scottish DancesMalcolm Arnold (9:50)
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- ABOUT THIS SERIES -

In order to preserve and make permanent the artistic accomplishments of Dr. Harry Begian at the University of Illinois, Mark Custom Recording Service, Inc. is producing a limited number of compact disc recordings. Compact discs such as this one have been remastered from the original University of Illinois tape recordings made between 1970 and 1984. Works which have been included on this compact disc were selected personally by Dr. Begian. This project was undertaken by Mark Records as a tribute to Dr. Harry Begian and the memory of Vincent S. Morette and his great admiration of Dr. Begian. Many of the older Master Tapes in the recording industry have undergone a chemical change between the acetate and the polyester substrait binding that holds them together. To keep the original integrity and historical perspective, the compact discs in this series have not been altered to compensate for these changes.

Zoltan Kodaly (1882-1967), an influential Hungarian composer, was raised in a musical family where he studied piano, violin, viola, and cello. He composed a Mass at the age of 16 and soon after enrolled at the University of Budapest. Although his earlier compositions were chiefly sacred choral compositions and chamber music, he soon turned to national folk songs as a staple of his melodic vocabulary. Kodaly was associated with Bela Bartok in the collection and editing of Hungarian folk tunes. In 1913, Kodaly and Bartok published a detailed paper on the subject of collecting national songs. One of Kodaly's greatest successes came in 1926 with the presentation of *Hary Janos*, a nationalistic opera in a comic style. Kodaly achieved worldwide attention in the early 1930's with his two suites of folk dances for orchestra which included *Dances of Marosszek* and *Dances of Galanta*, the latter of which was premiered by the Budapest Philharmonic on October 23, 1933. Kodaly's style includes a rather Romantic melodic treatment with a tinge of impressionism. The concert band transcription of *Dances of Galanta* was crafted by A.A. Harding.

Composer and arranger **Jerry Bilik** (b.1933) attended the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor where he received the B.M.E. and M.M. degrees in music. Beginning with the *Block M March* in 1955, his compositions for band have been extremely popular with both college and high school bands. Bilik is well known for his arrangements for marching band, several collections of choir tunes, and a marching band text. After serving as the chief arranger for the West Point Military Academy Band, Bilik returned to Michigan and joined the theory faculty of the University School of Music. Bilik has received many honors including two presidential commendations, is a frequent clinician and speaker, and enjoys tennis and sailing.

Symphony for Band is a major work for the medium and, although cast in the customary three movement form, is somewhat unique in that the first and final movements have short interludes which both forecast and recall the other movements. For example, a short interlude introducing the basic motive material for the middle movement is heard before the first movement draws to a close. The second movement utilizes and develops this thematic material. The final movement begins with a dramatic fanfare-like motif played first by the horns, which recurs periodically throughout. Material from each of the other movements is also restated, thus creating an overall "rondo-like" summary of the complete work. Another compositional device which helps unify the entire symphony is the system of tonal organization known as "Modus Lascivus," a system devised by Bilik's composition teacher, Tibor Serly, to whom the symphony is dedicated.

Born on October 21, 1921 in Northampton, England, **Malcolm Arnold** enjoys the reputation in his native land as the most uninhibited of all of England's living composers, both for what he says and how he says it. He was educated at the Royal College of Music in London, where he majored in composition with Gordon Jacob. He performed professionally as a trumpet player with the BBC Symphony and the London Philharmonic, and since 1948, has devoted his talents almost exclusively to conducting.

Supplying his own program notes for the *Four Scottish Dances*, Arnold wrote:

These dances were composed early in 1957, and are dedicated to the BBC Light Music Festival. They are all based on original melodies but one, the melody of which was composed by Robert Burns.

The first dance is in the style of a slow strath spey - a slow Scottish dance in 4/4 meter - with many dotted notes, frequently in the "Scotch snap." The name was derived from the strath valley of Spey.

The second, a lively reel, begins in the key of E-flat and rises a semi-tone each time it is played until the bassoon plays it, at a greatly reduced speed, in the key of G. The final statement of the dance is at the original speed in the home key of E-flat.

The third dance is in the style of a Hebridean Song, and attempts to give an impression of the sea and mountain scenery on a calm summer's day in the Hebrides.

The last dance is a lively fling, which makes a great deal of use of the open-string pitches of the violin performed on saxophone in the band edition.

Hammersmith, Prelude and Scherzo seals **Gustav Holst's** unique position as the wind band's first great champion among composers of the first rank. Holst was commissioned in 1930 by the British Broadcasting Corporation to write a work for its military band. Although it had been twenty years since he had written for that medium, he immediately seized upon this commission to craft a major piece designed for performance by the best professional players in England. This source of Holst's commission was a vital factor in scoring the composition for band, for he spared no section in fashioning a work of uncompromising technical and musical demands. However, the expected first performance by the BBC military band never took place, so when Holst died four years later, after transcribing the opus for orchestra, he had never heard a public performance of the work in its original form. The work was premiered by the U.S. Marine Band, conducted by Captain Taylor Branson, at the American Bandmasters Association convention in Washington, D.C., on April 17, 1932. Holst had been scheduled to conduct, but was ill and could not appear.

Holst lived and worked in Hammersmith, the west metropolitan borough of London, for thirty years. The sharply contrasted elements that he observed there as life unfolded about him were dominant factors in his overall philosophy, as well as the basic ingredients underlying his choice of the Hammersmith area as the subject for his BBC commission.

As noted Holst scholar Robert Cantrick observed:

In *Hammersmith*, Holst turned to the band to express musically a profound philosophic problem, one which was deeply rooted in his nature all his life; the paradoxical interplay of the humane and the mystical in man's experience. He did this at the height of his artistic maturity under the most favorable and creative conditions of his career. . . This tension never resolved itself in Holst's personal life. . . but this very unresolved tension is the essence of *Hammersmith*. Here he finally found adequate musical means for expressing the paradox in a one-movement work - the mood of the Prelude other-worldly, non-human, self-contained and inward looking; the mood of the Scherzo raffish, vulgar, worldly, excited, warm, emotional, and extroverted; the artistic union of the two achieved without elevating either to superior status over the other.

Germaine Tailleferre (1892-1983) studied at the Paris Conservatory where she won first prizes in harmony, counterpoint, and accompanying. Later, she studied briefly with Darius Milhaud and also had some informal lessons with Ravel. Tailleferre was the only female member of a group of French composers known as *Les Six* which also included Honegger, Milhaud, Poulenc, Auric, and Durey. From 1942 to 1946, she lived in the United States, but returned to France where she was in demand as a composer of music for cinema, stage, and radio. Her style of composition was pleasingly modernistic and feminine. Jean Cocteau invoked a comparison with a young French female painter, Marie Laurencin, saying that Tailleferre's music was to the ear what the painter's pastels were to the eyes. Tailleferre's *Overture*, transcribed for band by John Paynter, exemplifies Jean Cocteau's description of the French composer's style.

Antonio Carlos Gomez (1839-1896) was a highly talented youth of Portuguese descent who was sent to Milan at an early age to receive his musical education at the Brazilian government's expense. His claim to fame rests chiefly upon the opera, *Il Guarany*, although he composed other important works, including one each for the Philadelphia Centennial and the Columbian Exposition at Chicago.

Il Guarany Overture is one of the most brilliant works in the repertory of the concert band. Local Brazilian color is obtained through the use of Amazon Indian melodies. The themes of the overture are largely drawn from the opera itself and each has its place in the action. The majestic opening subject portrays the invocation to the sun god by a wild tribe of Indians called Aimores. The melody, played in octaves by clarinet and bassoon, is associated with a scene between the hero and heroine in the camp of the Aimores. The broad, expressive melody which follows provides the instrumental background for the plotting of Gonzales and his henchmen. Among the other interesting musical passages is a beautiful melody sung by the principal characters as a love-duet in the opera. The overture closes with a shortened version of the invocation to the sun god. The concert band transcription by *Il Guarany* was done by Herbert L. Clarke.

Although **Richard Wagner** (1813-1883) led a tempestuous life, characterized by poverty, political persecution and derision, he stands as a giant in the history of nineteenth-century music. A precocious child, he learned much of value concerning the stage from his step-father, Ludwig Geyer, an actor of considerable talent. Inspired to become a musician, Wagner's phenomenal progress in the study of counterpoint and his intimate knowledge of the theater created in him a desire to compose operas with a dramatic story, utilizing orchestral parts equal to the vocal parts. For Wagner, music functioned to serve the needs of dramatic expression and in this regard he had no peers.

Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral from *Lohengrin*, with its medieval color and pageantry, prefaces Elsa's betrothal to Lohengrin, the mystic knight of the Holy Grail, who has come to deliver the people of Antwerp from the Hungarian invaders. In the operatic presentation, a large double chorus, representing the people of Antwerp, adds its song of praise to that of the orchestra. In this transcription, Lucien Cailliet has succeeded in building into the instrumental framework of the modern band a true representation of all that Wagner so eloquently describes with orchestra and chorus.

Notes by Dr. John R. Locke, Director of Bands, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Sources for program notes:

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Credits

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Program Notes: John R. Locke of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS BAND

In the 1920's, John Philip Sousa called it the "World's Greatest College Band." During separate guest conducting appearances in the 1950's, Edwin Franko Goldman acclaimed it "second to none," and the "finest of all concert bands."

More recently, many of the country's most prominent composers and conductors have written in terms such as these:

"I have never heard such professional playing and sheer musicianship from any band"

"I have never heard any band, professional or otherwise, that has the warmth of tone and brilliance of sound that the Concert Band has."

"I know of no other band that could have played so much difficult music so well."

"One can easily see why the University of Illinois Bands continue to lead the nation in cultural attainment."

Shortly after the University of Illinois opened in 1868, a military band was organized. The military band became also a concert band and gave its first formal concert in 1890. Beginning in 1906, the University of Illinois Bands were guided to a position of eminence by Albert Austin Harding, universally regarded as "the father of the college band." Mark Hindsley, who had come to the University in 1934 as principal assistant, became Director of Bands in 1948 upon the retirement of Harding. It was during Hindsley's tenure that the University of Illinois Band Building was planned, constructed and dedicated to Harding. It is Hindsley who receives credit for initiating the far-sighted project of producing long playing disc recordings of the University of Illinois Concert Band.

Without question, Albert Austin Harding and Mark Hindsley were pioneers in the college band field, both as conductors and as arrangers. Both conductors produced numerous transcriptions of orchestral repertoire for performance by the Illinois Band greatly enriching the amount of quality music available for band performance. Upon the retirement of Hindsley in 1970, Dr. Harry Begian was appointed Director of Bands, only the third person ever to serve in that position.

During Dr. Begian's tenure at Illinois, the Symphonic Band performed virtually every work of substance in the concert band repertoire including original compositions, transcriptions and marches. Dr. Begian greatly enjoyed conducting the transcriptions of Harding and Hindsley, continuing the grand legacy of the Illinois Band. Further, Dr. Begian championed the music of Percy Grainger, producing a landmark two-album set of Grainger's works. Among transcribed literature, Begian is perhaps best known for his interpretive genius with the tone poems of Richard Strauss. Among original band literature, Begian's name is inseparably linked with the *Armenian Dances, Part I and II* of Alfred Reed which were composed for and dedicated to him. Additionally, Dr. Begian's career at Illinois demonstrated a devotion to march music which was second to none. Producing several march albums, Begian demonstrated interpretive possibilities to the band world which have long been admired and imitated.

In 1985, after the retirement of Dr. Begian, James Keene was appointed as the fourth Director of Bands in the history of the University of Illinois. Before coming to Illinois, Keene served for five years as director of Bands at the University of Arizona during which his bands received national recognition and acclaim through their concert tours and convention performances. Previous to his appointment at Arizona, Keene taught at East Texas State University, the University of South Carolina, Louisiana Tech University and the University of Michigan. At the University of Illinois, the Symphonic Band has continued to flourish under the leadership of Keene with frequent performances throughout the country at the most prestigious conferences and conventions.

- Dr. Harry Begian -

Conductor and Director Emeritus, University of Illinois Bands

Dr. Harry Begian is one of the world's most renowned band conductors. He was Director of Bands at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign from 1970 to 1984. Prior to that appointment he was director of Bands at Michigan State University for three years and at Wayne State University for the previous three years. Dr. Begian's work at both M.S.U. and W. S. U. carried forward the reputation he earned during his many years at Detroit's Cass Technical High School where he developed one of the finest high school bands in the country. In addition to his band conducting duties, during his last few years at Cass Tech, Begian headed the Music and Performing Arts Departments.

Begian's early musical training was in the Detroit area where he studied trumpet with Leonard Smith and flute with Larry Teal. He received undergraduate and masters degrees at Wayne State University and a Ph.D. at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

Begian organized and conducted his first band and orchestra while in his teens and has studied conducting at Tanglewood, summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has appeared as guest-conductor, clinician and lecturer throughout the United States, Canada and Australia. Along with his band conducting activities, he has also conducted operatic and musical comedy performances, community bands and orchestras, and church choir. In 1987, the musicians of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra invited Dr. Begian to conduct a formal concert in Detroit's Orchestra Hall.

A charter member of the American School Band Directors Association, he is also a past-president of the American Bandmasters Association and a member of the College Band Directors National Association. An honorary member of the National Band Association and Phi Beta Mu Band Fraternity. Begian is also a member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, Phi Delta Kappa and Omicron Delta Kappa. Most recently he was conferred honorary memberships in Kappa Kappa Psi and Tau Beta Sigma.

Dr. Harry Begian is a recipient of the National Band Associations Citation of Excellence, the Edwin Franko Goldman Award, the Notre Dame St. Cecelia Award and was elected to the Academy of Wind and Percussion Arts. His more than 60 record albums produced with the University of Illinois Symphonic Band comprise what has been called "the most distinguished and complete collection of recorded band performances in existence."

After a year of retirement, Begian returned to the podium for two years as conductor of the Purdue University Symphonic Band from 1985-1987. He is presently active as guest-conductor, clinician, adjudicator and lecturer with over 20 engagements a year, is a Consulting Editor to The Instrumentalist magazine and serves on the Board of Directors of the Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic.



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