

Program Notes:

The Improvisator - Eugene d'Albert

Eugene d'Albert (1864-1932) was a celebrated Scot pianist and prolific composer. He studied music at the National Training School in London, in Vienna, Austria, and finally in Weimar, Germany as a student of Franz Liszt. He gradually evolved away from piano performance to composition, writing 21 operas, two piano concerti, chamber music, lieder, piano pieces, and a few orchestral works. He is best remembered for his opera *Tiefland* (*The Lowlands*). He became a naturalized German citizen and taught in Berlin at the Hochschule für Musik. *The Improvisator*, premiered in Berlin in 1902, is a historic-romantic folk opera in three acts. This work was transcribed by the late University of Illinois Director of Bands Emeritus, Mark Hindsley.

Lads of Wamphray - Percy Aldridge Grainger

Percy Grainger (1882-1961) was born in Melbourne, Australia. A child prodigy pianist, he toured Europe at a young age. He settled in America in 1915 and at the outbreak of WW I enlisted in the US Army as an oboist and saxophonist. He became a United States citizen in 1919. Always an innovator, he predated Varese in experimentation with electronic music and used irregular rhythms before Stravinsky. Grainger composed his *Lads of Wamphray* as a birthday gift to his mother, Rose, in 1905. Inspired by a poem with the same title from Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, the work was premiered in that year by the Band of His Majesty's Coldstream Guards. *Lads of Wamphrey* was Grainger's first work for large wind band and with the *Hill Songs No. 1 and 2* (written between 1901 and 1907) form the first major modern repertoire for the American wind band. He revised the composition in 1937 for a performance at the American Bandmasters Association convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Andante and Rondo - Ernst von Dohnányi

Ernst von Dohnányi (1877-1960) was born in Poszony, Hungary. He studied piano at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest and later composition with Eugene d'Albert. Dohnányi was the conductor of the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra from 1919 to 1944 and immigrated to the United States following WW II in 1949 to take a position on the music faculty at The Florida State University. *Andante and Rondo* was transcribed in 1910 for large symphonic band by legendary University of Illinois Director of Bands, A. A. Harding. The two movements are taken from the composer's four movement *Suite for Orchestra in F sharp minor, Op. 19*.

Prelude and Fugue in D - Georg Friedric Handel

One of the greatest musicians of all time, Georg Friedric Handel (1685-1759) was born in the same year as Bach, 50 miles from Bach's birthplace. Beethoven said, "Handel is the greatest composer who ever lived. I would bare my head and kneel at his grave". Handel was a prolific composer writing operas, instrumental chamber works, oratorios, cantatas, Psalms, motets, passions, anthems and works for the keyboard.

Russian Christmas Music - Alfred Reed

Alfred Reed (b. 1921) is one of America's most prolific composers who composed *Russian Christmas Music* at the age of 23 while serving as associate conductor for the 529th Army Air Corps Band. To further Russian and American unity a concert was planned in Denver with premiers of two works, one American and one Russian. Roy Harris premiered the second movement from his *Abraham Lincoln Symphony*. The Russian work was to have been Prokofiev's *March, Op. 99*, but Harris found that it had already been premiered in the United States. Reed was assigned the task of composing a "Russian" piece just 16 days prior to the concert. He used as source material a 16th century Russian Christmas Song *Carol of the Little Russian Children* and other Eastern Orthodox liturgical music as his inspiration. He completed *Russian Christmas Music* in just 11 days. The piece was first performed on December 12, 1944, on a nationwide NBC broadcast. Since, *Russian Christmas Music* has become a band classic, with performance each year that number in the hundreds.

A Faust Overture - Richard Wagner

Richard Wagner (1813-1883) born in Leipzig, Germany, was a giant in the world of 19th century music composition. Known primarily as a composer of operas, Wagner nevertheless composed a symphony, instrumental overtures, choral and piano music. Originally intended as the first movement of a *Faust Symphony* dating from 1844, Wagner's *Faust Overture* aurally relates the tale of the Faust legend: Faust, an educated gentleman, summons the devil and sells him his soul in exchange for unlimited knowledge and pleasure. In the end, God saves Faust by bringing about his purification and redemption. This legend inspired western culture's literary classic *Faust* by giant German poet, novelist, playwright, courtier, and philosopher, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Flores de Espana - Pascual Perez Chovi

Born in Alginet, Spain, **Chovi** (1900-1953) was a clarinetist and director of the Municipal Band of Alginet. *Flores de Espana* is a pasodoble, which translated means two-step. These marches are often associated with the bullring but were originally composed for dancing. Spanish military bands adopted pasodobles using them as marches by changing the percussion parts.

Hill Song No 2 - Percy Aldridge Grainger

Grainger states that his Hill Songs (composed between 1901 and 1907) "arose out of thoughts about and longing for the wilderness, the freshness, the purity of hill-countries, hill-peoples, and hill-musics." Inspired by the bagpipes "fierce nasal sounds", the *Hill Song No 2* was orchestrated for an instrumentation of 24 players, primarily double and single reed instruments. These two compositions, with his *Lads of Wamphrey* and Holst's *Suites in Eb and F*, stand at the forefront of the 20th Century repertoire for wind band.

Suspiros de Espana - Antonio Alvarez

Antonio Alvarez (1867-1903) a composer, pianist, organist and conductor, was a native of Andalusia, a region in southern Spain on the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and formerly a center of Moorish civilization. He attended the Madrid Conservatory at the age of nine and graduated with the highest honors. He died at the young age of 36. Most noted during his lifetime as a composer of Zarzuela (Spanish light comic opera popularized in the later part of the 19th Century), Alvarez is known in the band world for his excellent pasodoble *Suspiros de Espana* (*Sighs of Spain*). The composer's desire was to "remind one of the sights and sounds of a wonderful country."

Armenian Dances Part 1 - Alfred Reed

Premiered by Dr. Harry Begian and the University of Illinois Symphonic Band at the 1973 CBDNA National Convention in Urbana, Illinois, this composition became the first of a four-movement suite using as its inspiration the music of Armenian composer Gomidas Vartabed (1869-1935). Gomidas is credited with being the father of Armenian classical music for his work on preserving and documenting over four thousand Armenian folk songs. *Part 1* is an extended symphonic rhapsody built on five Armenian folk tunes (translated to English): *The Apricot Tree*, *The Partridge's Song*, *Hoy, My Nazan*, *Alagyaz* and *Go, Go!*

- 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 doctorate 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.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS BANDS

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.

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About this project

In order to preserve and make permanent the artistic accomplishments of Dr. Begian at the University of Illinois, Mark Custom Recording Service, Inc. is producing a limited number of compact disc recordings such as this one. Works on this CD have personally been selected by Dr. Begian. This project was originally undertaken by Mark Records as a tribute to Dr. Begian and the memory of Vincent S. Morette, this company's founder, who's great admiration of Dr. Begian's and his bands was a source of great inspiration for him and his own bands.

These CDs have been carefully re-mastered from the original analog master tapes. Unfortunately, some of the master tapes have undergone a chemical change and have some degradation of signal. We have made every attempt to compensate for this aging process but still keep as much of the original integrity and historical perspective as possible. The CDs in this series have not been drastically altered to compensate for some of these changes or to take full advantage of today's technology.



In Concert with the University of Illinois Symphonic Band

The Begian Years • Volume XIX

Dr. Harry Begian, conductor

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