

PROGRAM NOTES

MARCH 2019

ON STAGE

YOLO COMMUNITY BAND

Commando March

When he was inducted into the Army in September, 1942, Samuel Barber made efforts to obtain a position in which he might be useful to the war effort and still compose music. Although he expressed surprise at the Army's apparent lack of interest in using his music for propaganda purposes, in a November 1942 letter to confidant Katherine Chapin he wrote "I have been asked by the Philharmonic and other orchestras for war music."

"Commando March" was not only Barber's first for wind band, but his first work subsequent to entering the Army. In a letter to friend William Strickland, Barber expressed mild frustration at the process:

I've finished a march for band and I think I shall ask Thor Johnson to try it out for me. I wonder how his band is. It must be played in this Service Command first. It was a nuisance to score - millions of euphoniums, alto clarinets and D^b piccolos to encumber my score page.

"Commando March" was completed in February 1943. In spite of its large instrumentation, Barber often referred to the work as his "little march". The premiere performance was given by the Army Air Forces Technical Command Training Band, Warrant Officer Robert L. Landers, conductor on May 23, 1943, in Atlantic City, New Jersey. As was the case with many of Barber's earlier works, "Commando March" was immediately well received by audiences. Following its premiere, Barber himself led the Goldman Band in several performances in July, 1943. He even adapted the work for orchestra at the request of Serge Koussevitzky, who led this score's first performance with the Boston Symphony Orchestra on October 29, 1943.

Four Scottish Dances

Malcolm Arnold was a highly respected and prolific English composer who combined the sounds of jazz, pop, brass bands, and the music hall. He held honorary doctorates from several British and American universities, and was honored as Commander of the British Empire in 1970. His original score for "Bridge on the River Kwai", which included an imaginative treatment of the "Colonel Bogey March" by Kenneth Alford, won an Academy Award in 1958.

Arnold's "Four Scottish Dances" were composed in 1957 and dedicated to the BBC Light Music Festival. They are all based on original melodies, with the exception of one composed by Robert Burns. The first dance is in the style of a slow strathspey – a Scottish dance resembling, but slower than, the reel. The second is a lively reel beginning in the key of Eb and rising a semitone each time until performed by the bassoon in the key of G. The third dance is in the style of a Hebridean Song and gives an impression of the sea and mountain scenery on a calm summer day. The last dance is a lively fling which makes frequent use of the open-string pitches of the violin – played by the saxophones in the band version.

Second Suite in F

One of the staples of the wind band literature, the "Second Suite in F" is one of only four works that Gustav Holst composed for band (along with his "First Suite in E-flat major for Military Band", "Hammersmith", and "A Moorside Suite). The Second Suite was composed in 1911, but Holst was so preoccupied with the preparations and performance of another work that he forgot about it until asked in 1921 to compose another work for military band. It was finally premiered in June of 1922 at Royal Albert Hall in London.

The march movement uses three tunes: the opening “Morris Dance”, a broad and lyrical folk song; “Swansea Town”, featuring the euphonium; and “Claudy Banks”, with a lilting, swinging feeling. The second movement is a slow, tender setting of an English love song, “I’ll Love My Love”, a sad tune heard first in the oboe. “The Song of the Blacksmith” has complex rhythmic and metric elements and utilized the blacksmith’s anvil as an inventive member of the percussion family. “The Dargason” is an English country dance and folk song dating back at least to the 16th century. After “The Dargason” is played seven times, and while it continues to be played, Holst combines it with “Greensleeves”, a love song which later acquired different words and became a Christmas carol.

SOLANO WINDS

Galop

Dmitri Shostakovich may have not much cared for his score for “Moscow, Cheryomushki”, but the “Galop” from the satirical operetta has become a favorite of wind band musicians and their audiences, thanks to the masterful transcription by Donald Hunsberger, Conductor Emeritus of the Eastman Wind Ensemble. Days before the premiere of the operetta, Shostakovich wrote to an acquaintance “I am behaving very properly and attending rehearsals of my operetta. I am burning with shame. If you have any thoughts of coming to the first night, I advise you to think again. It is not worth spending time to feast your eyes and ears on my disgrace. Boring, unimaginative, stupid. This is, in confidence, all I have to tell you.”

Pineapple Poll Suite

Opening Number
Jasper’s Dance
Poll’s Dance
Finale

After the copyright on Arthur Sullivan's music expired in 1950, the English opera company Sadler's Wells created a ballet called *Pineapple Poll*, based on Gilbert's Bab Ballad, "The Bumboat Woman's Story." It was set exclusively to music by Sullivan, arranged by Charles Mackerras. Mackerras had played oboe in a Sydney theater that produced all but two of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas. He wove the tunes from these works together brilliantly, and listeners may well recognize melodies from Mikado, Iolanthe, Princess Ida, Patience, Ruddigore, Gondoliers and other works in these selections.

Best Broadway Marches

A significant slice of popular music is occupied by the music of Broadway. Musical theatre is a wonderfully complex art form, blending the many arts in live performance. Musical theatre and the wind band have many parts in common, but perhaps none more obvious than the use of the march. This arrangement features several marches from some of our best loved musicals.

Napoli

The Italian songwriter Luigi Denza (1846-1922) was a prolific composer of songs, of which about 600 survive. “Funiculi, Funicula”, his most popular song, was composed in 1880 to commemorate the opening of a funicular railway. The success of this song was so great (sales of over half a million copies of the sheet music) that the melody was soon heard everywhere, giving rise to the impression that the tune was of ancient origin. When the great German composer Richard Strauss quoted the melody in his symphonic poem “Aus Italien (From Italy)” under the title “Neapolitanisches Volkslied” (Neapolitan Folksong), the publishers were soon threatened with legal action for violation of copyright. It is not known when the great cornet virtuoso Herman Bellstedt (1858-1926) first conceived the idea of a set of theme and variations on the well-known tune for cornet and band, but it is perhaps his most popular composition. The parts were bequeathed to Bellstedt’s student (and successor as soloist with Sousa’s Band) Frank Simon (1889-1967), and it is Simon’s edition of the solo, known

under the title “Napoli”, which is still heard on concert programs today. Steven Mead has made this arrangement a staple of his international performances as a euphonium soloist.

COMBINED ENSEMBLES

Elsa’s Procession to the Cathedral

“Elsa’s Procession to the Cathedral,” with its medieval color and pageantry, prefaces her betrothal to Lohengrin, mystic Knight of the Holy Grail, who comes to deliver the people of Brabant (Antwerp) from the Hungarian invaders.

In the operatic presentation, a large double chorus (representing the people of Antwerp) adds its song of solemn praise to that of the orchestra. It is in this music, mystic yet powerful, that we find Wagner striking out with those new and intense musical thoughts that were to culminate in “Tristan”, “The Ring”, and “Parsifal”. Not quite emancipated from the musical speech of his operatic contemporaries, one finds in the “Lohengrin” score those unmistakable flights into musico-dramatic magnificence transcending all that preceded it in idiom and musical adventure.

In this transcription of “Elsa’s Procession” for symphony band, Lucien Cailliet, with his great talent for instrumentation, has succeeded in building into the instrumental framework of the modern band a true and delicate representation of all that Wagner so eloquently describes with orchestra and chorus.

God’s Country

Rossano Galante is a graduate of the University of Southern California Film Scoring program and studied under Jerry Goldsmith. He has orchestrated numerous films and television series, including “The Wolverine”, “A Good Day to Die Hard”, “Fantastic Four”, and many others. He has written dozens of commissions for wind ensembles and orchestras through the United States, and has guest conducted his own works across the country. Originally from western New York, Galante resides in Los Angeles.

From the most statuesque mountain ranges to our grandest waterfalls, “God’s Country” uses soaring melodic lines, epic brass harmonies, and emotionally charged harmonies to musically depict the picturesque landscapes that have existed since the beginning of time.