

PROGRAM NOTES

Folk Dances

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) studied at the Petrograd Conservatory where he wrote his "Symphony No. 1 in F Minor" which brought him world attention. During his early years following graduation in 1923 he wrote music to serve the political needs of his country. After criticism from the government he composed his famous "Fifth Symphony". He taught at the Leningrad Conservatory just prior to World War II. Again he incurred government condemnation in 1948, but kept composing a series of serious works which surfaced after Stalin's death.

Shostakovich composed in a variety of styles using folk music, humor, altered harmonies and many other compositional techniques. Few composers have been as highly honored and few are as highly respected by the music profession as well as the concert-going public.

Composed in Shostakovich's light-hearted style, this single movement work is filled with the joy and exuberance of the Russian people. The many folk melodies are combined in a string so that musical energy abounds and the spirit of folk dances can easily be imagined. The first version of Dmitri Shostakovich's composition was instrumented by M. Vakhutinsky for Russian bands.

H. Robert Reynolds is the principal conductor of the Wind Ensemble at the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California. He spends his summers working with the Young Persons Wind Ensemble at Boston University's Tanglewood Institute. He is a Past President of the College Band Directors National Association. Prior to his current position, he held similar posts at the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin and California State University at Long Beach. His ensembles have performed in the major concert halls of the country, and many of his former students hold major band conducting positions at the leading universities throughout the country.

Suite of Old American Dances

When Robert Russell Bennett attended a concert honoring Edwin Franko Goldman on Goldman's 70th birthday in January of 1948, he was inspired by "the beautiful sounds the American concert band could make that it hadn't yet made". Bennett had been orchestrating musicals in New York since 1916, having a brilliant career as he collaborated with almost every leading theater composer, including Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Vincent Youmans, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers and Frederick Loewe. His inspiration from hearing the Goldman Band resulted in a piece that he titled "Electric Park", referring to an amusement park in Kansas City that Bennett recalled from his childhood. His publisher later supplied the name "Suite of Old American Dances". "I had a nice name for it, but you know how publishers are – they know their customers, and we authors never seem to," Bennett commented.

It took Bennett a year and a half to complete the piece with his busy schedule. The five movements of the suite reflect popular dances of the day. The "Cakewalk" dance originated on

the southern plantations. The dance or “strut” was danced to jig-like banjo/fiddle music, usually done by couples who, with a backward sway, strutted in a medium high step or low kicking fashion. Plantation owners would encourage their workers by presenting prizes for the best couples. The “Schottische” is a German variant of several Bohemian dances that later developed into the polka. It features quick shifts from foot to foot and a striking of the heel, resembling the Scottish reel. The “Western One Step” is a dance also known as the “Texas Tommy”, a bright-eyed tune with an equally bright-eyed tempo. Originated in the early 20th century, this dance is believed to have originated in brothels and saloons, where ladies of the evening were known as “tommies”. The “Wallflower Waltz” is included to celebrate the time-honored waltz, which still reigned as king of the ballroom dance scene despite the new cultural era replete with new dance steps. Finally, the “Rag” is not associated with any one dance, but is representative of the era as a whole. The ragtime era coincided with the beginning of the century, and with a new generation which was harshly criticized by its elders for embracing novel ideas (does that sound familiar?).

Descarga Parati

Tonight’s performance of “Descarga Parati” is its World Premiere! Composed by band member Melvin Brito, the piece was composed for the Solano Winds Community Concert Band. Its title translates loosely as “Jam Session for You”. The playful melodies and rhythms in the piece invoke that informal and conversational feel that jazz musicians incorporate when jamming together.

Benny Goodman: The King of Swing

In 1955, Warren G. Reckmeyer moved to the town of Mt. Morris, Illinois with his wife Carol. Warren and Carol were expecting their first child, and had just been hired as music instructors in the local school district. Warren soon joined the Kable Concert Band, a community band that was founded in Mt. Morris in 1845 and had been going strong since 1896. In 1957, Warren became the 30th director in the band’s history. Carol and Warren retired from school teaching in 1985, but Warren continued to conduct the Kable Concert Band. Just months ago, on July 29 of this year, he retired from the Kable Concert Band position at the age of 91, after 59 successful years leading the community band.

In 2004, Warren’s children commissioned “Benny Goodman: The King of Swing” in honor of their father’s 80th birthday. The Kable Concert Band offered the World Premiere of the piece under Warren’s direction. The medley includes “Let’s Dance”, “Stompin’ at the Savoy”, “Moonglow” and Benny Goodman’s signature tune, “Sing, Sing, Sing”.

On the Beautiful Blue Danube

No compilation of dance music is complete without a waltz, and no compilation of waltzes is complete without the standard-bearer, “On the Beautiful Blue Danube”. The Viennese Waltz is the oldest of current ballroom dance forms. It is distinguished from other forms of the waltz by

tempo (generally faster than the English Waltz) and the relatively small number of components to the actual dance moves. All movement in the Viennese Waltz is either toward the leader's right (natural) or left (reverse), interspersed with non-rotating "change steps" to switch between the direction of rotation.

Performed in the true Viennese style, a Viennese waltz has a unique rhythmic characteristic. Waltzes in general have a strong downbeat (on beat one of each measure) with weaker afterbeats on beats two and three. In the Viennese style, those playing the afterbeats will often place the second beat just a bit ahead of time to add a distinctive flavor to the music and an ongoing sense of forward motion. That "early placement of the second beat" is performed only in non-melodic parts, and the actual placement varies according to other musical factors such as dynamics. It is a musical mechanism that is typically not written into the musicians' parts, but rather is performed exclusively by the musicians listening to each other and feeling the music together.

The Symphonic Beatles

Seventy five years ago today, on October 9, 1940, John Lennon was born in Liverpool, England. On his twenty fifth birthday – fifty years ago today, on October 9, 1965 – he saw the Beatles' ballad "Yesterday" first hit number one on the American charts. "Yesterday" was actually composed by fellow Beatle, Paul McCartney. McCartney came up with the melody as he slept one night, and was concerned that he was subconsciously plagiarizing someone else's music. Once he was assured that the melody was truly his own creation, McCartney set to the task of writing lyrics for the tune. As he and Lennon did frequently, he used "working lyrics" until he settled upon a final version. The working lyrics for "Yesterday" began: "Scrambled eggs. Oh, my baby, how I love your legs". Thankfully for the rest of the world, he kept working! In 1999 and 2000, "Yesterday" was proclaimed the best song of the 20th century by the BBC, MTV, and Rolling Stone magazine.

To celebrate this milestone, Solano Winds presents "The Symphonic Beatles", a medley which includes Beatles' hits "A Hard Day's Night", "Yesterday", "I Want to Hold Your Hand", "Michelle" and "Hey Jude".

Danzón No. 2

The danzón is a dance form with origins in Cuba. It is very important in the folklore of the Mexican state of Veracruz. Arturo Márquez got his inspiration for "Danzón No. 2" while visiting a ballroom in Veracruz. The piece is one of the most popular and significant pieces of Mexican classical music in the orchestral repertoire. Underscoring the music is a rhythmic drive that is always moving forward, while the textures move between solo, duet and ensemble interpretations.