

THE HENDERSON STATE UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY BAND  
JUSTIN R. STOLARIK, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

PROGRAM NOTES | APRIL 29, 2009

GUSTAV HOLST | *FIRST SUITE IN E-FLAT FOR MILITARY BAND, OP. 28 NO. 1*

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**Born**

1874

**Died**

1934

**Work Composed**

1909

**Duration**

ca. 10:00

Gustav Holst was thoroughly at home in the world of military and brass bands, for he had been a trombone player at the age of eighteen. As a composition student at the Royal College of Music, he supplemented his scholarship by playing on the pier at Blackpool and Brighton during the summer holidays and in pantomimes during the Christmas season. Later, after he had left college, he toured with the Carl Rosa Opera Company and the Scottish Orchestra. He gave up the trombone in 1904, but he began practicing it again near the end of his life.

Holst wrote the *First Suite in E-flat for Military Band* as early as 1909. It was thought to have been premiered by the Royal Marine Band at Kneller Hall in 1922. The piece is today considered one of the cornerstones of twentieth-century band literature and certainly of the English wind-band repertoire consisting of several exceptionally fine works for the concert band produced by British composers.

The music of the three movements is founded on the same short motive, the first three notes of the piece. The opening “Chaconne” draws a wealth of variety from each repetition of the theme; it is obviously influenced by Purcell, whose music had brought a “great awakening” to Holst when he first heard it. The opening theme is repeated sixteen times by various instruments as others weave patterns around the ground theme; the theme is at one point inverted for two statements. The ground theme rolls as continuously as the Thames River, which Holst lived near his whole life. The second movement, “Intermezzo,” is a sparkling scherzo and is based on a variation of the rising three-note motive that began the “Chaconne.” This movement begins in a lively style with an accompaniment of constant staccato eighth notes, has a contrasting section in a lyrical mood, and ends with a combination of both themes. The only tempo indication is “Vivace” which tells more about the style than the tempo; the title of the movement gives more tempo information. The nature of the intermezzo throughout history has been one of contrast, as when it referred to acts of comic opera between the acts of an opera seria. The final “March” follows the traditional pattern of military band marches but is entirely characteristic of Holst. The principle theme is also based on the opening intervals of the first movement. The suite ends with a return of the opening theme with fragments from the second movement in a majestic coda.

## AARON COPLAND | *DOWN A COUNTRY LANE*

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<b>Born</b> 1900
<b>Died</b> 1990
<b>Work Composed</b> 1962
<b>Duration</b> ca. 2:30

Aaron Copland was born in Brooklyn on November 14, 1900. As a young pianist and composer, he first studied with Rubin Goldmark. He went to Paris in 1921 where he studied composition with Nadia Boulanger at the new School of Music for Americans at Fontainebleau. Aaron Copland has been called the “dean of American music,” adding great music to the repertoire for not only band, but also ballet, theater, movies, orchestra, and recital. He is given credit for breaking the German stronghold on American music and spearheading the new “American school.”

By 1962, Aaron Copland was a well-established American composer, having received the Pulitzer Prize for *Appalachian*

*Spring* and membership into the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. That year, Life Magazine presented the master-composer with an interesting commission – compose a new work for young pianists. The result was *Down A Country Lane*. *Down A Country Lane* would reflect contemporary ideas while minimizing the technical challenges which made most contemporary music inaccessible to developing students. Upon completion, the music was published in the June 29, 1962 issue of Life. According to the article: “*Down A Country Lane* helps fill a gap; it is among the few modern works written for young piano students by a major composer. ‘Yet,’ warns Copland, ‘this composition is a bigger challenge than it first looks, and even third year students will have to practice it before trying it in public.’”

According to letters from the magazine’s readers, the work was successful; students enjoyed it, both young and old. It has been transcribed for both orchestra (Copland himself scored it for orchestra for inclusion in a Youth Orchestra Series) and concert band, and is frequently played by student, community, and professional groups. The symphonic band transcription by Merlin Patterson received praise from the composer as “a careful, sensitive, and most satisfying extension of the mood and content of the original.”

## JOHN BARNES CHANCE | *INCANTATION AND DANCE*

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<b>Born</b> 1932
<b>Died</b> 1972
<b>Work Composed</b> 1960
<b>Duration</b> ca. 7:30

John Barnes Chance was born on November 20, 1932, in Beaumont, Texas. He began his formal musical training at nine years of age. He studied piano with Mrs. Janet McGaughey and composition with Kent Kennan while at The University of Texas at Austin.

*Incantation and Dance* was the first composition that Chance wrote for band. It was given its premiere performance on November 26, 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina, under the title of *Nocturn and Dance*. It is dedicated to Herbert Hazelman and the Greensboro High School Band. *Incantation and Dance* is one of Chance's most performed works. It is energetic, technically challenging, and enjoyable to hear and play.

Chance's music was influenced mostly by the people who were close to him. His compositional output was greatest while in Greensboro, where he was encouraged by Herbert Hazelman. The composer Clifton Williams, as well as being a close friend and mentor, was very influential on Chance's compositional form.

## VINCENT PERSICHETTI | *SYMPHONY NO. 6 FOR BAND, OP. 69*

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<b>Born</b> 1915
<b>Died</b> 1987
<b>Work Composed</b> 1956
<b>Duration</b> ca. 16:30

Vincent Persichetti, born in Philadelphia, was one of the most universally admired twentieth-century American composers. Persichetti began his musical life at the age of five, first studying piano, then organ, double bass, tuba, theory, and composition. By the age of eleven, he was paying for his own musical education, supporting himself by performing professionally as an accompanist and church organist. His earliest works, written at age fourteen, exhibit true mastery of form and style. By age twenty, Persichetti was simultaneously head of the theory and composition departments at the Combs College, a conducting major with Fritz Reiner at the Curtis Institute, and a piano major studying with Olga Samaroff at the Philadelphia Conservatory. He received a Diploma in Conducting from the Curtis Institute

and advanced degrees from the Philadelphia Conservatory. In 1941, Persichetti was appointed head of the theory and composition departments at the Philadelphia Conservatory. In 1947, he joined the faculty of the Juilliard School of Music where he taught for the next forty years, assuming chairmanship of the composition department in 1963. Persichetti composed for nearly every musical medium, publishing over 120

works. He devoted a significant portion of his creative output to repertoire for winds. From the *Serenade for Ten Wind Instruments, Op. 1* to the *Chorale Prelude: O God Unseen, Op. 160*, Vincent Persichetti provided a wealth of literature of unparalleled excellence. Included among his fourteen works for band are the *Divertimento, Op. 42* (1950), *Psalm, Op. 53* (1952), *Symphony No. 6, Op. 69* (1956), *Masquerade, Op. 102* (1965), and the *Parable IX, Op. 121* (1972).

The *Symphony for Band* was completed during the winter of 1955-56. The Washington University Chamber Band had commissioned Persichetti to write an eight-minute piece. After two months, Persichetti called band director Clark Mitze to tell him things had gotten a little out of hand – his idea had developed into a four-movement symphony. The *Symphony No. 6 for Band* was premiered by the Washington University Chamber Band under Clark Mitze on April 16, 1956 at the Music Educators National Conference in St. Louis. The first public performance was by the Goldman Band in New York on August 2, 1956 with Persichetti conducting.

The opening Adagio section of the first movement contains important thematic material that leads into the Allegro section. The symphony is cyclic, as this first movement contains themes used throughout all four movements.

Sketches show that Persichetti began with the percussion parts and the low brass when he began composing the first movement. Persichetti's use of percussion is his most extensive, as compared to previous pieces, as he integrates the percussion into the thematic development. The second movement was written first and was possibly the original eight-minute piece. The movement is based on a hymn tune taken from Persichetti's *Hymns and Responses for the Church Year*, entitled "Round Me Falls the Night." The third movement, "Allegretto," is in 6/8 and opens with a new theme in the clarinet. The melody is passed around throughout the movement, and the meter alternates between the crisp 2/4 theme and the melodic 6/8 theme. The symphony closes with an exciting "Vivace" finale that brings back all the themes and ends with a chord containing all twelve chromatic pitches.