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Messiah University Graduate Wind Conducting Recital

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Program Notes

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of Master of Music in Conducting

Messiah University

Messiah University Graduate Wind Conducting Recital

Jeremiah Dobo, Conductor

**First Suite in Eb for Military Band (1909)..... Gustav Holst
(1874-1934)**

- 1. Chaconne**
- 2. Intermezzo**
- 3. March**

**Kentucky 1800 (1955).....Clare Grundman
(1913-1996)**

**Ye Banks and Braes O' Bonnie Doon (1932).....Percy Aldridge Grainger
(1882-1961)**

**Settings on a Hymn of Praise (2001).....Quincy C. Hilliard (b.
1954)**

Psalm for Band (1954).....Vincent Persichetti (1915-1987)

First Suite in Eb for Military Band (1909)

In 1909, Gustav Holst's *First Suite in Eb* was premiered by the Royal Military School of Music in London, England. The groundbreaking piece is considered to be the first major work written exclusively for the wind band.¹ Prior to the competition of *First Suite in Eb*, much of the literature for the wind band was comprised of arrangements of orchestral works and marches. But Holst's decision to write such a substantial work for the medium brought the wind band into relevance and led to an explosion of new and consequential works exclusively for the ensemble. Holst said that he based the entire suite on an ascending three note melodic motif consisting of Eb-F-C. The first movement, "Chaconne", draws inspiration from English composer Henry Purcell with the use of a short, repeating bass line. This melody, which is introduced in the low brass and string bass, is then repeated numerous times as it is modified and varied in style and rhythm. At one point, Holst even goes so far as to invert the chaconne melody. The second movement titled "Intermezzo" showcases the dexterity and range of the wind band as the brisk pace and intensely changing textures bounce to and fro. The third and final movement "March" is a befitting ending to the piece since it brings the ensemble back to what it is familiar with, the march style. Holst also introduces a contrasting melodic line, which is much more legato and flowing in nature before intertwining them to bring *First Suite in Eb* to a climactic end.

¹ Battisti, Frank L., and Thomas C. Duffy. In *The New Winds of Change: The Evolution of the Contemporary American Wind Band/ 1 Ensemble and Its Music*, 15. Delray Beach, FL: Meredith Music Publications, 2018.

Gustav Holst (1874-1934) was born in Gloucestershire, England and is best remembered as an educator, musician, and especially a composer. Holst began playing the violin as a child, but soon decided to take up the piano instead. Unfortunately, after he was stricken with a never condition which limited the mobility of his right hand, he abandoned the piano and instead took up the trombone. Early in his career, he made money playing with the Carl Rosa Opera Company and the Hite Viennese Band before eventually attending the Royal College of Music where he studied composition with Charles Stanford.² After numerous rejections from music publishers, Holst moved into his most notable teaching positions at St. Paul Girl's School and Morley College. During his this time, he would write his most notable compositions including, *First Suite in Eb*, *Second Suite in F*, *Hammersmith* and *The Planets*.

Kentucky 1800 (1955)

In 1955, *Kentucky 1800* was published by American composer, Clare Grundman. The piece is a rhapsodic tone poem which utilizes music that conveys the Appalachia region of the United States in the 19th century.³ It contains three folk songs titled "The Promised Land", "Cindy", and "I, Sad and I'm Lonely". "Bound for the Promised Land" is based on a poem written in 1787, which was then set to music with its first written account being in 1835.⁴ It tells the biblical story of a person who longs to arrive in the land of Canaan and proclaims that they

² Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Gustav Holst." Encyclopedia Britannica, September 17, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gustav-Theodore-Holst>.

³ Wind Repertory Project contributors, "Kentucky 1800," Wind Repertory Project, https://www.windrep.org/index.php?title=Kentucky_1800&oldid=372992.

⁴ Waltz, Robert B. and David G. Engle, "Bound for the Promised Land: The Traditional Ballad Index," California State University Fresno, <http://www.fresnostate.edu/folklore/ballads/LxU099.html>.

are bound for the promised land. Grundman sets this folksong as a beautiful, flowing woodwind feature contrasted with a maestoso fanfare featuring the brass and saxophones. The piece then shifts tone to the beautiful treatment of "I'm Sad and I'm Lonely" which is the song of a young woman whom has had her heart broken and warns of the lies that men tell which are more numerous than the "cross-ties on the railroad or stars in the sky."⁵ Grundman utilizes the gentle timbre of the flutes and clarinets to mimic the heartbroken woman. The melody never leaves the high woodwinds and allows them to feature. The third treatment is of "Cindy" which dates back to 1915. It is a raucous tune that tells the story of a young man's attempt to court a woman named Cindy and some of her extraordinary qualities.⁶ The energetic tune is passed about the ensemble as Grundman takes the time to feature solos and soli sections for the trumpets, saxophones and low brass.

American composer and arranger Clare Grundman was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1913. He initially studied at Ohio State University where he received his undergraduate and master's degrees before attending the Berkshire Music Center with Paul Hindemith. With the outbreak of World War II, Grundman enlisted in the United States Coast Guard where he served from 1942-1945 as a military musician. He composed for a multitude of mediums including film, radio, television, and even Broadway orchestration. However, his most notable works are his compositions and arrangements for concert band including *American Folk Rhapsody No. 4*, *Norwegian Rhapsody*, *Overture on a Short Theme*, and *Kentucky 1800*.

⁵ Waltz, Robert B. and David G. Engle, "I'm Sad and I'm Lonely: The Traditional Ballad Index," California State University Fresno, <http://www.fresnostate.edu/folklore/ballads/San243.html>.

⁶ Waltz, Robert B. and David G. Engle, "Cindy (I): The Traditional Ballad Index," California State University Fresno, <http://www.fresnostate.edu/folklore/ballads/LxU028.html>.

Ye Banks and Braes O' Bonnie Doon (1932)

In 1903, Percy Aldridge Grainger set the words to Robert Burn's poem "The Banks of Doon" to the Scottish folk tune "The Caledonian Hunts Delight". This arrangement would be titled *Ye Banks and Braes O' Bonnie Doon* and would be scored for a chorus of women in unison, accompanied by men's voices, whistlers, and harmonium or organ.⁷ Grainger's composition with Burn's words describes a love story around the River Doon from Loch Doon in Scotland. In 1932, Grainger set the work for band featuring his unconventional instrumentation including ad lib. parts for Bassoon III, Double-Bassoon, Bass Saxophone, Flugelhorn, etc. The piece is set in 6/8, which is typically felt as two macro-beats that are subdivided into groups of three. However, *Ye Banks* is set at a relaxed eighth note at 104 beats per minute resulting in the eighth note being felt as the primary pulse. The second clarinets, oboes, and cornets as well as the alto saxophone hold much of the beautiful, flowing melody throughout. In the 18th measure, Grainger introduces new melodic content in the piccolo, flute, first oboe, upper clarinets, and first cornet. This new melody referred to as the "Whistler's Tune" that interlocks with the main theme. The piece ends with a descending glissando in the upper woodwinds and cornet almost as if it were the satisfied sigh of the man in Robert Burn's poem.

Percy Aldridge Grainger was born in 1882 in Brighton, Australia and is most well remembered as a composer, pianist, and a champion of the saxophone family and the wind band. At the age of 13, Grainger left Australia to study at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt, Germany before eventually moving to London, England in 1901. During his time in England, he devoted much time to performing and writing for the piano and collecting folk music. He is

⁷ Wind Repertory Project contributors, "Ye Banks and Braes O' Bonnie Doon," Wind Repertory Project, https://www.windrep.org/Ye_Banks_and_Braes_O%27_Bonnie_Doon.

credited with spurring the revival of interest in English folk music. In 1914 he moved to the United States where he would briefly serve in the US Army in World War I before becoming a citizen in 1918. Throughout the rest of his life, he lived in the United States and travel Europe and Australia extensively, collecting music and continuing to educate and compose. In 1932, he was hired by New York University as the Dean of Music where he continued to innovate by inviting Duke Ellington to give lectures and by putting jazz in the curriculum. Grainger's eclectic life is most often remembered for his compositions, including those for band such as *Lincolnshire Posy, Country Gardens, Irish Tune from County Derry, and Ye Banks and Braes O' Bonnie Doon.*

Settings on a Hymn of Praise (2001)

In 2001, Quincy Hilliard composed a piece of compiled setting on a hymn tune he titled, *Settings on a Hymn of Praise*. The piece was never published but is instead held by Hilliard himself and the copyright falls under his company Hilliard Music Enterprises, Inc. The piece is a sprawling work of nearly ten minutes in length based entirely around African American spiritual "Let Us Break Bread Together On Our Knees". The spiritual has roots in coastal South Carolina, potentially dating back as far as the 18th century. The first written account of the song comes from an article in 1925 compiling the music sung at the Penn School in St. Helena Island, South Carolina.⁸ The words read as thus, "let us break bread together on our knees. Let us break bread together on our knees. When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me." Hilliard creates four separate setting of the original spiritual, and

⁸ Christ, Fenner. "Let us break bread together on our knees." Hymnology Archive, February 12, 2019. <https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/let-us-break-bread-together#:~:text=>

interestingly enough, the original version does not appear until the end. He instead begins with limited instrumentation; solo horn, then low brass, then alto saxophones. All of this with a repeated rhythmic motif in the timpani. He shifts through tonal centers and meters as he modifies and draws-out the original melody before introducing a tonal fabric, much like what is found in Hindemith's *Symphony in Bb*. The style then drastically shifts as the melody is reintroduced in the second setting, a big band jazz chart featuring solo saxophone. The third setting can most easily be described as klangfarbenmelodie. This section of sporadic rhythmic shifts and aggressive dramatico style bounces the melody between groups of instruments every measure or even less. We finally calm into a cadeza duet between horn and clarinet before finally introducing the hymn as a four-part chorale similar to how it would be heard in a religious setting.

In 1954, Quincy C. Hilliard was born in Starkville, Mississippi where he began playing the trumpet in elementary school. He would eventually attend Mississippi State University and receive his Bachelor of Science in Music Education and then his Masters of Music Education from Arkansas State University. He has published numerous books centered on music education and developing bands including *Superior Bands in Sixteen Weeks*, *Chorales and Rhythmic Etudes for Superior Bands*, and *Scales and Tuning Exercises for Superior Bands*. In 1999 he received a Ph.D. in music theory and composition from the University of Florida. He is currently the composer in residence and a professor of music theory and composition at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette where he accepts commissions and writes for wind band for a variety of reasons.

Psalm for Band (1954)

In 1952, the Alpha Chapter of the Pi Kappa Omicron National Band Fraternity commissioned Vincent Persichetti to write a piece. The University of Louisville Concert Band being conducted by Persichetti himself premiered his Psalm for Band. The piece would be published two years later. For his inspiration, the composer refers to an ancient poem of worship that could be sung or accompanied by strings. It is not clear what this poem is however. It is obvious that Persichetti's compositional style is abundant throughout *Psalm for Band* as he holds true to himself by keeping the sound of the band somewhat segregated by instrument family, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. The piece can be thought of in "three distinct sections, a sustained chordal mood, a forward moving chorale, followed by a paeon culmination of the materials".⁹ The first section feels as though it meanders about in rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic content. The second section truly begins to signify the religious implications of the title of the piece as it feels as though Persichetti has taken a hymn and put it through the filters of contemporary tonality. The third section brings the previous melodic motifs together while adding frantic woodwind lines and brash percussion and brass lines as it ends in a flourish.

Vincent Persichetti was born in 1915 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where he would end up spending nearly half of his life. He studied piano, organ, double bass, and tuba and by the young age of 11, he was paying for portions of his musical education by performing. He attended the Combs College of Music where he studied with Russell King Miller. While studying conducting at the Curtis Institute and piano at the Philadelphia Conservatory, he was also named the head of the theory and composition departments at Combs College at only 20 years

⁹ Wind Repertory Project contributors, "Psalm for Band," Wind Repertory Project, https://www.windrep.org/Psalm_for_Band.

old. His impressive teaching resume expanded in 1947 when he was hired by William Shuman to teach at the Julliard School of Music. Persichetti wrote for most medium quite successfully but was truly one of the most prolific composers for wind band in the 20th century. His pieces such as *Divertimento for Band*, *Symphony No. 6*, *Pageant*, and *Psalm for Band* helped solidify the wind band as a legitimate ensemble while also being some of the most influential in the genre.