

Band Music Reviews (December 2009)

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With ten inches of new fallen snow on the ground outside my window, it seems appropriate that WASBE is featuring Nordic music on their website. The resources tab of their website is an interesting place to visit, and I guarantee you'll come across music you never knew was out there. Did you know that Tauno Marttinen (b. 1912) is one of the most prolific Finnish composers of all times, and represented in his oeuvre of some 400 works are almost all genres of serious music? It's true. Be that as it may, the reason I was in WASBE's neighborhood was to check out a new resource for young bands.

The WASBE Developing Band Network is a forum for musicians and educators throughout the world that are involved in the training of young band musicians. The way a young instrumentalist is taught varies from country to country but the ultimate goal is the same. The WASBE Developing Band Network connects music academies, school music programs, and youth bands throughout the world in an effort to share ideas about all aspects of band music education. To find out what's up around the world, and to share your own ideas, log on to: <http://www.wasbe.org/wdbn/>

As long as we're roaming to foreign and snow bound territory, let's pay a visit to our friends up north. An important yet little known (among Americans) resource is the Canadian Music Centre (that's *center* to us in the lower 48). Located in Toronto, the Canadian Music Centre holds Canada's largest collection of Canadian concert music. The CMC exists to promote the works of its Associate Composers in Canada and around the world. The Centre makes available on loan over 15,000 scores and/or works of Canadian contemporary music composers through its lending library:

<http://www.musiccentre.ca/home.cfm>

The CMC came to my attention recently when I received a score to Norman Sherman's "The Pioneers." This charming three-movement suite is in the grade 4 category and clocks in at approximately fourteen and a half minutes. The style reflects the influence of Morton Gould, Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, and George Gershwin, with the simplicity of Pierre La Plante or Larry Daehn (at times), the

sincerity of Norman Dello Joio (at times), and the humor of Robert Russell Bennett sprinkled throughout. Although that description suggests a hideous patchwork of unoriginality, the piece actually hangs together quite well. Mr. Sherman is a skillful and practical composer, and this piece would complement any number of classic band works. Though not cutting edge, it is a fresh addition to the literature. To learn more about Mr. Sherman, visit www.floriusmusic.com To obtain a score and parts, log on to the CMC website.

Another score that came my way this semester was Kenneth Fuchs "United Artists." This five and a half minute fanfare/overture was transcribed by the composer from the orchestral original in 2008. An estimated grade 5 work, its big, bright, cinematic quality is bound to be a crowd pleaser. For those who are familiar with more recent trends in band composition, Fuchs work shares characteristics of Carter Pann's "Slalom," Kevin Puts' "Millenium Cannons," and William Schuman's "George Washington Bridge" (okay, that last one's not so new). Score and parts are available through Hal Leonard.

Staying in the cinematic vein, Joseph Curiale's "Double Happiness" has a delightful "Magnificent Seven" quality to it. Exuberant and a bit cliché, it is nevertheless well crafted and fun to hear. Estimated at a grade 4, "Double Happiness" can be found at www.arrangerspublishingcompany.com While you're there, I'd recommend steering clear of "A Mariah Carey Christmas," but "A Cowboy Christmas" is worth a laugh (but not a space on your next program).

Finally, I'd be remiss if I failed to mention Steven Bryant's "The Marbled Midnight Mile." This gentle and contemplative grade 3 work was premiered at the 2009 NMEA conference by the UNL Wind Ensemble. With ample cross cuing, it will sing beautifully no matter how large or small, young or old the ensemble is that welcomes it. The composer, himself the son of a band director, wrote:

"The Marbled Midnight Mile" is a companion to my earlier works "Dusk" and "First Light" - the three of them together form a loosely-related 'night cycle.' This newest work is the middle of the cycle, evoking the myriad wandering thoughts that occur in the solitude of night, and the title suggests an extended inner journey through a shifting mental landscape. There is no singular program or story to the piece; rather I hope the listener finds his or her own associations and memories from long nights spent in quiet contemplation.

“The Marbled Midnight Mile” was commissioned by a consortium of bands in the state of Nebraska sponsored by the Nebraska Chapter of Phi Beta Mu. Stay tuned to my next column when I’ll reveal the ins and outs of commissioning new works, with practical suggestions to help get your band connected directly to the creative flow.