

Band Music Reviews (December 2010)

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In this 75th anniversary season, if you haven't yet visited the NMEA website to check out the archives, you're missing some fun. The program from the first conference back in 1937 is posted and the ads alone are priceless. Notice also that the clinic band was a mere 121 members strong (hint, hint...). If that instrumentation was acceptable to Revelli, Bainum, and Bachman - three of the most influential bandmasters of the 20th century – we would do well to ponder how to infuse their wisdom into our modern All-State practices. But I digress.

The 1937 program also shows what the All-Nebraska High School Clinic Band performed. Of the nine works, three remain as standards in the symphonic band literature: Erik Leidzen's transcription of J.S. Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* (Carl Fischer, 1936; grade 3), Haydn Wood's *Mannin Veen* (Boosey & Hawkes, 1933; grade 4), and Leidzen's transcription of Bach's *Come, Sweet Death* (Fischer, 1936; grade 3). In recent years, Alfred Reed's transcription of the latter has overtaken Leidzen's version in popularity (Barnhouse, 1976); both are worth a look.

There were three marches on the program. One is a rarely performed gem worthy of notice: Harry Alford's arrangement of Charles Belsterling's *March of the Steel Men* (Carl Fischer, 1937; grade 4). Another is harder to track down, but appears to remain in print: Richard Hildreth's *Soldier of Fortune March* (Ludwig, 1937; grade 3). The last of the three is Leon Metcalf's *Mountaineers March* (Fillmore, 1936). After an exhaustive search, it seems to be out of print. However, Metcalf was one of the Fillmore Company's most popular composers and his *Make Way for Melody* march is alive and well.

The remaining three works chosen by Bainum, Revelli, and Bachman also seem to have fallen off the publishing radar. Erik Leidzen's transcription of Ferde Grofe's *Mardi Gras* from the *Mississippi Suite* (Feist, 1926) is still performed with some regularity, however the publishing provenance has evaporated in the mists of anti-trust legislation. Fred Huffer's arrangement of Carleton Colby's *March of the Pioneers* (Remick, 1936) is nowhere to be found, which leaves us with the multiple mysteries surrounding W.J.

Duthoit's arrangement of Frederick Charrosin's *Les Deux Petite Japonais* (Boosey & Hawkes, 1936). Sadly, this work cannot be found under the French title but rather is listed with the unfortunate alternative title *Two Little Japs* – I have no idea why. The composer's name is also misspelled in a variety of sources, most commonly as Frederich Charrison. Given Charrosin's widespread fame as a composer of lighter fare for radio, it seems odd that this one composition has been crumpled and tossed into obscurity. Ah well...I'm sure it was fun while it lasted.

When you take a look at the program as a whole, it is intriguing to note that seven of the nine compositions were published within a year of the conference, and the remaining two were comparatively recent as well. As a profession, we tend to view our focus on contemporary compositions as a new idea. Clearly Bainum, Revelli, and Bachman came up with the same concept long ago. As the saying goes, "the more things change, the more they stay the same." Also notice the organization of the program. Each conductor opened with a march, followed by a slow tune or character piece, then a big closer. Sound familiar? You bet. Seventy five years later and we still love the original recipe. You might also ask, "Why all the Leidzen?" From 1933 to 1956, Erik Leidzen was Edwin Franko Goldman's chief arranger for the Goldman Band, gradually replacing Mayhew "Mike" Lake in that role. Goldman declared Leidzen to be a "band genius," and helped inspire collaboration between him and such luminaries as Irving Berlin, Meredith Wilson, and Robert Russell Bennett. He was closely associated with the Salvation Army throughout his career, taught at the Interlochen Music Camp, and assisted William Revelli in the graduate band program at the University of Michigan.¹

For those who would like to join in the spirit of NMEA's 75th anniversary celebrations but don't have access to the works from the original conference program, there are two excellent resources for acquiring historical band literature – and they're FREE. <http://www.bandmusicpdf.org/> and <http://www.bandmusicpdfscans.org/> are growing repositories of classic, turn of the 20th century band literature. They are public domain resources, meaning the copyrights have run out and the music is free and legal to print and perform at will. The collections include concert and contest marches, solos with band accompaniment, serious concert literature, light/novelty pieces, and more. The oldest piece dates to

¹ Holz, Ronald, "Edwin Franko Goldman and Erik Leidzen: Musical Partnership and Friendship, 1933-1956," in Cipolla, Frank and Donald Hunsberger, *Wind Band Activity In and Around New York ca. 1830-1950*. CBDNA: 2005.

1800, but most spring from the 1880s onward. There are 1,100 pieces so far, and the collections are growing.

And speaking of free: John Culvahouse of the NBA and Colonel Thomas Palmatier, Commander and Conductor of The U.S. Army Field Band are spreading the word about how to get free clinicians, master classes, and guest conductors from our military bands. They have developed an easy way for music educators to request these assets for a wide range of musical styles. The very user-friendly web request portal is <http://bands.army.mil/request/> Don't be shy. The musicians of our armed forces are eager to share their talents and expertise with students and teachers nationwide.