

WIND ENSEMBLE PROGRAM NOTES

NOVEMBER 16, 2023 7:30PM

LIED.KU.EDU/LIVE

KU
BANDS

The University of Kansas

First Suite in E-flat for Military Band (1921)..... Gustav Holst (1874- 1934)

Gustav Holst's *First Suite in E-flat for Military Band* occupies a legendary position in the wind band repertory and can be seen, in retrospect, as one of the earliest examples of the modern wind band instrumentation still frequently performed today. Its influence is so significant that several composers have made quotation or allusion to it as a source of inspiration to their own works.

Holst began his work with Chaconne, a traditional Baroque form that sets a series of variations over a ground bass theme. That eight-measure theme is stated at the outset in tubas and euphoniums and, in all, fifteen variations are presented in quick succession. The three pitches that begin the work -- E-flat, F, and B-flat, ascending -- serve as the generating cell for the entire work, as the primary theme of each movement begins in exactly the same manner. Holst also duplicated the intervallic content of these three pitches, but descended, for several melodic statements (a compositional trick not dissimilar to the inversion process employed by the later serialist movement, which included such composers as Schoenberg and Webern). These inverted melodies contrast the optimism and bright energy of the rest of the work, typically introducing a sense of melancholy or shocking surprise. The second half of the Chaconne, for instance, presents a somber inversion of the ground bass that eventually emerges from its gloom into the exuberant final variations.

The Intermezzo, which follows is a quirky rhythmic frenzy that contrasts everything that has preceded it. This movement opens in C minor, and starts and stops with abrupt transitions throughout its primary theme group. The contrasting midsection is introduced with a mournful melody, stated in F Dorian by the clarinet before being taken up by much of the ensemble. At the movement's conclusion, the two sections are woven together, the motives laid together in complementary fashion in an optimistic C major.

The March that follows immediately begins shockingly, with a furious trill in the woodwinds articulated by aggressive statements by brass and percussion. This sets up the lighthearted and humorous mood for the final movement, which eventually does take up the more reserved and traditional regal mood of a British march and is simply interrupted from time to time by an uncouth accent or thunderous bass drum note. The coda of the work makes brief mention of elements from both the Chaconne and Intermezzo before closing joyfully.

- Program Note by Jacob Wallace

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Anahita (2005).....Roshanne Etezady (b. 1973)

In the Assembly Chamber of the State Capitol Building in Albany, New York, there are two murals that were completed in 1878 by the New England painter William Morris Hunt. These works are enormous -- each approaching 18 feet in length -- and are considered the culminating works of the artist's career.

One of these murals, *The Flight of Night*, depicts the Zoroastrian Goddess of the Night, Anahita, driving her chariot westward, fleeing from the rising sun. However, if you travel to Albany today, you won't see *The Flight of Night*. Two years after Hunt completed the giant murals (and only one year after his death), the ceiling in the Assembly Chamber began to leak. By 1882, *The Flight of Night* had already been damaged, and by 1888, the vaulted ceiling in the Assembly Chamber had to be condemned. A "false" ceiling was erected, completely obscuring Hunt's murals, and today, most of *The Flight of Night* has been destroyed by the elements. Only the lowest inches of the original painting are still visible.

Anahita draws inspiration from photographs of Hunt's masterpiece before its decay as well as from the Persian poem that inspired Hunt originally. The first movement, *The Flight of Night*, is characterized by dramatic, aggressive gestures that are meant to evoke the terrifying beauty of the goddess herself. Movement two, *Night Mares*, is a scherzo-like movement that refers to the three monstrous horses that pull the chariot across the sky. In the final movement, *Sleep and Repose/The Coming of Light*, we hear the gentler side of the night, with a tender lullaby that ends with trumpets heralding the dawn.

What follows is the translated Persian poem that Colonel Leavitt Hunt sent to his brother, William Morris Hunt.

Anahita

Enthroned upon her car of light, the moon
Is circling down the lofty heights of Heaven;
Her well-trained courses wedge the blindest depths
With fearful plunge yet heed the steady hand
That guides their lonely way. So swift her course,
So bright her smile, she seems on silver wings.
O'er-reaching space, to glide the airy main;
Behind, far-flowing, spreads her deep blue veil,
Inwrought with stars that shimmer in its wave.
Before the car, an owl, gloom sighted, flaps
His weary way; with melancholy hoot
Dispelling spectral shades that flee
With bat-like rush, affrighted, back
Within the blackest nooks of caverned Night.
Still Hours of darkness wend around the car,
By raven tresses half concealed; but one,
With fairer locks, seems lingering back for Day.
Yet all with even measured footsteps mark
Her onward course. And floating in her train
Repose lies nestled on the breast of Sleep,
While soft Desires enclasp the waist of Dreams,
And light-winged Fancies flit around in troops.

- Program Note by Roshanne Etezady

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...and the mountains rising nowhere (1977)..... Joseph Schwantner (b. 1943)

Commissioned by Donald Hunsberger and the Eastman Wind Ensemble with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, *...and the mountains rising nowhere* was Joseph Schwantner's first composition for wind ensemble (and is part of a "trilogy" that includes *From a Dark Millennium* and *In evening's Stillness*). The premiere was given in College Park, Maryland, at the 1977 National Conference of the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) by the Eastman Wind Ensemble, Hunsberger conducting. It is dedicated to children's author Carol Adler; its title inspired by a line in her poem *Arioso*:

Arioso
arioso bells
sepia
moon-beams
an afternoon sun blanked by rain
and the mountains rising nowhere
the sound returns
the sound and the silence chimes

- Program Note by Nikk Pilato

Lincolnshire Posy (1937/1940)..... Percy Aldridge Grainger (1882- 1961)

Lincolnshire Posy was commissioned by the American Bandmasters Association and premiered at their convention with the composer conducting. It is in six movements, all based on folk songs from Lincolnshire, England. Grainger's settings are not only true to the verse structure of the folk songs, but attempt to depict the singers from whom Grainger collected the songs. Since its premiere, it has been recognized as a cornerstone of the wind band repertoire.

Lincolnshire Posy, as a whole work, was conceived and scored by me direct for wind band early in 1937. Five, out of the six, movements of which it is made up existed in no other finished form, though most of these movements (as is the case with almost all my compositions and settings, for whatever medium) were indebted, more or less, to unfinished sketches for a variety of mediums covering many years (in this case, the sketches date from 1905 to 1937). These indebtednesses are stated in the score.

This bunch of "musical wildflowers" (hence the title) is based on folksongs collected in Lincolnshire, England (one notated by Miss Lucy E. Broadwood; the other five noted by me, mainly in the years 1905-1906, and with the help of the phonograph), and the work is dedicated to the old folksingers who sang so sweetly to me. Indeed, each number is intended to be a kind of musical portrait of the singer who sang its underlying melody -- a musical portrait of the singer's personality no less than of his habits of song -- his regular or irregular wonts of rhythm, his preference for gaunt or ornately arabesqued delivery, his contrasts of legato and staccato, his tendency towards breadth or delicacy of tone.

- Program Note by Percy Aldridge Grainger