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## Final Conducting Performance Program Notes

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MUSI621 – Written Comprehensive Exam: Wind

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master's in Music Conducting

Messiah University  
Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania

Rob Romeyn is an American composer who has written a variety of works for band, marching band, and jazz band. He served as a school band director on elementary, middle, and high school levels. Romeyn's music is often featured on state music lists.<sup>1</sup> His experience as a composer and as an arranger for multiple school institutions has informed the arrangement of compositions.

*Of Castles and Kings* is an exciting piece of music based on two separate themes. The first is a fanfare introduced during the beginning of the piece and the second is a legato theme ending on a half cadence. Both themes provide opportunities for students to work on their listening skills as they are passed around the ensemble and students switch their roles from melody to background. Romeyn's piece allows students to practice switching styles from broad and regal to legato and connected. It is easily accessible to good middle school and early high school groups.

Gustav Holst began composing in his early teens. After taking counterpoint lessons with George Frederick Sims, he was admitted to Stanford's composition class where he became good friends with Ralph Vaughan Williams.<sup>2</sup> Williams's and Holst's careers paralleled each other and both men continued to be influences throughout their lives. Holst followed Williams as a teacher at James Allen's Girls' School in Dulwich. He also secured teaching positions at St. Paul's Girl's

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<sup>1</sup>"Rob Romeyn", *Wind Repertory Project*, February 12, 2022,

[https://www.windrep.org/Rob\\_Romeyn](https://www.windrep.org/Rob_Romeyn).

<sup>2</sup> Colin Matthews, "Holst, Gustav", *Grove Music Online*, Last modified January 20, 2001,

Accessed February 7, 2022, <https://doi->

[org.ezproxy.messiah.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.13252](https://doi-org.ezproxy.messiah.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.13252).

School and Morley College.<sup>3</sup> Williams's work as a pioneer of the English folksong revival influenced Holst's development as a composer. Holst began arranging folksongs and even writing folksongs of his own.

Holst utilized a variety of techniques which distinguished him as a composer. He made frequent use of unconventional time signatures and rhythmic alterations. His melodies are often based on the movement of fourths and fifths with accompaniments based on ostinatos and scalar patterns.<sup>4</sup> Each of these compositional methods is featured in *First Suite in Eb*.

*First Suite in Eb* is a landmark piece in the history of wind literature. It helped redefine the wind band sound and allowed for parts written for an adapting ensemble. Holst's piece was written when saxophones began to replace alto and bass clarinets and B-flat trumpets replaced E-flat trumpets.<sup>5</sup> *First Suite* demonstrated the possibilities for the wind band and served as a model for the ideal sound of an ensemble.

*First Suite in Eb* is written in three movements meant to be played through without a break. The first movement, "Chaconne", presents a theme which is important for each of the movements. It is played by the low brass first and is then passed around the ensemble. The "Chaconne" presents the potential for students to map the iterations of the melody. Students could follow the melody through its manipulations of instrumentation and melodic creation. The middle section features an inverted melody. The trombones play the melody in the wrong key

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Battisti and Thomas C. Duffy, *The New Winds of Change: The Evolution of the Contemporary American Wind Band/Ensemble and Its Music* (Chicago: Meredith Music Publications, 2018), 17.

near the end of the movement. Students would develop incredible listening skills and it would provide an opportunity for the director to introduce critical music theory concepts. The subject of a hemiola could be discussed as this is included in the low accompaniment of the inverted melody.

The second movement, “Intermezzo”, differs stylistically from the first movement. This movement is much lighter. It allows students to experience the varying weights possible by the ensemble as it moves from a light beginning played by the woodwinds to a heavier motif. The movement flows through a legato motif passed around the woodwind sections and into the trumpets. The legato motif allows students the opportunity to practice matching their treatment of the melodic material with other sections’ treatment of the material. The “Chaconne” movement provides opportunity for technical discussions and the “Intermezzo” movement provides opportunity for stylistic development.

The third movement, “March”, is the most energetic of the three. It allows students to practice playing in a march style. Holst presents two themes played in two separate styles. The first fanfare theme is presented by the trumpets. The second is a legato theme presented by the woodwinds. Both themes combine to finish the piece. Holst utilizes a variety of dynamic levels along with contrasting styles. Students would expand their ability to play in contrasting styles and would be able to follow the two melodies and their changes. It combines the skill opportunities presented by the first two movements.

Vincent Persichetti had a lasting influence on the wind band heritage. During the time before he began composing, many band compositions were transcriptions of string pieces. He believed the band was an ensemble with endless musical possibilities when composers

considered it a serious ensemble.<sup>6</sup> This led Persichetti to write intentionally and musically for each section, including the percussion. He speaks about his *Parable for Band* which requires even the second bassoonist and alto saxophonist to play musically.<sup>7</sup> This intent and practice sets Persichetti apart from other composers.

*Psalm for Band* follows the expressive qualities Persichetti sought to include in his compositions. It follows the melody of Persichetti's "Creation Hymn". Persichetti's piece would allow students to work on drastic dynamic changes and chamber moments. The first half is legato with broad chords and heavy, impactful moments. The second half of the piece breaks the theme up and divides it into echoes around the ensemble. It includes staccato motifs and legato motifs. Students could work on their listening skills as they match their treatment of the different motifs to the treatment of the same motifs around the ensemble. Persichetti exploits the musicality of each section throughout the piece. Students must consistently perform at their highest musical level to achieve a successful performance of this piece. The percussion section assists in creating the impactful moments of the piece which challenges those students to perform musically. Persichetti's *Psalm for Band* is challenging for students but would advance students' musicality through its use of chamber moments, drastic changes in dynamic level, and a range of styles.

Paul Hindemith's pieces and compositional style fluctuated throughout his career. Early in his compositional career, Hindemith was influenced by Brahms, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky,

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<sup>6</sup> Vincent Persichetti and Rudy Shackelford, "Conversation with Vincent Persichetti",

*Perspectives of New Music* 20, no. 1/2 (Autumn 1981-Summer 1982): 120.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Mahler, and Reger.<sup>8</sup> He often included late Romantic harmonies in his early works and composed for a variety of instrumentations. In the early 1920's, he began to align himself with the Neue Sachlichkeit or new objectivity style of thinking.<sup>9</sup> Hindemith left behind his Romantic tendencies and focused on writing independent lines for each part and writing in regular formal designs.

Hindemith served a variety of roles throughout his career, all of which assisted in creating his compositional style. During a period in which his music was outlawed in Germany, he devoted his time to writing an in-depth book on theory. He also spent a significant amount of time in America where he taught at Tanglewood and Yale, forming the Yale Collegium Musicum ensemble.<sup>10</sup> His time in America made him a well-known composer throughout the world.

*Symphony in Bb* is a dense piece of music written in three movements. It will challenge students technically and stylistically. The first movement is “Moderately fast, with vigor”. It features a rhythmically challenging and chromatic theme introduced by the trumpets with a triplet and eighth note accompaniment played by the woodwinds. The second theme is more legato in style leading to a unison figure which is played again at the end of the movement. A staccato theme is introduced with opportunity for chamber moments before the first two themes are layered on top of each other and a unison theme is presented again to end the first movement.

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<sup>8</sup> Giselher Schubert, “Hindemith, Paul”, *Grove Music Online*, Last modified January 20, 2001, Accessed February 7, 2022, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.messiah.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.13053>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Students have opportunities, in the first movement alone, to develop technically and musically. Students must perform at a high musical level to achieve success in their performance of this piece.

The second movement is a mixed meter challenge with multiple themes fighting for attention. It allows students to work on a variety of time signatures and to see how different themes can fit together even if they are not in the same time signature. The themes presented in the simple meters in the beginning of the movement are layered over the themes presented in the compound meters of the second part of the movement. Students can work on their analytical skills following the statements of the two themes and how they interact with each other. They can continue to advance their musical skills as they play through diverse styles and dynamic levels. Students can also develop as soloists with the solo alto sax and solo cornet melodies featured in the beginning of the movement.

The “Fugue” movement features a new theme presented by the full band in the beginning before a unison descending line leads to the beginning of the fugue. The theme is passed around the ensemble and accompaniment parts are included throughout. This allows the director to talk about the theme and how the theme changes throughout the movement. Students will gain experience playing a fugue form. Countermelodies and accompaniments are presented throughout the movement. There are opportunities for solos and musical decisions made by the soloists regarding timing and dynamics. An augmented version of the original theme of the first movement occurs at the end of the movement. As with the other two movements, students still have opportunities to develop their technical playing with challenging rhythmic motifs.

*Symphony in Bb* allows students to grow as musicians through the technical requirements, analytical opportunities, and ensemble and soloistic material present throughout the work.



William Himes is an American composer whose career is based in Michigan. He served as a teacher in the public schools in Flint and as an adjunct professor at the University of Michigan-Flint. Himes continues to be in demand around the world as a conductor, composer, lecturer, soloist, and clinician.<sup>11</sup> His setting of *Amazing Grace* is beautifully reflective and continues to be performed around the United States.

Himes's piece states the melody three times. Each statement is unique in some way, allowing multiple sections of the ensemble to play different roles. Trumpets play the melody through the first two statements and the band blossoms into the second statement of the melody. Students can work on expressive and lush playing. The second statement of the melody is accompanied by a flowing eighth note pattern and a countermelody. Students must interpret the most important part of the musical texture. It allows students to show the importance of the countermelody and how it interacts with the melody. The climax of the piece occurs before the final phrase of the melody. Students can show how Himes builds to this final phrase from the rising dotted half note accompaniment to the return of the countermelody. The French horns keep the energy after the climax with their own accented countermelody which allows those students to shine and provide their own musical playing. The piece begins to decrescendo as part of the melody is passed around the ensemble before the piece ends on an F major chord. Students can advance their expressive playing through a known melody line using Himes's piece. The students can decide how they would like to accent various parts of the melody based on the words they know. Each ensemble could have a unique interpretation of the melody line based on

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<sup>11</sup> "William Himes", *Wind Repertory Project*, February 8, 2022,

[https://www.windrep.org/William\\_Himes](https://www.windrep.org/William_Himes).

which part they decide is most important. The writing is easily accessible by high school ensembles and will allow them to perform at a high expressive and musical level.

Kit Mills is a percussionist and composer. He has written award-winning pieces which span a variety of genres. While his work as a composer is important to him, it is his work as a teacher which inspires him.<sup>12</sup> Mills has worked as a private instructor, ensemble coach, and leader of clinics, masterclasses, lectures, and school assemblies. He has formed partnerships with a collection of musicians allowing his music to be performed around the world.

*Epic!* is an exciting piece commissioned by two band director brothers to challenge their percussionists. The piece begins with a percussion chamber moment as the rest of the ensemble plays an accompaniment part. It is the job of the ensemble to keep the energy up while the percussionists take the focus. The wind instruments must recognize which sections of the piece require them to play the accompaniment and which parts require them to play legato melodies. The piece features moments where the wind instruments must set down their instruments to stomp and clap to help build energy for a new section. *Epic!* pushes the percussion section to be the melodic feature rather than just playing background parts. It shows the potential of a band's percussion section and allows them to grow as musicians in a unique way. The rest of the band must play stylistically with different articulations and responsibilities present in the piece. It is important for students to understand their role and the piece allows for discussions about what their role means. *Epic!* consistently keeps the energy alive through its exciting writing and the melodies passed around the ensemble.

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<sup>12</sup> "Bio", February 12, 2022, *Kit Mills*, <https://kitmills.com/bio>.

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