

Keynote Address -

BASBWE/RNCM International Wind Festival;

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Good Morning! In September 1981 I was privileged to present the Keynote Address at the first-ever Conference of the British Association of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles in Oxford. My first words to the delegates were as follows:

"I am pleased to be with you on this important and historical day - the First Conference of the British Association of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles. My pleasure extends beyond the normal excitement of joining with colleagues to share ideas and experiences. It is as an individual who (hopes) he has provided a little of the stimulation for the formation of your association as the result of what took place at the First International Conference for Wind Band Conductors, Composers and Publishers held (last July, 1981) at the RNCM in Manchester."

During the past two decades it has been my very good fortune to spend a great deal of time in the UK guest conducting many of your bands and participating as a clinician, teacher and adjudicator in numerous workshops and conferences. I am very happy to be with you again at this conference and am looking forward to participating as a guest conductor and clinician as well as attending the numerous musical activities that are scheduled to take place this week-end.

I'd like to begin my address this morning with a bit of history. In 1979, when I became president of CBDNA, I had been a high school band director for 14 years, a college wind ensemble conductor for 2 years and the conductor of the New England Conservatory Wind

Ensemble for 12 years. Over these 30 years I gradually grew to feel that there was a need for an international wind band association where conductors, composers, publishers and performers from different countries of the world could come together, attend performances and exchange information about wind bands/ensembles and literature. It was my feeling that such an organisation would have the potential to function as an effective vehicle for the advancement of the wind band/ensemble on a global scale. With "seed" money from CBDNA and the great assistance of William Johnson, Director of Bands at California Polytechnic State University, and Timothy Reynish, Head of Winds and Percussion at the Royal Northern College of Music, I was able to organise an international conference here in July 1981. The delegates attended performances by wind bands/ensembles from the UK, France, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Japan and the United States, exchanged information about their national band activity and literature, met in daily sessions throughout the week and concluded that a world wind band/ensemble association should be formed. A board of directors and chairperson were selected and the World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles was born.

Timothy Reynish, who at the time of the conference was exclusively an "orchestra person," became very excited by the music and quality of performances he heard and immediately began to work for the formation of a British Wind Band Association. As the saying goes, "the rest is history." During the past 2 decades BASBWE has become the strongest influence in the growth and development of the wind band movement and its literature in the UK.

On the global front, even though WASBE has not as yet realised its primary objective "To Promote Symphonic Bands and Ensembles as Serious and Distinctive Mediums of Musical Expression and Culture," it has

served as an important forum for the communication and exchange of information among world wind band/ensemble directors, composers and publishers. A good example of this global networking can be found in the performances of works commissioned by BASBWE and individual UK wind bands. Works by Richard Rodney Bennett, Philip Wilby, Guy Woolfenden, Joseph Horowitz, Adam Gorb, Edward Gregson, Michael Ball, and others are performed by wind bands/ensembles around the world. Likewise, pieces written by composers from other countries (US, Japan, Norway, etc) are now being performed by UK wind bands/ensembles. This is a very good and important development that hopefully will continue to expand in future years.

Gunther Schuller, distinguished composer, conductor, author, educator, music publisher and wind band/ensemble supporter was the Keynote Speaker at the 1981 International Conference for Wind Band Conductors, Composers and Publishers. In his address he urged the band directors at the conference to undertake projects that would advance the professional viability of the wind band/ensemble. In part, this is what Schuller said:

"It bothers me enormously that the wind ensemble and band medium is not yet perceived by our culture(s), by our musical establishment(s) and by our taste-makers and cultural leaders as an important, viable and an integral part of musical life. There is far too much ignorance and prejudice against this field, the band, a misperception that I believe you can combat more effectively than you have thus far. We all know what the roots of these prejudices are. In the eyes of the cultural elitists the band medium is stigmatised and tainted by a number of prior associations: the military band, the marching band, the always out-of-tune school bands,,, all of this is regarded as a not really serious activity, but an activity for amateurs, for students. and tainted above all by the stigma that attaches itself rather readily to anything that resides merely (or primarily) in

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academia Whether fact or fiction, these perceptions result in another perception, namely, that of your isolation in academia, removed from the mainstream of musical life, the real professional battlegrounds where the Mehta's and Rostropovich's and Pavarotti's and Guarneri's and Elliott Carter's and Pierre Boulez's plot and win their victories. It is too easy for the ignorant and not-so-well intentioned to put (the) wind ensemble and band people off, to keep you on the sidelines with easy snap verdicts like: "Oh, that's only for the kids", or "that's not for serious artists or professional musicians", or "that's a field where incompetent musicians play all that trashy music"

Later in his address Schuller states:

"... there are too many fine and/or famous composers that have eluded your grasp thus far. You need more of that kind of international world calibre amongst the composers in your repertory before that world will begin to take you seriously, before a critic from the New York Times or The (London) Times will look in on what you're doing and look in on (conferences) such as this. And you must more aggressively pursue that establishment world, with its critics and taste-makers, its foundations and other benefactors, its managers, and its musical leaders. You must reach out now beyond your own seemingly large but actually small world. For they will not come to you; you must go to them. Mostly they don't know you exist"

"... the (wind band/ensemble) field need no longer apologise for itself. You have achieved extraordinary things, things which much of the professional world of music cannot match. You are strong, you have the leadership and a great deal of artistic integrity, and you are historically at a juncture where standing still will be tantamount to going backwards"

Schuller's urging that we commission works from the finest composers in the world is as relevant today as it was in 1981. Many significant and important composers have already written wind band/ensemble compositions but (far) too many have gone uncommissioned by our profession. Often commissions are awarded to composers who have written wind band pieces and are considered "safe" (ie "knows what a band should sound like") in order to guarantee a 'successful' commissioning project; thus many distinguished 'non band' composers have been neglected in favour of commissioning 'safe' wind band

composer. We have compositions from Tippett, Holloway, Knussen, MacMillan, Schuller, Rands, Harbison, Copland, Bolcom, Bassett and Stockhausen, but it is essential that in the future Corigliano, Kernis, Danielpour, Sheng, Gorecki, Bainbridge, Turnage and other important composers not be allowed to escape from writing for our medium

The best composers must not only be commissioned to create works for advanced level wind bands/ensembles but must be persuaded to write pieces for young and intermediate level wind bands. Writing excellent music for the players in grammar and middle school wind bands is a very challenging task. Pulitzer Prize winning composer Michael Colgrass recently composed a piece for middle school band entitled *Old Churches*. His comments concerning the challenges facing composers writing music for young wind band players are very interesting and enlightening. I quote Mr Colgrass,

"It struck me that Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven wrote a lot of simple music for amateurs without 'dumbing down'

The question: am I a good enough composer to write a simple theme that can be genuinely exciting, the way the great masters did? Well, this project was the most humbling of any experience I've had as a composer. I think writing for (young) bands should be a required project in our university composition programs. Writing for eighth grade band is like walking in four-pound shoes: if (one) can move gracefully with (this) weight on (one's) feet, you'll fly when you put on the four-ounce runners. The whole experience of working with the kids was so rich - albeit frustrating - and finally so fulfilling, that I have to say it was one of the most satisfying events of my musical career"

Composer Francis McBeth thinks that *"... many composers take the wrong approach to junior high/middle school music. The direction should be writing more musically challenging music (and) tailoring it to the ease of fingerings and the characteristics of each instrument - in other words, simplicity of mechanics as opposed to simple music"*

We must encourage our best composers to write music for young bands that is substantive in musical content and yet accessible. Music for young wind band players must be artistically stimulating and educationally appropriate, not merely entertaining. We

have made strides in this area but there is still far too much "junk food quality" school level wind band music being published AND PURCHASED by band directors. The issue of high quality educational wind band music should be a high priority for all of us and the associations we belong to.

There has been extraordinary progress made in the development of the contemporary wind band/ensemble at all levels. The work of numerous dedicated conductors and leaders have helped improve the quality of teaching and conducting, elevated musical performance standards and has expanded the quantity and quality of wind band/ensemble literature.

I would like to conclude by identifying some of the issues that need to be addressed in the 21st century in order to insure the continued growth, development and advancement of the wind band/ensemble.

1. Education and Training of the Contemporary Wind Band/Ensemble Conductor

The education and training of wind band/ensemble conductors must be strengthened and improved. The lack or low level of basic musicianship skills often prohibits conductors from dealing with the challenges found in non traditionally notated contemporary music. Opportunities must be created that will provide wind band conductors with superior training in conducting technique, sight singing, ear training, analytical skills and knowledge in music history and literature (including wind band/ensemble history and literature). Hopefully, future band directors will be sensitive, imaginative conductors who create performances of both old and new music that are expressive - performances that stimulate emotional and intellectual response from players and listeners.

2. Leadership in the Band Music Education Profession

Presently the wind band world is being greatly influenced by the music industry

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which promises answers to the challenges faced by wind band/ensemble directors. Never have there been so many "merchandise fixes" (educational aids, guides, products, etc) offered to those working in the teaching/directing profession.

Too often this material is "entertainment instruction" packaged as education aids. While some of this material is useful, much of it is not and does not contribute to the goal of teaching music as an expressive art. The leadership in the teaching of music through the wind band/ensemble should be lead by exceptionally trained musician/artist teachers/conductors.

3. Wind Band/Ensemble Advocacy to Convince Symphony Orchestra Conductors to Perform Great Works from the Wind Band/Ensemble Literature

An excellent body of literature exists for the wind band/ensemble at the close of the twentieth century. Works by respected and prestigious composers such as John Harbison, Robin Holloway, Ollie Knussen, Karel Husa, Bernard Rands, Sofia Gubaidulina, Gunther Schuller, Nicholas Maw etc are being performed by symphony orchestras, opera companies, chamber music societies, etc around the world. National and international wind band/ensemble associations, leaders and conductors must work to make symphony orchestra conductors aware of the excellent wind band/ensemble works written by these same composers. If this advocacy were successful it would be an important first step towards advancing wind band/ensemble literature into the professional musical world and having our best repertoire heard by new audiences (the sophisticated audiences who attend symphony orchestra concerts) and reviewed by professional music critics.

If symphony orchestras began to program wind works on their regular concerts, in time, a series of performances featuring music from the wind band/ensemble repertoire and performed by the orchestra's woodwind,

brass and percussion players might be developed. This strategy seems more appropriate at the present time than attempting to create new professional wind bands/ensembles.

Even if professional wind bands/ensembles could be created, would a new type of music ensemble, performing mostly unfamiliar music be able to attract audiences sizeable enough to make it viable? Presently, established symphony orchestras and other professional ensembles have problems attracting audiences to concerts of new music - music the general concert going public does not know.

It appears to me that the best strategy at the moment might be to try to make symphony orchestra conductors aware of our best literature and hope that they will decide to perform some of these pieces on their concerts. If this happens and audiences become increasing familiar with our repertoire, the potential for successfully creating professional wind band/ensembles in the future will be greatly increased. The artistic stature of the wind band/ensemble would be greatly enhanced through performances of great wind band/ensemble literature in major concert venues.

4. Radio, Television Broadcasts and Recordings

Broadcasts of professional level live performances of concerts and/or CD recordings are excellent ways to increase the public's awareness of quality contemporary wind band/ensemble music. At the present time CD recordings of wind band/ensemble music are plentiful but most of the music contained on these disks is of mediocre quality and not performed at a professional level. If the profession wants to be perceived as truly artistic, gain the attention of music critics, CD record reviewers, FM classical music radio station program directors and sophisticated music lovers, broadcasts of professional level performances of our best repertoire is a must!

5. Commissioning and Programming

As mentioned earlier, commissioning works from the best composers in the

world must be a priority. Music written for wind band/ensemble by this calibre of composer would elicit the attention of critics and important people in the non-wind band/ensemble music and art world. Programs must be formulated that will attract sophisticated audiences and major music critics to wind band/ensemble concerts. Important works must receive repeated performances in the same location if the perception of a basic wind band/ensemble repertoire is to be established in the minds of listeners. Imaginatively formulated concert programs that include quality music, old and new, traditional and experimental, have the greatest potential for attracting audiences whose primary interest is music and not entertainment. Concerts should inspire and uplift, tax and stimulate listeners.

6. Literature for School Wind Bands/Ensembles

There is ample evidence to suggest that much of the repertoire studied and performed by school bands today is of questionable musical substance and value (to put it more bluntly - it is junk food music containing little or no 'musical nutrition'). Innovative and interesting quality works by gifted composers must supplant the 'junk food music' and 'formula pieces' which make up much of the present day school band repertoire.

7. Wind Band/Ensemble History and Research

Musicologists must be invited to investigate and write about the excellent works found in the wind band/ensemble repertoire. Scholarly papers and research on wind band/ensemble history must appear in important journals and publications. Wind band/ensemble history and literature information must be added to music history texts and courses.

Research studies on the wind band/ensemble performance repertoire should be continued. The findings of past research has provided useful information concerning the use and quality of the literature performed by wind bands/ensembles.

Knowledge gained through this kind

of activity has important implications regarding wind band/ensemble conductor education and future development and growth of the repertoire

8. Positive Self Image and Involvement

It is important that conductors of wind bands/ensembles have a positive image of themselves and their medium. They must see themselves as part of the world of music and not restrict their vision to the 'band world'. Any conductor, whether directing young or professional players in small towns or large cities, performing repertoire of high musical quality and urging excellent composers to create future works, makes a significant contribution to the art of music. Having knowledge of the history, development and literature of the wind band/ensemble allows the conductor to understand and appreciate his/her position in the history of the art.

Well-trained and educated wind band/ensemble conductors, who are aware and appreciate great music (in all genres) and actively study and perform contemporary music are the best hope for advancing the position of the wind band/ensemble medium in future musical development.

We, the directors and conductors of wind groups, along with the composers who write music for us, will determine the future development of our profession. There has been considerable progress made in the past fifty years at both ends of the creative spectrum. The number of individuals in our profession who understand the challenges and are trained to do something about it seems higher than ever. However, if the profession at large places items other than the quality of music at the head of the agenda, our progress will proceed at a snail's pace, similar to that of an individual driving an automobile down a motorway with the handbrake engaged.

The musical values we each possess, the literature we each select, the decisions we each make regarding the composers commissioned will determine the future of wind band/ensemble development in the 21st century.

Thank you

2002 BASBWE/RNCM International Wind Festival

Some personal highlights
Brendon Le Page

Amongst the surfeit of clinics and concerts at this year's Festival, some of those I attended were of particular interest.

Roadblocks

Scott Rogers, an American now domiciled in Norway, gave two interesting clinics, demanding fresh approaches to teaching rhythm and notation, in 'Roadblocks', as well as a new approach to learning scales in 'Scalemaps'. He has kindly contributed an article to *Winds* as a follow-up to his clinic.

Scale maps

With the help of some willing musicians from the RNCM, Scott Rogers demonstrated some fresh approaches to mastering scales. 'Match the skill to the music' and 'understand the logic of the instrument' e.g. B and B_b on a clarinet - what is the reason for the 2nd finger giving the B natural.

Without using notation, he starts with three notes - this gives tonality. By transposing these three notes up or down in half steps, this gives all the finger patterns of all scales! He then used his concept of 'scale map's, to incorporate major, minor, octatonic, lydian, whole tone scale patterns.

By relating this to triads this is extended to five notes, then minor versions. Then chord symbols and eight-note patterns are introduced. The demonstration ended with a complete SATB chorale by Steven Melillo being played using the scale degrees.

New Boosey Method

Chris Morgan gave a clinic on the new Boosey Method for instrumental tuition.

This new Method takes on board all the best current good practice on music teaching, with strong links to the broader music education curriculum. While designed for individual or group tuition on like instruments, there are several ensemble pieces which encourage teachers to form mixed ensembles. The book also contains a CD and a wide variety of newly composed pieces by eminent British composers.

It incorporates many gentle reminders to teachers of good practice. Using graphic scores, rhythm drills, composition, differentiation, listening, performing and evaluating. While the method books provide all the necessary material, teachers will still have to be trained and enthused into these new ways of working.

RNCM Wind Orchestra - a Finnish Smorgasbord

Like the curate's egg, this concert was good in parts. Nonetheless it provided an interesting opportunity to hear unfamiliar works and several new compositions in a variety of styles. I found the *Sinfonietta de Soffiatori* by Geirr Tveitt pretty turgid and samey, but Aulos Sallinen's *Chorali* is a good piece, and Battisti's sympathetic direction brought out its shape and interest all the way through.

Garland's *Concerto for Sax and Wind* featured wonderful sax playing from the composer, but other than as a vehicle for the composers virtuosity, the piece had little of interest: 'I wish he'd stop clearing his throat and get started' commented one audience member.

Rimsky Korsakoff's *Variations for Oboe*