



The Score

Spring 2016

Director's Notes, Jay Durner

As an audience member at one of the community band's concerts, you might ask yourself, "Why are they playing that piece?" There is certainly a process that is used in the selection of a concert's playlist that varies from ensemble to ensemble, but I generally try to incorporate the philosophy of "Something for Everyone." I have had occasions where a selection was well received by the audience, but not so much by the players. Some selections are fun to play, but not so much audience pleasers. The trick, if you want to call it that, is to find a balance between those two results.

Several selections are played quite frequently by a community band, usually in the area of the patriotic selections, and are looked at as tiresome by some of the members. What we must remember is that there will probably be someone at the concert who has never heard the band, is amazed that such an ensemble exists, and may not have heard that selection performed within the venue of a concert band! It may end up being their favorite piece on the program.

Another situation that often occurs is that a piece is selected that is unfamiliar to the band as well as the audience. The band works on the music very diligently and the selection ends up being performed very well, but is met with only polite applause. This is usually because the majority of the audience is unfamiliar with the piece and may not appreciate all of the intricacies on a first hearing. That feeling can often be cleared up either in written program notes or in a brief description from the podium prior to the performance.

Several genres of music lend themselves to what an audience expects to hear at a community band concert. Marches, Broadway show tunes, Classical Overtures (William Tell and 1812 being the top two!), fun pieces that are in the novelty style (Leroy Anderson's The Typewriter), and, of course, the flag-waving patriotic selections of George M. Cohan and Irving Berlin.

My responsibility is to provide the band members with enough variety, as well as challenge, that they like playing the music, and also to enable the audience to be entertained and maybe even introduced to something new. The Blacksburg Community Band is always open to suggestions as to pieces you would like to hear, as well as your thoughts on programming ideas. As a community band, we appreciate your support and hope you keep on coming to our programs and bring friends. And as I generally say at the end of our programs, without you being there, it is just another rehearsal!

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VICTORY AT SEA



Television in the early 50s was a lot different. Not just in technology, with little round screens, black and white pictures, test patterns, and the National Anthem every night around ten when the station went off the air, but in attitude. It was, of course, still finding out things about itself and what it would and could be, but it also still had the now rare idea that it could actually be of service to the viewers, in the form of education and preservation of history. Edward R. Murrow invited us to SEE IT NOW, even PERSON TO PERSON. Leonard Bernstein hosted YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERTS, and YOU ARE THERE used modern news coverage techniques to take us to historical events and even interview the participants.

Henry Solomon was a network exec with an interesting background. He'd been a Navy Lieutenant in World War II, been stationed aboard combat ships, and was an assistant to Admiral Samuel Elliot Morison in preparing the massive and definitive HISTORY OF UNITED STATES NAVAL OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II. He knew the war at sea from both a boots on the deck and a historical perspective. When he proposed a 26-week documentary on the Naval aspects of World War II, the networks were enthusiastic, especially with Solomon himself producing, co-writing and whittling millions of feet of film down to a mere 61,815. But his suggestion of an original score was met with skepticism, not least from the composer in question, Richard Rodgers.

Rodgers was a towering figure in American popular music. But a 26-episode series requiring 12 hours of music?! Daunting, to say the least. But when Solomon screened the show for Rodgers, the composer leapt on board.

But not without help. Time to dispel a myth or two. Enter Robert Russell Bennett, excellent and famed composer on his own, and the orchestrator/arranger of many Rodgers shows. Rodgers composed a dozen themes in piano score for various events in the show, and Bennett took it from there, fully orchestrating, arranging the tunes in different moods, and finally conducting the recording sessions with Toscanini's NBC Symphony. In reality, Bennett composed more of the score than Rodgers, and some episodes, aside from the main theme, SONG OF THE HIGH SEAS, were all Bennett.



Bennett recorded the music later in stereo with the RCA Victor Symphony (an ad-hoc group of top New York players), and Rodgers conducted one early recording of the suite familiar to us all. The music has been in print, programmed, and popular since first heard. As Bennett once said, "Neither (Rodgers) nor I could know at the time what a long life this new offspring was to have, or that it would reach more listeners than all of our Broadway shows combined."

In the SUITE we play, one tune, BENEATH THE SOUTHERN CROSS, the tango, was bestowed with lyrics by Hammerstein and found a place as NO OTHER LOVE in ME AND JULIET. And the GUADALCANAL MARCH is often heard at pops concerts. And, by the way, our suite differs from the orchestral version in that in the orchestral version, between GUADALCANAL and THE SUNNY PACIFIC ISLANDS, there's a tune mainly for strings, featuring a solo violin, FIDDLELING OFF WATCH. And the band version also does not include THEME OF THE FAST CARRIERS, which goes between GUADALCANAL and FIDDLELING in the orchestral version. All in all, and for us particularly, VICTORY AT SEA remains a major musical accomplishment. The only thing like it I've come across is Morton Gould's score to the CBS documentary series WORLD WAR I. But that's another story. . .

From our President, Jennifer Hundley

Hello Band,

With an organization this large it can be a challenge to keep everyone informed. Sometimes an email or rehearsal is missed, and conveying information multiple ways allows for the greatest chance that everyone stays informed. The BBCB listserv is our most important communications tool for keeping active and retired members informed. For many years our listserv was hosted by the Blacksburg Electronic Village, but that option ended in December 2015. We have now survived the great listserv migration to Google Groups. Along the way there have been a few hiccups, but I'm hoping those are coming to an end. If anyone has stopped receiving band emails please let me know.

It takes a village for the band to run smoothly, and it can't be done without the help and commitment of its members.

- If you have any additional time and would like to become more involved there are opportunities ranging from librarian, historian, board member, or committee member. If you are interested in these opportunities please don't hesitate to talk to me or a board member.
- If you know of friends, acquaintances, or past members who would enjoy playing again please invite them to come to rehearsal. It's a great opportunity for making music, contributing to the community, and meeting new friends.

I want to thank the board for helping everything run smoothly. The band wouldn't be possible without members taking time out of their busy schedules to practice, rehearse, and perform concerts. If anyone has suggestions for improving the band please share them with me or a board member.

Warm regards,

Jennifer

The Band Newsletter, The Score, provides a way to share topics and information that do not lend themselves to email, Facebook, or tweets. Let us know your comments and suggestions about the Newsletter.

Spring Concert April 24 3:00 PM Blacksburg High School



"A Tribute to Veterans"

Tentative Program to include:

Victory At Sea: Richard Rogers

Lest We Forget: James Swearingen

Hymn To The Fallen: John Williams

Irving Berlin's Songs for America

Heritage Of Freedom: James Curnow

Flight: Claude T. Smith

Americans We: Henry Fillmore

It's Never Too Late

Vicki Scarratt



I had the pleasure and privilege of meeting Susan Brooker-Gross in early 2001 after she received a flute for Christmas. She called to say she was having some difficulties and asked if I would be willing to give her a few flute lessons. I knew immediately Susan was very special. Not many people attempt to learn a wind instrument in their 50s.

Susan had a strong musical background in voice and piano and, as it turned out, the difficulty she was having was quickly attributed to her flute, which was purchased from Tuesday Morning. (Tuesday Morning has many fine products, but flutes are not among them.) We had a good laugh over the pros and cons of purchasing an instrument from Tuesday Morning.

Susan was enthusiastic and continued to come to lessons. Her love of the flute, along with her dedication, perseverance, and serious practice were so evident. Not only did she learn to play the flute, she excelled. She quickly outgrew her Tuesday Morning flute, affectionately now nicknamed her “beach flute,” and purchased a beautiful new flute.

As Susan became more accomplished, I wanted her to have another outlet for her music so I told her about the Blacksburg Community Band. I brought some band music to her lesson, and I encouraged her to come to a rehearsal and just play what she was comfortable with. That was the beginning of her long association as a dedicated and valued member of the flute section and the band. She not only loved playing in band, but loved the newly formed friendships as well. (Isn't that a wonderful thing about band?)

Each year after the Holiday Concert, she would measure her progress by the number of notes she could successfully play in the technical passages in the band's perennial Christmas repertoire. This year she gleefully announced that she successfully played all of the sections in all of the pieces.

After she slipped on the stairs last Christmas, she sent me an email with the subject line “Susan's Latest.” And in typical Susan style, her main concern was that her fractured arm might not allow her to play the flute again and her worst fear (she said jokingly—no offense to our wonderful clarinet section) was she would have to switch to clarinet!

Susan took life's challenges in stride, never complaining, but instead choosing to move forward with a positive attitude and a quick-witted sense of humor. And now Susan has passed, and her family and friends face the challenge of a life without Susan.

Susan's untimely death is yet another reminder of the fragility of life. For me this is an “in your face” reminder to make the most of every day, every opportunity, and to cherish every friendship. Don't simply go through the motions. Be truly present in every moment. Connect, don't just exist. You may not get a second chance.

May we all channel our “inner Susan” and follow our dreams and passion, no matter our age. What have you got to lose? Nothing. And everything to gain, not only for yourself but for those whose lives you touch along the way. I know my life was forever changed for the better because of Susan.

Susan, I hope, wherever you are, you find another community band and teacher to share your joy and love for the flute. They will be lucky to know you; however, we will forever miss you.

It Can't be Three Years!!

Ed Schwartz & Leslie Palacios

It was late January 2013 that I announced to the band that I would be leaving for points south and taking Leslie with me. It is hard to believe that the last three years have sped by so quickly. As 2016 begins its speedy journey through our lives, I was asked to share what we have been up to here in Georgia.

First of all, we miss the Blacksburg Community Band a great deal and continue to keep up with the band's activities through the weekly band emails and from various members, particularly Harriett Cooper. The band will always be in our thoughts, and we celebrate all that you accomplish. We will make every attempt to attend the spring concert every year and continue to support the band in any way that we can. Our band activities here in Georgia have been, overall, very positive but, we also realize how fortunate we were to be in Blacksburg with such a wonderful group of friends and, frankly, "family."



We play in the Classic City Band here in Athens, Georgia; Leslie on flute (and occasional mallet percussion), and I am playing bass trombone. The band is, in many ways, very similar to the Blacksburg Community Band. It is slightly larger, with around 70 at most rehearsals and 80 members for our big concerts. Like the Blacksburg Community Band, the members have a wide variety of skills, ranging from intermediate to very advanced skills. Considering that Athens is a community of over 100,000, the Blacksburg Community Band is of a very respectable size and quality by comparison. As an aside, the Classic City Band is the oldest continuous community band in the state and will celebrate its 40th anniversary this year.

I am currently the Associate Conductor of the group and conduct a work or two on most concerts. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to program the 2015 Christmas concert and conduct most of it. I was able to put several of John Howell's works on the program, which were very well received. I was very pleased to be able to share John's music and introduce a new audience to the joys of his wonderful work.

Apart from the large band, there are several small ensembles within the Classic City Band, in which Leslie and I participate. I am in the Dixieland group (The Classic City Dixiedawgs) and have become its musical director. We perform about once a month, averaging about a dozen gigs per year. For those of you unaware of the University of Georgia mascot, it is a Bulldog (affectionately known as the Bulldawg or Dawgs), thus the reference to "dawgs" in the name. I have also subbed in their Big Band, The Classic City Swing. Interestingly, they had a polka band when I arrived and, recently, the leader of that group "retired" from the band. He is in his late 80's and has health issues. I was asked to take over that group, so Leslie and I do several polka concerts a year with this group of around 18 players. Finally, Leslie was able to convince the Classic City Band that we needed to put together a small group to play at many of the retirement homes at Christmas. This past December we played in five facilities, with ad hoc groups, using the small Salvation Army books. As an aside, Leslie used her visual artistic talents to create music binder covers for the Dixiedawgs and the Polka Band. She also, as a former band librarian, introduces the band to the "band pencil" and had a gross embossed for them to use. Such a stickler she is.

I think that I can say that we have become a part of the music community here and have stayed busy with several opportunities that were available to us and a few that we have created. We look forward to seeing everyone at the April 24th concert in Blacksburg and hope that you understand how fortunate you are to have the Blacksburg Community Band in your lives. Not only is it an incredible musical group for the size of your community, but you have an incredible group of people that spend the time to keep the band running smoothly.

More information about the Classic City Band can be found at: <http://www.classiccityband.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/Classic-City-Band-145860305481973/>

Blacksburg Community Band Joins the Association of Concert Bands

The Blacksburg Community Band is now an organizational member of the Association of Concert Bands (ACB). The ACB is a national organization promoting the civic wind band tradition and providing an opportunity for nonprofessional musicians to perform. Nationally, 520 bands, including 13 other bands in Virginia, belong to ACB. Individual and corporate memberships are also available.



ACB publishes a journal three times a year and supports its members with a unique array of educational, and supporting resources for community bands. One of the resources is the option to participate in a Blanket Performance License with Broadcast Music Inc. and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers. (BMI and ASCAP collect license fees on behalf of their songwriters, composers, and music publishers and distribute them as royalties to those members.)

Music copyright owners enjoy a number of different rights, including performance rights, print rights, and recording rights. Rental or purchase of sheet music or the purchase of a record does not authorize its public performance. Those who perform in public must obtain permission, e.g., a license, to do so. ACB has formed Blanket Performance Licensing Agreements with both BMI and ASCAP for performance rights for its members, which simplifies the process and reduces the cost of meeting our copyright obligations. The copyright exemptions for nonprofit organizations are very narrow. Even if no admission is charged for performances, the collection or mention of donations triggers the copyright obligations.

The annual organizational membership costs \$50 and the annual Blanket Performance License costs \$225. To learn more about the ACB visit their website www.acbands.org or speak with one of your

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Irving Berlin (1888 – 1989)–Did you know?

A piece in our Spring Concert program is a compilation of songs by Irving Berlin. You probably know that Irving Berlin was a very prolific and successful song writer and composer in the first



half of the 20th century. He wrote show tunes, Broadway musicals, and film scores. But did you know:

-He was born Israel Isidore Baline in Russia and immigrated with his family (his father was a Jewish cantor) to the U.S., New York City, in 1893 when he was 5 years old. They lived in the Lower East Side slums of NY. His father died when he was 13, and he left school to help support his family. He started by using his singing ability in the streets and saloons of the Bowery and Yiddish Theatre District where they lived. He quickly gained “street smarts” and learned what the public enjoyed and would pay for (an early trajectory similar to Louis Armstrong’s in New Orleans).

- A grateful and patriotic immigrant, he wrote the music and lyrics for “God Bless America.” It was written when he was a soldier in WWI but was not performed until the U.S. was about to enter WW II. He gave the royalty rights to the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts.
- He could not read or write music. Although he taught himself to play the piano he played only in the key of F# using just the black keys. He had a special transposing piano and used assistants to write his music and complete the harmony and composition.
- He was also a savvy business man and a founding member of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP).

Berlin’s life story is fascinating, reflecting American cultural, political, and musical developments of the early 20th century.

Some interesting links:

His special piano: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bO8VZoRw214>

A collection demonstrating his skill as a lyricist:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5MPrcX8xAI>