

# Maintaining the Integrity of Our Repertoire

Dr. Robert Rustowicz

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The body of literature written for the wind band is a remarkable entity. Depending the definition of the term “band,” we can find original works for band as early as the late eighteenth century in France. With the development of the school band program in this country during the mid-twentieth century, a continually increasing demand for new music was generated. The band repertoire has continued to grow in volume, breadth and quality ever since. This growth has fostered in our field a keen interest in new releases.

Obviously, the demand for new music continues to spur the composition of new works. Music written for school bands often addresses the needs of developing musicians through pedagogical means. Instrument ranges, rhythms, key signatures and articulations are generally designed to lie within the performers’ range of abilities. Contests (evaluated performances)

have also had an influence. With state contest lists periodically undergoing reassessment and adjustment, composers and publishers are naturally interested

in having their works included. Lastly, as teachers we have become accustomed to the availability of new music and

continue to look

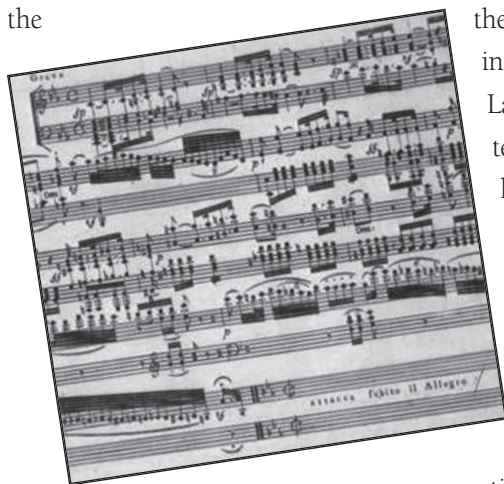
forward to its appearance. Even though our repertoire is relatively young, it is a living and maturing entity. It offers composers more opportunities for publication and performance than any other media.

The body of literature from which we select the music we perform is of a considerably greater quantity than fifty years ago. It is a remarkable situation, but it is not devoid of problems. In selecting music for young performers, it can be a simple matter of repeatedly returning to works of similar style and intent due to the high level of potential

success and accessibility they offer. Performances at contests are, perhaps, the most dominant issue in our concert preparations. The demand to be successful at such graded performances and the time necessary to adequately prepare them for performance may be a key factor in selecting music. Since the amount of preparatory time also limits the amount of literature to which we expose our students, our choice of music becomes more critical.

One of the results of our music selection process is that we have looked more favorably toward newer releases and have turned away from older, more established works—works written some time ago, such as during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Much of this older music is performed less frequently each year, and is in danger of literally being forgotten. The real problem occurs when these older works go out of print and are lost to the vast majority of band musicians and audiences, particularly with younger directors and in newer schools.

Not all older works in the repertoire experience this problem. Fortunately, many such works appear on contest lists (as a result



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of their level of technical and musical difficulty) and continue to be performed, such as the *Symphony in B Flat* (Paul Hindemith), the *Symphony No. 6 for Band* (Vincent Persichetti), the *Symphony for Band* (Morton Gould), and the *Symphony No. 3* (Vittorio Giannini). There are a vast number of original band works that are only rarely performed, including but not limited to:

Paul Fauchet	<i>Symphony in B Flat</i>
W. Francis McBeth	<i>Chant and Jubilo</i>
Felix Mendellsohn	<i>Overture for Band</i>
Howard Hanson	<i>Chorale and Alleluia</i>
Paul Creston	<i>Celebration Overture</i>
Darius Milhaud	<i>Suite Française</i>
Ottorino Respighi	<i>Huntingtower, Ballad for Band</i>
William Schuman	<i>Newsreel in Five Shots</i>
Robert Russell Bennett	<i>Symphonic Songs for Band</i> <i>Suite of Old American Dances</i>
Morton Gould	<i>Jericho</i>
Gordon Jacob	<i>An Original Suite for Military Band</i>
Clifton Williams	<i>Fanfare and Allegro</i>

Fortunately, we will never “lose” these works. The score and parts will remain on shelves in many band libraries and recorded performances will be kept and played for interest and leisure. Live performances, however, will certainly continue to decline. We run the risk of losing familiarity with a substantial body of valuable music.

We would do well to rejuvenate interest in this body of older music. Works such as these form the basis for our band heritage. Many played key roles in the development of our repertoire and provide us much information, material and insight into the

people and times in which they were written and the path taken by our developing repertoire. There is a wealth of musical styles and concepts available within these works with which we are unfamiliar. Much of it is written in a light, unpretentious manner and was intended to provide entertainment through easy listening.

The task of rejuvenating interest in these works requires us to first familiarize ourselves with the history of our repertoire. To this end, I would suggest obtaining a copy of *The Twentieth Century American Wind Band/Ensemble* by Frank Battisti (Meredith Music Publications). Additional information can be found in such books as *The Concert Band* by Richard Franco Goldman and *Bands of America* by Harry Wayne Schwartz. Locating scores/parts may require some investigation and exploration, particularly in the band libraries of older schools. Recordings are available and may also require some investigation (see *The Bicentennial Collection CD* set by the U.S. Marine Band).

The demands placed on our band programs, particularly in contest situations, affects our selection of music for performance. As a result, we often find ourselves placing the need to be successful in performance ahead of our students’ educational needs. We also have a philosophical responsibility to maintain the integrity of our repertoire. Attempting to occasionally program some of the more “mature” works in our repertoire would offer many positive benefits—not only to our students, but to our audiences and ourselves as well.

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