

# Composers of Great Band Works

by Dr. Brian Harris, Director of Bands  
McLennan Community College, Waco

## Charles Edward Ives (1874 - 1954)

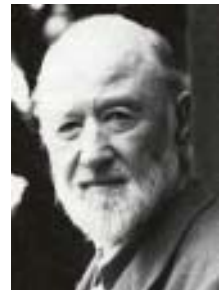
### Lifeline

- born in Danbury, Connecticut (October 20).
- had one brother, two years his junior (Joseph Moss).
- at 14, was a salaried church organist.
- at 17, wrote the organ piece *Variations on America*.
- left home at 18 to study for the Yale University entrance exam (he barely made it in).
- at 20, his father died.
- graduated from Yale at 23, then moved to New York to work with a life insurance company.
- after more than 13 years as a church organist, he “quit music” at age 27, devoting himself to his own unique style of composition.
- suffered a mental and physical breakdown at 31.
- married a minister’s daughter (her name: Harmony) at age 33.
- at 33 he started his own insurance company, which became the largest agency in the country.
- at 40, adopted a daughter (Edith Osborne Ives).
- had a heart attack at age 43.
- most of his creative output ceased by age 44; he remained virtually unknown as a composer until his late 50s.
- at 72, won a Pulitzer Prize for his *Third Symphony* - 36 years after he wrote it.
- died peacefully at age 79 in New York (May 19), while his wife and daughter held his hand.



### Anecdotes and Trivia

- his father (George) was a Union bandmaster during the Civil War.
- his mother (Mary Elizabeth) was a locally prominent choir singer.
- as a boy, his dad would have him sing in one key, while his dad accompanied in another.
- enjoyed playing sports, especially baseball, football, and tennis.
- was terrified of cameras.
- graduated from Yale with a B average in his music courses, but a D+ in everything else.
- was an innovator in the life insurance business, initiating many ideas that have now become standard practice such as a training school of agents and the concept of “estate planning.”
- once arranged to have two bands march around a park playing different tunes so he could hear what it sounded like when they approached and passed each other.
- Ives and his wife believed that their love for each other was a reflection of divine love and that his music was their means of spreading that love into the world.
- would hire groups to play his works so he could hear and revise them; the reaction of the players was a combination of laughter and outrage.
- published many of his works at his own expense and would give them away to anyone who requested a copy.
- wrote two pieces for band, *March Intercollegiate* (1892) and *March Omega Lambda Chi* (1896), both of which he derived from his earlier keyboard works of the same title.
- extant compositions include more than 40 orchestral works (including 4 symphonies), 23 keyboard works, 23 chamber pieces, 41 choral works, and 151 songs.
- once said “Music is life.”



### Sources

*Ives* by The Charles Ives Society, Inc. (1998); *Charles Ives and His World* by J. Peter Burkholder (1996)  
*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980); *Charles Ives Remembered* by Vivian Perlis (1974)

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### Aaron Copland (1900 - 1990)

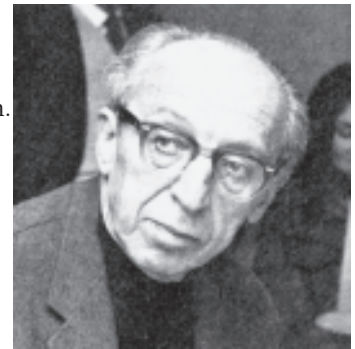
#### Lifeline

- born in Brooklyn, New York (November 19).
- was the youngest of five children (two brothers, two sisters)
- received his earliest music instruction (piano lessons from his sister) at age 7.
- by age 8 he started to improvise and make up tunes on the piano.
- at 13 his father allowed him to study piano with a local teacher.
- when 15, he was inspired to pursue a career in writing music after attending a concert by Paderewski.
- at age 16 he acquired a “mail order” course on harmony.
- began formal composition lessons during his senior year in high school (age 17).
- after graduating high school, he continued private music studies while living at home.
- at 20, spent a year in France where he met Nadia Boulanger, with whom he studied for 3 years.
- returned to New York at age 23, determined to make a living as a composer.
- at 39 was able to obtain some fame and financial success by writing film and ballet scores.
- at age 45 won a Pulitzer Prize for *Appalachian Spring*
- royalties from publications and recordings of his works gave him financial security as early as age 46.
- began conducting in his mid-50’s, earning top dollar for guest appearances.
- by 70, his estate was worth several million dollars.
- continued to conduct until the age of 82, when his memory losses created too great a challenge.
- died (December 2) of respiratory failure in a New York hospital at the age of 90.
- in accordance with his will, his large estate established the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, whose purpose was to “encourage and improve the public knowledge and appreciation of serious American contemporary music.”



#### Anecdotes and Trivia

- both parents immigrated to the US at different times; both came from Eastern Europe.
- his father (Harris) owned a prosperous mercantile store in Brooklyn.
- his mother (Sarah) attended high school in Dallas and considered herself a Texan.
- he was sensitive about his crooked teeth and avoided smiling for photographs.
- regretted that he never attended college.
- preferred to compose at night, saying “Music is largely emotions and I can’t get emotional early in the day.”
- his composition style is characterized by collage, once saying “I don’t compose; I assemble materials.”
- was a frequent lecturer and writer about music.
- his 1939 text for music appreciation classes, “What to Listen for in Music,” is still in print.
- many of his early works were booed and hissed by audiences, conductors, and musicians alike.
- was particularly fond of composers Mahler, Ives, and Nielsen.
- enjoyed playing tennis, but his true passion was reading (“not to learn anything, but from the pure love of it”).
- liked cats and dogs; once had a Great Dane named Nadja (in honor of his teacher, Nadia Boulanger).
- arranged his popular “Simple Gifts” (extracted from the ballet *Appalachian Spring*) for band in 1956.
- his sole original work for band, *Emblems* (1964), was commissioned by the College Band Directors National Association.



#### Sources

*Aaron Copland* by Howard Pollack (1999)

*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980)

# Composers of Great Band Works

by Dr. Brian Harris

Director of Bands McLennan Community College

## William Howard Schuman (1910 -1992)

### Lifeline

- born in New York City (August 4), the youngest of two children (sister, Audrey).
- received a few years of violin lessons in grade school, but did not enjoy practicing.
- because of his academic abilities, was sent to a public junior high for gifted students.
- attended summer camp in Maine, where he began writing musical shows and songs.
- in high school, organized a successful jazz band known as “Billy Schuman and his Alamo Society Orchestra.”
- at age 17, enrolled in business studies at New York University.
- at age 19, attended his first orchestral concert -the next day he enrolled in private harmony lessons and decided to leave the university in order to pursue a career in music.
- began collegiate studies at the Juilliard School at age 21 and later studied in Europe at Salzburg’s Mozarteum.
- at age 24, received a bachelor’s degree in music education at Columbia Teacher’s College.
- accepted a music teaching position at Sarah Lawrence College (Bronxville, NY) the same year.
- married at age 25 (Frances Prince).
- at age 25, his First Symphony was premiered
- completed his master’s degree at Columbia University at age 26.
- at age 27, his Second Symphony won a contest judged by Aaron Copland, who became an advocate and lifelong friend.
- wrote his first piece for band (*Newsreel*) at age 31.
- when 32, first child Anthony William was born.
- won the first Pulitzer Prize ever awarded for music at age 33.
- at age 35, became director of the Juilliard School of Music, initiating changes that promoted it to premiere status.
- when 38, daughter Andrea Frances was born.
- wrote *New England Triptych* for orchestra at age 45, later transcribing each movement for band (*Be Glad Then, America; When Jesus Wept; Chester Overture*).
- at age 51, he left Juilliard to assume leadership of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.
- retired from the Lincoln Center after suffering a mild heart attack at age 57.
- was actively composing new works until his death at age 81.
- died (February 22) of heart failure after hip surgery in a Manhattan hospital.

### Anecdotes and Trivia

- both parents (Samuel and Rachel) were of German descent.
- was named after President William Howard Taft; but known as “Bill” to family.
- as a youth, his passion was baseball, not music.
- showed an early interest in drama, writing and producing his own play in junior high school.
- learned to play string bass in high school, also experimenting with piano and saxophone.
- bought a clarinet at a pawn shop and sterilized the reeds by boiling them in coffee “ to give them a better flavor.”
- was known for being aggressive, with a reputation as a “wild boy” and a practical joker.
- in college, created his own party society, the UMPPAA (“United Musical Poker Players’ Association of America”).

**Works for Band:** *Newsreel*, *In Five Shots* -1941, *George Washington Bridge* -1950, *The Band Song* -1953, *Chester Overture* -1956, *When Jesus Wept*-1958, *Variations on “America”* (Ives)- 1968, *Dedication Fanfare* -1968, *Be Glad Then, America* -1975

**Sources:** *William Schuman* by Flora Rheta Schreiber and Vincent Persichetti (1954); *William Schuman: Documentary* by Christopher Rouse (1980); *William Schuman: A Bio-Bibliography* by K. Gary Adams (1998)



# Composers of Great Band Works

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McLennan Community College, Waco

## Robert Russell Bennett (1894 - 1981)

### Lifeline

- born in Kansas City, Missouri (June 15).
- at age 4, suffered a bout with polio and consequently was educated at home by his mother until age 12; later graduated from public high school as valedictorian.
- as a child, was taught piano and violin by his parents.
- when 9, his father helped him notate his first original piano piece.
- at 22, moved to New York City to pursue a career as a musician/composer/conductor.
- at 25 he married Louise Merrill; a daughter (Jean) was born a year later.
- at age 32, moved to Paris to study composition with Nadia Boulanger, completing his first Symphony under her tutelage.
- at 33, returned to the U.S. and resumed scoring for Broadway shows; also received a Guggenheim fellowship to make possible a year devoted to composing in Europe; he hoped to secure a conducting position at a German opera house.
- at age 34, returned again to New York having decided to continue a career in composing rather than conducting.
- at 39, became music director for Rudy Vallee's "Royal Gelatin Hour" weekly radio show; his first opera premiered at the Juilliard School, generating favorable reviews.
- in his early 40's, moved to Los Angeles to work on films; the remainder of his career would be divided between Hollywood and Broadway; was given his own weekly half-hour radio music show entitled "Russell Bennett's Notebook."
- began work on *Suite of Old American Dances* at age 53; he conducted the Goldman Band in the 1949 premiere.
- at 57 began work on music for the *Victory at Sea* television series; completed twenty-six half-hour episodes.
- at 63, his commissioned work *Symphonic Songs for Band* was premiered by the National Intercollegiate Band.
- through his 60's and 70's, he continued to work on his own compositions, a few select theater productions, his NBC television show "Project 20," and an occasional guest-conducting assignment.
- died at age 87 (August 19).

### Anecdotes and Trivia

- his father (George) was professional trumpet and violin player.
- his mother (May) was an accomplished pianist and music teacher.
- had one sister (Beatrice), two years his junior; a third sibling did not survive infancy.
- when in college, he did his counterpoint exercises in ink on the first draft during breaks between playing piano for silent films.
- at one time was a roommate with George and Ira Gershwin.
- was known as "Russell" to acquaintances.
- was an avid tennis player; for a brief time played semi-professional baseball in Kansas City.
- volunteered for service during WWI and was made bandmaster of the 70<sup>th</sup> Infantry Band. Later said that the band consisted of "fifty-one men, one of whom could play."
- was commissioned to write band music to be synchronized to a fireworks and water fountains display for the 1939 World's Fair in New York City.
- *Suite of Old American Dances* was originally titled *Electric Park* (a park in Kansas City he was fond of visiting).
- between 1920 –1970 he collaborated with all of the best-known Broadway writers of musical stage productions: Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Frederick Lowe.
- claimed to have worked on almost 300 musicals. Examples of the more popular ones are: *Show Boat* (1927), *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), *Kiss Me Kate* (1948), *South Pacific* (1949), *The King and I* (1951), *My Fair Lady* (1956), *The Sound of Music* (1959), *Camelot* (1960).
- created orchestrations of musicals at an amazing speed, often working for more than 24 hours without rest.
- worked almost exclusively in ink and "straight down the page" – writing all parts simultaneously rather than filling in melody and bass lines then working in the inner voicings.
- preferred an evening of opera or symphonic music to an opening night on Broadway.
- composed seven symphonies, three operas, numerous concerto and sonata works, choral works, keyboard pieces, film music, and more than 20 original compositions for concert band/wind ensemble.

### Sources

*The Life and Work of Robert Russell Bennett* by Roy Benton Hawkins (1989, UMI Dissertation Services); *Robert Russell Bennett: A Bio-Bibliography* by George J. Ferencz (1990, Greenwood Press); *The Broadway sound: the autobiography and selected essays of Robert Russell Bennett* by George J. Ferencz (1999, University of Rochester Press)



# Composers of Great Band Works

by Brian Harris, *Bandroom.com Publications*

## Karl Lawrence King (1891 - 1971)

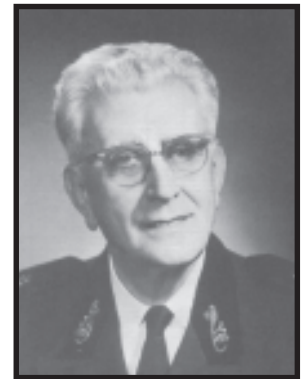
### Lifeline

- born in Paintersville, Ohio (February 21), an only child.
- the family moved to Canton, Ohio when King was 11 years old.
- at age 12, he used earnings from his newspaper route to purchase a cornet and pay for music lessons; later switched to baritone because of embouchure problems.
- left school at age 14 after completing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade; took a job as a printer's assistant with the local newspaper.
- at 17, had two numbers (a march and a dirge) accepted for publication.
- at 19, he joined the Robinson Famous Circus band as a baritone player.
- after three years spent with different circus bands, he joined the Barnum and Bailey Circus at age 22.
- at 23, accepted his first director/conductor position with the Sells-Floto/Buffalo Bill Circus band.
- by age 24, he had more than 150 compositions in print.
- married at age 25, resigning his job with the Sells-Floto band.
- at 26, accepted position as conductor of the Barnum and Bailey Circus band.
- at age 27, he enlisted in the US Army (WWI) but the war ended before he began service; he returned to his hometown of Canton as director of a local band.
- at 28, he began his music publishing business and his only son (Karl L. King, Jr.) was born.
- at 29, the family moved to Fort Dodge, Iowa where he accepted the job as director of the municipal band, a position he held until his death 52 years later.
- at 32, his father died.
- at age 59, he was feted with a testimonial dinner attended by the governor of Iowa, a Congressman, other dignitaries and leaders in the band world including Glenn Bainum, A.A. Harding, Paul Yoder, and William Santleman (conductor of the Marine Band).
- at 62, was awarded an honorary doctorate in music from Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma.
- at 70, conducted a clinic-concert of his works for the Texas Bandmasters Association in San Antonio, Texas.
- at 74, his 96-year-old mother died.
- at 79, a disastrous fire destroyed the building where the Fort Dodge band was headquartered, destroying most of his original manuscripts.
- died (March 31) of acute diverticulosis at age 80 in a Fort Dodge, Iowa hospital.



### Anecdotes and Trivia

- his father (Sandusky) sold farm equipment and played tuba in the town band.
- his mother (Anna) was not involved in music.
- met his future wife (Ruth) at age 11 while delivering newspapers to her father's music store.
- his only formal instruction in composition consisted of four piano lessons and one harmony lesson.
- taught himself how to orchestrate by studying scores.
- founded and ran the K.L. King Music House (music publishing).
- was mostly interested in composing and conducting; did not enjoy teaching music lessons.
- was influential in establishing the "Iowa Band Law" which allowed cities to levy a local tax "for the maintenance and employment of a band for musical purposes." This law was eventually adopted by 28 other states.
- was a founding member of the American Bandmasters Association and the Iowa Bandmasters Association.
- was one of the first composers to write music for the (then) growing school band movement.
- composed over 200 marches and close to 100 other compositions (waltzes, serenades, galops, etc.).
- once said: "I've sung my song. It was a rather simple one; it wasn't too involved; I'm happy about it."



### Sources

*Karl L. King* by Thomas J. Hatton (1975); *Karl L. King: His Life and His Music* by Jess Louis Gerardi, Jr.; Karl L. King website (<http://www.s-hamilton.k12.ia.us/KarlKing>)

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## Darius Milhaud (1892 - 1974)

### Lifeline

- . born in Aix-en-Provence, a town in southern France (September 4).
- . was an only child.
- . began violin lessons at age 7.
- . at age 13, began studies in harmony with the conductor of the local army band.
- . began studies at the Paris Conservatory as a violin student, then switched to composition.
- . by his mid-20's, had established polytonality as the norm for his works.
- . from age 24 to 26, lived in Brazil as a guest of the ambassador from France.
- . on a visit to London, heard American jazz for the first time (age 27).
- . at age 29, he toured the USA as pianist of his own works.
- . married his cousin Madeleine at age 32.
- . at 38, son Daniel was born.. left France at age 46 when the Nazi regime took power, securing a teaching job at Mills College in Oakland, California.
- . returned to France at age 54 as professor of composition at the Paris Conservatory (his alma mater) but retained his post at Mills College.
- . at age 71, resigned his teaching duties due to failing health and moved to Geneva, Switzerland.
- . died at age 81 in Geneva (June 22).



### Anecdotes and Trivia

- . last name is pronounced “mee - yo,” with stress on the second syllable.
- . came from a wealthy Jewish family.
- . both parents were musically talented.
- . his father was an almond merchant.
- . was a member of Les Six, a group of young French composers which included Honegger and Poulenc.
- . early in his career, he was considered by the public as “an unprincipled exploiter of fashionable oddities” for his highly unusual harmonic treatments.
- . several premieres of his works caused audience riots, necessitating the use of police to clear the house.
- . his popular ballet score, *La création du monde*, was inspired from hearing authentic black jazz in Harlem.
- . wrote his famous band work, *Suite française*, in 1944 using folk songs from various regions of France. Other works for band include *Introduction et marche funébre* (1936), *Deux Marches* (1945), *West Point Suite* (1948), and *Musique de théâtre* (1970).
- . composed 18 string quartets, two of which can be played separately or together.
- . wrote a song cycle using as text an agricultural catalog's description of farm equipment.
- . enjoyed traveling despite severe rheumatoid arthritis (which necessitated the use of a wheelchair by age 40).
- . was a prolific composer, completing more than 450 works, including 15 opera, 17 ballet scores, 12 symphonies, and music for about 30 films.



### Sources

My Happy Life: An Autobiography by Darius Milhaud (1974)  
The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (1980)  
Conversations with Madeleine Milhaud by Roger Nichols (1996)

# John Barnes Chance (1932 - 1972)

## Composers of Great Band Works

**Dr. Brian Harris, McLennan Community College, Waco, Texas**  
**Timothy P. Hoffman, Southview High School, Sylvania, Ohio**

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### Lifeline

Born in Beaumont, Texas (November 20, 1932), the youngest of three children

Age 9 - began piano lessons

Age 14 - became a percussionist at Beaumont High School

Age 18 - awarded a music scholarship to attend the University of Texas at Austin

Age 22 - awarded the B.M. in Theory-Composition; remained at UT as a graduate student.

Age 23 - won a Carl Owens Award for his composition "Adagio for Clarinet and Strings"

Age 23 - awarded the M.M. degree in Theory-Composition

Age 24 - began three years of duty in Army service bands as a percussionist and arranger

Age 24 - won a second Carl Owens Award for his graduate thesis, *Symphony in Three Movements for Orchestra*

Age 22 - married Patricia Weaver, a former high school classmate; divorced seven years later

Age 27 - received a Ford Foundation Young Composers Project grant; assigned to the Greensboro, NC public schools

Age 33 - received Ostwald Award from the American Bandmasters Association for *Variations on a Korean Folk Song*

Age 30 - married Linda Vey Riley and became a loving father to her young children, Jeffrey and Kimberly

Age 34 - accepted a music faculty position at the University of Kentucky

Age 37 - promoted to associate professor and appointed head of the UK theory-composition program

Age 39 - while airing a tent in his backyard, a metal support touched the electric fence used to confine his dogs. He died at 12:40 p.m. at Central Baptist Hospital from cardiac arrest (August 16).

### Anecdotes and Trivia

- grew up in Beaumont with an older brother and sister
- as a high school senior, his one-movement "Symphony for Orchestra" was premiered by the school orchestra
- somewhat of an introvert in college, he did not have many personal friends
- he did not excel in class work and often did only what was asked of him, if at all
- he frequently would write all night, sleep a few hours, then continue writing again; as a result he often missed classes
- professors were reluctant to give him low grades because his finished assignments showed much talent
- at UT-Austin he studied composition with Clifton Williams, Kent Kennan, and Janet McCaughey; made life-long friends of composers Francis McBeth and Lawrence Weiner.
- served as an arranger for the 4th and 8th United States Army Bands
- while stationed in Seoul, South Korea, he first heard "Arrirang," the well-known Korean folk song he later used as the theme for *Variations on a Korean Folk Song*

## John Barnes Chance

- was interested in electronics and developed considerable skill at building stereo components from kits
- before and after his residency in Greensboro he worked at a stereo component store in Austin, Texas
- during his time in Greensboro, he wrote numerous works for the high school ensembles including his first piece for band, *Incantation and Dance*
- while working at UK, he collaborated with Martin Mailman and Francis McBeth on a government project designed to bring cultural activity to the mountain children of western Arkansas
- wrote music for a variety of media, including band, orchestra, chorus, and chamber and solo instruments
- after his tragic death, a scholarship fund was established at UK for students majoring in music composition

## Works for Band

WGOOM

*Overture to a Musical Comedy*

*Incantation and Dance*

*Burletta*

*Introduction and Capriccio for Piano and Twenty-Four Winds;*

*Variations on a Korean Folk Song*

*Blue Lake Overture; Elegy*

*Concerto for Trumpet and Band*

*Symphony No. 2 for Winds and Percussion.*

## Sources

The life and works of John Barnes Chance (graduate thesis by Timothy P. Hoffman, 1981)

Program Notes for Band (Norman E. Smith, 2002)

Obituary (School Musician Director and Teacher, November 1972)

Correspondence with Joseph Baber (University of Kentucky, 2004)

*Dr. Brian Harris is Director of Bands at McLennan Community College in Waco, Texas. Prior to MCC, he taught public school band and was Associate Professor of Music at the University of Texas at San Antonio. His music degrees are from Florida State University, Louisiana State University, and Samford University. He is author of the Warner Brothers method book 'Directional Warm-Ups for Band' and offers several teaching resources for band directors at [www.bandroom.com](http://www.bandroom.com).*

*Timothy P. Hoffman is currently director of bands at Southview High School in Sylvania, Ohio where he directs the Cougar Marching Band, Symphonic Band, Jazz Band, Pit Orchestra, and percussion ensemble. He is a member of MENC, OMEA, ASBDA, the National Band Association, and Phi Beta Mu. In addition to having chaired the OMEA District One Band Competition for the past ten years, he is active as a clinician, private clarinet and saxophone instructor, and performing musician in the Toledo area.*