

In Concert with the University of
Illinois Symphonic Band



The Begian Years * Vol. VI

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 2. Siegfried's Rhine JourneyRichard Wagner (10:14)
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- ABOUT THIS SERIES -

In order to preserve and make permanent the artistic accomplishments of Dr. Harry Begian at the University of Illinois, Mark Custom Recording Service, Inc. is producing a limited number of compact disc recordings. Compact discs such as this one have been remastered from the original University of Illinois tape recordings made between 1970 and 1984. Works which have been included on this compact disc were selected personally by Dr. Begian. This project was undertaken by Mark Records as a tribute to Dr. Harry Begian and the memory of Vincent S. Morette and his great admiration of Dr. Begian. Many of the older Master Tapes in the recording industry have undergone a chemical change between the acetate and the polyester substrait binding that holds them together. To keep the original integrity and historical perspective, the compact discs in this series have not been altered to compensate for these changes.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) developed a keen musical interest at an early age. Having mastered the violin and clavier by age fifteen, Bach devoted himself to the study and mastery of the organ. His musical career flourished as an organist, but he soon dedicated his life to the art of composition. Many of his greatest works were composed during the twenty-seven years he served as music director of the St. Thomas and St. Nicholas churches in Leipzig. One of the truly great composers, Bach's music is inspiring in any setting and is well suited for the concert band.

One of the characteristic large musical structures of the Baroque period was the combination of a prelude, toccata, or fantasia with a fugue. Most of Bach's important organ works in this form date from his Weimar period, although a few were written at Cöthen and Leipzig. The *Toccatà and Fugue in D minor* (BWV 565) dates from 1709 and is an example of a form popularized by Buxtehude, in which the fugue is interspersed with sections of free fantasia. Among the best known works ever composed for organ, Bach's *Toccatà and Fugue in D minor* provides a marvelous challenge for the most virtuosic organist. Five published transcriptions for the concert band exist of this masterwork, including the one so expertly crafted by Erik Leidzen and performed by the University of Illinois Symphonic Band.

Although **Richard Wagner** (1813-1883) led a tempestuous life, characterized by poverty, political persecution and derision, he stands as a giant in the history of nineteenth-century music. A precocious child, he learned much of value concerning the stage from his stepfather, Ludwig Geyer, an actor of considerable talent. Inspired to become a musician, Wagner's phenomenal progress in the study of counterpoint and his intimate knowledge of the theater created in him a desire to compose operas with a dramatic story, utilizing orchestral parts equal to the vocal parts. For Wagner, music functioned to serve the needs of dramatic expression and in this regard he had no peers.

Siegfried's Rhine Journey from *Die Götterdämmerung* belongs to the scene which is an interlude between the Prologue and Act One. The music opens with the theme of the "Annunciation of Fate." As the day dawns, an expressive pianissimo melody is heard followed by the theme of Siegfried as hero, performed by the horn. The music portrays Siegfried's parting from his beloved Brünnhilde. In a flurry of leitmotifs, the music depicts the past glorious deeds of the hero and looks ahead to his impending doom. The masterful band transcription of *Siegfried's Rhine Journey* was done by Lucien Cailliet.

Richard Strauss (1864-1949), like Gustav Mahler, was a celebrated conductor. Strauss was trained under Hans von Bulow and held conducting positions in the opera houses of Vienna, Weimar, Berlin and Munich. He was frequently honored throughout Europe as a composer and conductor and was widely recognized as the dominant figure in German musical life during the early twentieth century. As the definitive post-Romantic composer, Strauss is known for his symphonic poems, generally composed before 1900, and for his operas, which came later. Strauss wrote symphonic poems with both philosophical and descriptive programs. *Don Juan* (1889) was composed after a poem by Nikolaus Lenau and is regarded as Strauss's first completely mature work. *Don Juan* is vividly scenic, highly descriptive, and brilliantly orchestrated. This demanding transcription for concert band was penned by Mark Hindsley.

In 1905, Richard Strauss leaped to fame as an opera composer with *Salome*, his first true operatic success. Strauss accepted the Wagnerian principles of continuous music, the use of leitmotifs, and the centrality of the polyphonic orchestra. *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911) transports the listener to the elegant, stylized, aristocratic wig-and-powder milieu of eighteenth-century Vienna. Without a doubt, *Der Rosenkavalier* is Strauss's operatic masterpiece. The ultra-Romantic style, sensuous melodies, chromatic harmonies, lively sense of comedy, and the colorful orchestrations characterize this masterpiece. Best known and most frequently performed, of course, are the light-hearted and melodious Viennese waltzes. The setting for concert band was transcribed by Lucien Cailliet.

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) began to show interest in music at the age of eleven by playing the violin. By the time he was twenty, Hindemith was concertmaster of the Frankfurt Opera (1915-23) and, after making viola his specialty, toured Europe with the Amar Hindemith Quartet. Around 1936, he became interested in the musical *Jugendbewegung*, a movement devoted to the furtherance of active music-making among amateurs. Hindemith's continuing interest in composing *Gebrauchsmusik*—music for practical use rather than music for art's sake — stemmed from this association. In 1927 Hindemith was appointed professor of composition at the Academy of Music in Berlin and out of his teaching experience grew his famous theoretical work, *The Craft of Musical Composition*. Published in 1937, this volume was, at the time, the most comprehensive theory of harmony yet devised. In 1940, Hindemith was appointed to the Yale University School of Music faculty. Later he took up residence in Switzerland and made frequent visits to the United States until his death in 1963.

Hindemith wrote the *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Carl Maria von Weber* in 1943, during his tenure as a professor at the Yale School of Music. Hindemith felt strongly that his "Metamorphosis" should be available in a band version and asked his colleague, Keith Wilson, to do the transcription. Not until 1960 was permission received from Hindemith's publishers; even then, the work, regarded by Wilson as his largest and most significant transcription, took one and a half years to complete. The *March* is the final movement of the work and it reveals Hindemith's knowledge of wind combinations and timbral contrasts.

The most important part of the march theme is a two-bar fragment which is stated by the brass at the very onset. This reappears and is developed at different points of punctuation throughout the movement. There is also a more lyrical "trio" theme which is repeated and developed, fortissimo, featuring most notably a stunning crescendo passage in the horns. The burden of the melodic writing shifts from the woodwinds in the initial presentation of the themes to the brass in the last half of the piece.

The symphonic tone poem *Death and Transfiguration* (1889) was the second symphonic poem of Strauss and comes in order between *Don Juan* and *Till Eulenspiegel*. The programmatic content of *Death and Transfiguration* concerns a man who lies dying in his room. The atmosphere of death hangs heavily over his sick bed as he dreams of his childhood and youth. He grows weaker and, at last, sinks back, yielding to death. But, out of the darkness comes his real victory -- release from the world, transfiguration. The solemn theme of the transfiguring triumph wells up gradually to a superb climax from which it relaxes into eternal serenity. The musical form can best be understood as an allegro in free sonata form with a slow introduction and a hymn-like epilogue. This dramatic and stirring composition was arranged for concert band by James Keays.

Notes by Dr. John R. Locke, Director of Bands, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Sources for program notes:

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Credits

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Performance Recording: Great Hall, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts

Program Notes: John R. Locke of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Recording Engineers: Carl Volkers, James Kurowski, Steve Pierson, Rex Anderson

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS BAND

In the 1920's, John Philip Sousa called it the "World's Greatest College Band." During separate guest conducting appearances in the 1950's, Edwin Franko Goldman acclaimed it "second to none," and the "finest of all concert bands." More recently, many of the country's most prominent composers and conductors have written in terms such as these:

"I have never heard such professional playing and sheer musicianship from any band"

"I have never heard any band, professional or otherwise, that has the warmth of tone and brilliance of sound that the Concert Band has."

"I know of no other band that could have played so much difficult music so well."

"One can easily see why the University of Illinois Bands continue to lead the nation in cultural attainment."

Shortly after the University of Illinois opened in 1868, a military band was organized. The military band became also a concert band and gave its first formal concert in 1890. Beginning in 1906, the University of Illinois Bands were guided to a position of eminence by Albert Austin Harding, universally regarded as "the father of the college band." Mark Hindsley, who had come to the University in 1934 as principal assistant, became Director of Bands in 1948 upon the retirement of Harding. It was during Hindsley's tenure that the University of Illinois Band Building was planned, constructed and dedicated to Harding. It is Hindsley who receives credit for initiating the far-sighted project of producing long playing disc recordings of the University of Illinois Concert Band.

Without question, Albert Austin Harding and Mark Hindsley were pioneers in the college band field, both as conductors and as arrangers. Both conductors produced numerous transcriptions of orchestral repertoire for performance by the Illinois Band greatly enriching the amount of quality music available for band performance. Upon the retirement of Hindsley in 1970, Dr. Harry Begian was appointed Director of Bands, only the third person ever to serve in that position.

During Dr. Begian's tenure at Illinois, the Symphonic Band performed virtually every work of substance in the concert band repertoire including original compositions, transcriptions and marches. Dr. Begian greatly enjoyed conducting the transcriptions of Harding and Hindsley, continuing the grand legacy of the Illinois Band. Further, Dr. Begian championed the music of Percy Grainger, producing a landmark two-album set of Grainger's works. Among transcribed literature, Begian is perhaps best known for his interpretive genius with the tone poems of Richard Strauss. Among original band literature, Begian's name is inseparably linked with the *Armenian Dances, Part I and II* of Alfred Reed which were composed for and dedicated to him. Additionally, Dr. Begian's career at Illinois demonstrated a devotion to march music which was second to none. Producing several march albums, Begian demonstrated interpretive possibilities to the band world which have long been admired and imitated.

In 1985, after the retirement of Dr. Begian, James Keene was appointed as the fourth Director of Bands in the history of the University of Illinois. Before coming to Illinois, Keene served for five years as director of Bands at the University of Arizona during which his bands received national recognition and acclaim through their concert tours and convention performances. Previous to his appointment at Arizona, Keene taught at East Texas State University, the University of South Carolina, Louisiana Tech University and the University of Michigan. At the University of Illinois, the Symphonic Band has continued to flourish under the leadership of Keene with frequent performances throughout the country at the most prestigious conferences and conventions.

- Dr. Harry Begian -

Conductor and Director Emeritus, University of Illinois Bands

Dr. Harry Begian is one of the world's most renowned band conductors. He was Director of Bands at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign from 1970 to 1984. Prior to that appointment he was director of Bands at Michigan State University for three years and at Wayne State University for the previous three years. Dr. Begian's work at both M.S.U. and W. S. U. carried forward the reputation he earned during his many years at Detroit's Cass Technical High School where he developed one of the finest high school bands in the country. In addition to his band conducting duties, during his last few years at Cass Tech, Begian headed the Music and Performing Arts Departments.

Begian's early musical training was in the Detroit area where he studied trumpet with Leonard Smith and flute with Larry Teal. He received undergraduate and masters degrees at Wayne State University and a Ph.D. at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

Begian organized and conducted his first band and orchestra while in his teens and has studied conducting at Tanglewood, summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has appeared as guest-conductor, clinician and lecturer throughout the United States, Canada and Australia. Along with his band conducting activities, he has also conducted operatic and musical comedy performances, community bands and orchestras, and church choir. In 1987, the musicians of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra invited Dr. Begian to conduct a formal concert in Detroit's Orchestra Hall.

A charter member of the American School Band Directors Association, he is also a past-president of the American Bandmasters Association and a member of the College Band Directors National Association. An honorary member of the National Band Association and Phi Beta Mu Band Fraternity. Begian is also a member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, Phi Delta Kappa and Omicron Delta Kappa. Most recently he was conferred honorary memberships in Kappa Kappa Psi and Tau Beta Sigma.

Dr. Harry Begian is a recipient of the National Band Associations Citation of Excellence, the Edwin Franko Goldman Award, the Notre Dame St. Cecelia Award and was elected to the Academy of Wind and Percussion Arts. His more than 60 record albums produced with the University of Illinois Symphonic Band comprise, what has been called "the most distinguished and complete collection of recorded band performances in existence."

After a year of retirement, Begian returned to the podium for two years as conductor of the Purdue University Symphonic Band from 1985-1987. He is presently active as guest-conductor, clinician, adjudicator and lecturer with over 20 engagements a year, is a Consulting Editor to The Instrumentalist magazine and serves on the Board of Directors of the Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic.





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