



Coda Connections

Columbia Bands, Inc.
Quarterly Newsletter

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Columbia Bands Website

Greetings, fans and members of the Columbia Bands!

The jazz band enjoyed two excellent performances this fall, the concert band has been hard at work preparing some amazing winter-themed music, and Flute Cocktail is back in session, with the highest group membership in our history. All groups are ready to entertain you with some wonderful arrangements and original works.

Please also remember that the members of Columbia Bands, Inc. value your feedback, so feel free to contact us any time with comments, questions, or suggestions.

Sincerely,

Len Morse
Coda Connections Editor

Performance Calendar

(Local public performances only)



December:

Sun, 12/14, 3:00-5:00PM, All three CBI ensembles (concert band, flute choir, jazz band) at [River Hill High School](#), Clarksville, MD

Recommendation: Lincolnshire Posy

by Mike Blackman (Columbia Concert Band Director)

So you like the music that you've heard from the Columbia Concert Band and would like to hear some more compositions for winds and percussion? I might suggest that you start with a piece that many conductors consider to be the most significant piece in the band repertoire - "[Lincolnshire Posy](#)" by Australian-born [Percy Grainger](#).

Grainger refers to this six-movement work as a "bunch of wildflowers." Each movement is an adaptation of a different folk song that he collected on a 1905-1906 trip to Lincolnshire, England. Grainger traveled the countryside with a primitive wax cylinder recorder strapped to his back, in search of anyone who was willing to sing for him. His settings of these folk songs were an attempt to duplicate not only the melodies, but also the exact styles of the performances. This makes the piece very difficult to play, as the rhythms of the original performances were often distorted by varying degrees of inebriation, and/or simply by



the amateur nature of the singing. Grainger wrote:

"Each number is intended to be a kind of musical portrait of the singer who sang its underlying melody...a musical portrait of the singer's personality no less than of his habits of song, his regular or irregular wonts of rhythm, his preference for gaunt or ornately arabesque delivery, his contrasts of legato and staccato, his tendency towards breadth or delicacy of tone."

The first movement, "Dublin Bay," opens with a progression of parallel major triads which immediately suggests an unstable tonal center. As it progresses, the melody becomes increasingly ambiguous as the music becomes bimodal and is even 'interrupted' by the heroic statement of a related folk song, "The Duke of Marlborough."

"Horkstow Grange," subtitled, "The Miser and his Man - a local tragedy," is the second, and shortest movement. Interestingly, the text, which is quite vivid and certainly tragic, is not symbolically reflected in this beautiful, flowing, straightforward melody. Legendary conductor (and editor of the revised edition of "Lincolnshire Posy") Frederick Fennell suggests that Grainger set it as a kind of requiem to the men in the story and their "falling out."

In contrast to "Horkstow Grange," "Rufford Park Poachers" is perhaps the most complex of the six settings in this work. The ensemble is first faced with the decision of which of two versions to perform. Grainger, in his typical manner, offers the following advice:

"If you have a soprano saxophonist who can play the solo from bar 19 to bar 46 LOUDLY, piercingly, feelingly and vibrantly, use version B. If not, this solo may be played on a Flugelhorn (or trumpet, or cornet) in which case use Version A. The Bandmaster should be careful to let the band know which version is to be played."

Grainger's obsession with free rhythm, along with his desire to notate the tune exactly as it was sung to him, resulted in a piece with constantly changing odd meters. This challenge, unfortunately, has caused many conductors to bypass the movement. It begins and ends with the theme being presented in strict canon, perhaps representing the stealthy movement of the poachers.

Although technically very difficult for the woodwinds, most of the fourth movement, "The Brisk Young Sailor," is quite straightforward. It is the only movement clearly in a major key, and it consists of five melodically identical statements of the theme, the fourth scored as a canon. A short coda concludes "The Brisk Young Sailor," and it is here that Grainger leaves his harmonic mark: a chromatic progression which ends with an unresolved cadence.

The next movement, "Lord Melbourne," is particularly fascinating in terms of the composer paying tribute to the original singer, George Wray. Mr. Wray had insisted to Grainger that church singing, with its conformity to notation, ensemble, and equal-tempered pitch, had ruined the folk singing tradition. Still, his performance of this war song (which includes a bit of boisterous humor) featured spasmodic irregularity and a unique sense of pitch, some of which may have been the result of mild intoxication. Grainger depicts much of Mr. Wray's singing style in his scoring of the movement. Marked "Heavy, fierce," the opening is a thickly-harmonized free-time section which, as one might expect, includes instructions:

"The bandleader should slightly vary his beat-lengths with that rhythmic elasticity so characteristic of many English folk singers, and especially characteristic of George Wray, the singer of this song."

The middle section of the movement, although metered, features constantly changing time signatures, and the arrangement ends with another aggressive free time statement.

The final movement, "The Lost Lady Found," is a dance song, and Grainger's scoring includes rhythmic accents which depict three types of dance action used by folk singers. The eight statements of the theme are all harmonized in simple fashion but grow continually more complex in orchestration and counterpoint. Although the conclusion incorporates a ritardando, melodically it stops abruptly (as a folk song might) when the "lost lady" is found. On the last chord, Grainger marks wayward time in the trumpet and baritone parts. This final deviation from standard form indicates that each player should enter at will, with no instruction from the conductor.

"Lincolnshire Posy" is truly a masterpiece. It is sophisticated, yet completely listenable, and demonstrates Grainger's brilliant understanding of the wind and percussion instruments and how they interact in the ensemble. Check it out - you won't be disappointed!

Mike Blackman,
Columbia Concert Band Director

Fun Stuff

Celebrity Birthday: [Kenneth Joseph Alford](#) (a pseudonym for Fredrick Joseph Ricketts, his real name) (February 21, 1881 - May 15, 1945); Career military composer, musician, and director; considered to be the British equal of Sousa. Alford composed many marches, including "On the Quarterdeck," "Holyrood," "The Voice of the Guns," and "Colonel Bogey," which was supposedly named after a fellow golfer. (The original version was re-arranged by Malcolm Arnold for the movie "Bridge on the River Kwai.")



Happiness (Japan)

Quarterly Word: "[Koto](#)" - Japanese version of a zither, with 13 strings and moveable bridges; usually played by women.

Quarterly Quote: "Play every note as good as if it were a solo, but make blending with your section the main musical objective." ~ Conductor Gordon Bowie, on blending

Official CB Positions



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President - John Messinger
Vice President - Harold West
Secretary - Kim Drake
Treasurer - Jeanette Donald

Members-at-Large

Jackie Bryant, Nancy Efron, Bob Frantz, Al Ingalls, Jim Wesloh, Harold West

Ex-Officio Music Directors

CCB Director - [Mike Blackman](#)
CJB Director - [Pete BarenBregge](#)
FC Director - [Len Morse](#)

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