

# The ABC's of Great Middle School Band Music!

*Dr. Jason Worzbyt  
Professor of Bassoon  
Associate Director of Bands*

# What this presentation is:

- ◆ A living and organically growing collection of repertoire.
- ◆ A combination of several resources, including several all state adjudication lists, graduate theses, dissertations, and trusted publications in the field.
- ◆ An attempt to draw attention to some neglected composers and works that have been forgotten over time and/or are out of print.



# What this presentation isn't:

- ◆ A collection of my favorite pieces (although many are here!).
- ◆ A complete list of the best works available as of 4/7/2022. In fact, if your favorite piece isn't on here, let me know!
- ◆ An attempt to define the difficulty or complexity "level" of middle school band music. The term "middle school" can mean many things to many different people.





Let's get started!!!!



# What does the research say?

*Select theses, dissertations, and articles concerning the selection and evaluation of middle school band repertoire.*

# “The Most Valued Repertoire of Distinguished Middle-Level Band Conductors” Dr. James McCrann (DMA Rutgers University)

- ◆ A total of 18 band directors took place in this study.
- ◆ The works below were selected by at least 9 directors:
- ◆ Kentucky 1800 - Clare Grundman
- ◆ Air for Band - Frank Erickson
- ◆ American River Songs - Pierre La Plante
- ◆ On a Hymnsong of Philip Bliss - David Holsinger
- ◆ A Childhood Hymn - David Holsinger
- ◆ A Longford Legend - Robert Sheldon
- ◆ Cajun Folk Songs - Frank Ticheli
- ◆ Overture for Winds - Charles Carter
- ◆ Simple Gifts: Four Shaker Songs - Frank Ticheli
- ◆ Three Ayres from Gloucester - Hugh Stuart (PA native!!)

# “Middle School Band Contest Repertoire in Northern Illinois: Analysis and Recommendations” Dr. Phillip Hash, Calvin College

- ◆ A total of 81 bands in 72 schools were evaluated, along with 243 compositions.
- ◆ Most frequently performed composers:
  - ◆ James Swearingen (24)
  - ◆ Robert Sheldon (13)
  - ◆ John Edmundson (12)
  - ◆ Andrew Balent (11)
  - ◆ David Shaffer (11)
  - ◆ Frank Erickson (10)
  - ◆ Ed Huckleby (9)
  - ◆ David Holsinger (8)
  - ◆ Larry Daehn (7)
  - ◆ Eliot Del Borgo (7)



♦ Works performed that are included in Teaching Music Through Performance in Band, Teaching Music Through Performance in Beginning Band, and the Selective Music List from the National Band Association:

- ♦ A Childhood Hymn - David Holsinger
- ♦ Air for Band - Frank Erickson
- ♦ Amazing Grace - Frank Ticheli
- ♦ Ancient Voices - Michael Sweeney
- ♦ An Irish Rhapsody - Clare Grundman
- ♦ As Torrents in Summer - Sir Edward Elgar / David
- ♦ As Summer Was Just Beginning - Larry Daehn
- ♦ Blessed Are They - Johannes Brahms / Barbara Buehlman
- ♦ In The Shining of Stars - Robert Sheldon
- ♦ Kentucky 1800 - Clare Grundman
- ♦ On a Hymnsong of Philip Bliss - David Holsinger
- ♦ Prospect - Pierre La Plante
- ♦ Shenandoah - Frank Ticheli
- ♦ Snakes - Tom Duffy
- ♦ Toccata for Band - Frank Erickson

- ◆ Works included on 12 - 25 State / Association Music Lists
  - ◆ Kentucky 1800 - Clare Grundman
  - ◆ Air for Band - Frank Erickson
  - ◆ An Irish Rhapsody - Clare Grundman
  - ◆ Symphonic Overture - Charles Carter
  - ◆ Toccata for Band - Frank Erickson
  - ◆ Canto - W. Francis McBeth
  - ◆ Festivo - Nelhybel (collected works at University of Scranton!)
  - ◆ On A Hymnsong of Philip Bliss - David Holsinger
  - ◆ Fall River Overture - Robert Sheldon
  - ◆ Sinfonia VI: The Elements - Timothy Broege
  - ◆ Marriage of Figaro - Mozart / Slocum
  - ◆ Shenandoah - Frank Ticheli
  - ◆ Exhaltation - James Swearingen
  - ◆ Anthen for Winds and Percussion - Claude T. Smith
  - ◆ Blue Ridge Overture - Frank Erickson
  - ◆ As Torrents in Summer - Sir Edward Elgar / Davis

- ◆ Works, con't
  - ◆ Ave Verum Corpus - Mozart / Buehlman
  - ◆ A Childhood Hymn - David Holsinger
  - ◆ Covington Square - James Swearingen
  - ◆ Majestia - James Swearingen
  - ◆ Pevensey Castle - Robert Sheldon
  - ◆ Prelude and Dance - Eliot Del Borgo
  - ◆ Old Scottish Melody - Wiley
  - ◆ A Tallis Prelude - Douglas Akey
  - ◆ Aventura - James Swearingen

# “An Evaluation of Quality in Compositions for School Band (Grades III and IV): A Regional Study - Dr. Jeffery Lee Miller

- ◆ This dissertation should be required reading of all middle school band directors. It is a treasure trove of information!
- ◆ It can be found easily doing an internet search.
- ◆ There is too much information to feature here, but here are the key takeaways:

# Miller dissertation - con't

- ◆ 32 university band directors, and 32 middle school band directors were chosen to participate in this study from the following states: Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.
- ◆ The middle school directors were chosen through their respective music education associations.
- ◆ Each state's Prescribed Music List was utilized in this study.

# Miller disseration - con't

- ◆ Key takeaways:

- ◆ Many states had discrepancies where level of difficulty was involved (ex. Grade III vs. Grade IV for a single work)
- ◆ Large gap between the perception in quality between university band directors and middle school band directors (ex. 29 compositions had the highest rating of “Meritorious Status from middle school directors versus 9 for university directors)
- ◆ The compositions in common were:
  - ◆ Prelude and Fugue in B-flat minor - J.S. Bach/Moehlman
  - ◆ Down a Country Lane - Aaron Copland/Patterson
  - ◆ Air for Band - Frank Erickson
  - ◆ English Suite - Clare Grundman
  - ◆ Kentucky 1800 - Clare Grundman
  - ◆ Ave Verum Corpus - W. A. Mozart/Buehlman
  - ◆ Three Ayres from Gloucester - Hugh Stuart



...and now, the lists!!!!

# What were the resources used?

- ◆ Many recommendations from dear friends, teachers, mentors, and colleagues, not to mention the wonderful middle school students of PA!
- ◆ State music lists of Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Michigan, Florida, Texas, Iowa, as well as the Teaching Music Through Performance in Band series published by GIA.
- ◆ The dissertations and articles listed here, as well as others included in today's handout.





- ◆ Each letter of the alphabet will be represented by two composers, as well as two “honorable mentions” when I couldn’t limit myself to two (I can do that, right?).
- ◆ If your favorite composer or piece isn’t here, or in the handout, please, please, please email me at [reedtip@iup.edu](mailto:reedtip@iup.edu) so I can add it to this ongoing discussion!!!!

# A

- ◆ Douglas Akey - Peregrin
- ◆ Fred Allen - Bosnian Folk Songs
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Samuel Adler - A Little Night and Day Music
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Virginia Allen - Sailing

# B

- ◆ Andrew Boysen - Tricycle
- ◆ Timothy Broege - Rhythm Machine
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Patrick Burns - Suspended Animation
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Jodie Blackshaw - Letter from Sado

# C

- ◆ Charles Carter - Polyphonic Suite
- ◆ James Curnow - Nathan Hale Trilogy
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Michael Colgrass - Old Churches
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Carol Brittin Chambers - Sunchaser
- ◆ Phi Beta Mu Commission performed by the PMEA All State Wind Ensemble this year!

# D

- ◆ Larry Daehn - British Isles Suite
- ◆ Greg Danner - Walls of Zion
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Steve Danyew - Goodnight, Goodnight
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Brent Michael Davids - Grandmother Song

# E

- ◆ Frank Erickson - Rhythm of the Winds
- ◆ John Edmundson - Tribute
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Dennis Eveland - Four Short Festive Dances
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Donald Erb - Stargazing (with tape)

# F

- ◆ Kathryn Fenske - Dances from Terpsichore
- ◆ Dan Forrest - A Basque Lullaby
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Arthur Frackenpohl - Prelude and March
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Gregory Fritze - Set Free to Go Home

# G

- ◆ Clare Grundman - Fantasy on American Sailing Songs
- ◆ Morton Gould - Mini Suite
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Julie Giroux - The Bonsai Tree
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Ryan George - Autobahn



# H

- ◆ Ralph and Jack Hale - Circus Suite
- ◆ Jennifer Higdon - Rhythm Stand
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Howard Hanson - Variations on an Ancient Hymn
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Adolphus Hailstork - New Wade N' Water

# I

- ◆ Anthony Iannaccone: Plymouth Trilogy
- ◆ John Ireland / Steadman Allen - Elegy from A Downland Suite

# J

- ◆ Robert Jager - Carpathian Sketches
- ◆ Norman Dello Joio - Caccia
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Jeff Jordan - and a time
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Louis-Emannuel Jadin / Schaefer -  
Symphonie in F Major

# K

- ◆ Nelson Keyes - Bandances
- ◆ John Kinyon - Shenandoah Valley
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Joseph Kreines - American Folk Song Settings No. 2 "Skip to My Lou"
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Brant Kerrick - The Old Red Mill

# L

- ◆ Pierre La Plante - Nordic Sketches
- ◆ Timothy Loest - Friends of Freedom March
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Libby Larsen - Hambone
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Tania Leon - Alegre

# M

- ◆ W. Francis McBeth - Canto
- ◆ Robert Margolis (as arranger) - Battle Pavane / Fanfare, Ode, and Festival
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Gene Milford - Fantasy on American Sailing Songs
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Dwayne Milburn - Meditation

# N

- ◆ Valclav Nehlybel - Suite from Bohemia
- ◆ Jerry Nowak - Seascape
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Yukiko Nishimura - Star Ship
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Hankus Netsky - Nonantum Bulgar

# O

- ◆ John O'Reilly - North Star Overture
- ◆ William Owens - Maesong
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Leroy Osman - Hebrew Folk Song Suite No. 3
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Tawnie Olson - Pop!



# P

- ◆ James Ployhar - Korean Folk Song Medly
- ◆ Aaron Perrine - Life Painting
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Stephen Paulus - Mosaic
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Andrew David Perkins - Gradients

# R

- ◆ Thomas Root - Polly Oliver
- ◆ Steve Reinecke - River of Life
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Jan Van der Roost - Dublin Dances
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Chalon Ragsdale - A Tribute to Grainger

# S

- ◆ Hugh Stuart - *Three Ayres from Gloucester*
- ◆ Robert Starer - *Fanfare, Pastorale, and Serenade*
- ◆ Honorable Mention: John Stevens - *Benediction*
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Alvin Singleton - *Ridgeview Centrum*

# T

- ◆ Christopher Theofanidis - Sweet Like That
- ◆ Frank Ticheli - Abracadabra
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Christopher Tucker - Gulf Breezes
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Pavel Tchesnokoff / Houseknecht - Salvation is Created

# V

- ◆ Ralph Vaughan Williams / Stout - Linden Lea
- ◆ Orazio Vecchi / Daehn - Fa Una Canzona
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Johnnie Vinson - Nettleton
- ◆ Honorable Mention: RVW Transcription Series by GIA - Three Organ Preludes / Sigh No More, Ladies / How Can The Tree But Wither?

# W

- ◆ Travis Weller - Irish Jig for Young Feet
- ◆ Clifton Williams - Variation Overture
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Dana Wilson - Odysseus and the Sirens
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Hugh Whaley - Twinkle Variants "Alla Marcia"

# Y

- ◆ Bruce Yurko - Night Dances
- ◆ Charles Rochester Young - In the Quiet Evening
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Satoshi Yagisawa - Largo
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Chen Yi - Spring Festival

# Z

- ◆ John Zdechlik - Chorale and Shaker Dance II
- ◆ Roger Zare - Meditation on Amen
- ◆ Honorable Mention: Gary Ziek - Jet Stream



# Additional Articles and Resources

- ◆ Grade Six Quality Literature for your Grade Three Band - H. Brent Barton and David Jaggie
- ◆ Choosing Repertoire for Middle School Band - Dr. Travis Weller
- ◆ Repertoire IS the Curriculum - Prof. H. Robert Reynolds
- ◆ Grade 2 Band List - [MSBandDirector.com](http://MSBandDirector.com)
- ◆ Grade Thrive: Differentiation and Inspiration Through Programming (2017 Midwest Clinic)
  - ◆ Carl Holmquist
  - ◆ Dr. Timothy Mahr
  - ◆ Stephanie Scheibe
  - ◆ Reid Wixson
- ◆ We Are What We Eat! Thoughtful Analysis and Aesthetic Based Programming - Dr. Timothy Shade





Questions???

Thank you for being  
here!!!!!!!

*Dr. Jason Worzbyt*  
*Professor of Bassoon*  
*Associate Director of Bands*  
*[reedtip@iup.edu](mailto:reedtip@iup.edu)*  
*724-388-6224*

