

GERMAN WIND BAND REPERTOIRE

Some remarks on the German scene

Eduard Oertle

The organisational structure of the German band associations and the repertoire played by the bands are quite different from the English or American system.

There are only few school bands. Most players join community bands, the so-called "Musik-vereine" most of which can be found in the South of Germany. The clearly visible north-south divide is best illustrated by the following figures: In 1996, 219,000 out of 441,000 or in other words, about one half of the active players in the different German wind band associations came from Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, the two big federal states in the South. The great majority of bands play on a grade 2.5 to 3.5 level. As the pieces played in most concerts - especially in the ones of village bands - do not differ much from those performed outdoors, the repertoire often is rather poor and consists mainly of entertaining pieces and arrangements with an increasing Dutch and American influence. One possible reason for this might be that most conductors are amateurs some of which can easily be lured by demo-CDs and tapes. Usually demo material in an appropriate quality is not available from the publishers of serious works.

A comparatively small interest in the international repertoire in general and the British repertoire in particular may be deduced from the fact that there is still no conductors' or players' organisation like BASBWE, and that despite the overwhelming total number of players and bands only 86 out of 1,038 paying WASBE-members come from Germany.

Unfortunately, apart from the Augsburg Conservatory Wind Band there is no other wind band at a college or a state university of music. With the former Leipzig Radio Wind Orchestra there is only one professional wind orchestra outside police and armed forces but as they have no saxophones, their repertoire is restricted to commissions and arrangements of pieces originally written for symphony orchestra. Our military bands often lack both personnel and opportunities to perform ambitious works on a satisfactory or even exemplary level.

But there has been a move to the better in the last few years. A growing number of orchestras who select their players on regional, federal state or federal level have been founded, such as district youth bands, the Baden-Württemberg Wind Orchestra ("Landesblasorchester Baden-Württemberg") or the German Philharmonic Wind Orchestra "Deutsche Bläserphilharmonie".

More and more bands employ professionally trained musicians as conductors and show a growing interest in original band music.

Bands increasingly co-operate with music-schools or establish their own ones. This leads to a better musical standard of the young people that in some areas literally "flood" the bands which again results in a tremendous drop of the average age. In most bands I know it is around 30 now. These well-trained young musicians are no longer satisfied with polkas, marches, waltzes and unprofessionally made arrangements.

Last but not least, with "Clarino" there is now a competent magazine for interested wind players and conductors.

All in all the situation for composers and publishers of ambitious music seems to improve slowly but steadily.

DONAUESCHINGEN 1926

One of the first German composers who realized the need for new band works was Paul Hindemith. Since 1922 he had belonged to the committee of the yearly festival of new music in Donaueschingen. In 1926 he asked some of his colleagues to write works for amateur bands.

Of course his own contribution, the *Konzertmusik op. 41*, was much too difficult for the target group. The only work which is suitable for an upper intermediate band is the *Promenadenmusik* by the Austrian **Hans Gál**, now available from Schott. This wonderful piece consists of three dances ("Gavotte", "Ländler", "Marsch", 11:00) and is written in a quite traditional but nevertheless stimulating Austrian style. A good 1st trumpet and 1st flügelhorn are a must. Like in many German editions there is a separation of "tenorhorns" and "baritones", but both parts can be played by euphoniums. This edition can be played without oboe, a second flute, bassoon, bass clarinet, saxophones, a third horn and a third trombone. Therefore it is suitable for very small bands as well. **Ernst Toch's Spiel für Blasorchester** ("Game for Wind Band") (grade 5, 8:00, Schott) might be the most popular work from the Donaueschingen festival in the UK. Bands which are able to cope with it should also try *Drei Lustige Märsche* ("Three Merry Marches") by **Ernst Krenek** (grade 5, 7:00, Universal Edition Vienna, on hire). They are orchestrated for small wind ensemble and very funny indeed. Not only for the sake of completeness **Ernst Pepping's Kleine Serenade für Militärorchester** ("Little Serenade for Military Band") (grade 5, 6:00, Musikverlag Bauer, Karlsruhe) has to be mentioned. Among the compositions for Donaueschingen this demanding piece stands furthest away from the possibilities of the 'Gebrauchsmusik' for amateur wind musicians, but closest to the artistic claims of the New Music of the twenties.

BORIS BLACHER DIVERTIMENTO OP.7

(grade 3, 6:30, Bote & Bock)

Ten years after the Donaueschingen Festival, Boris Blacher wrote his *Divertimento*. He was born in China as the son of German-Baltic parents and came to Berlin in 1922 at the age of 19. He died in 1975 after having been president of the Berlin State Academy of Music and the Academy of Arts. His studies in mathematics and architecture and his interest in Igor Stravinsky's music show in his music and also in this small work.

The 1st movement is an intrada in an A-B-A-C-A rondo form with a short coda. It contains some quite modern features such as an extensive use of seconds and sevenths, bitonal chords lacking the thirds or polymetric parts like in the first couplet where a joyful melody which cannot really decide which time signature it would prefer is accompanied by a descending motif using whole tones in a 3/2-bar. The 2nd movement is a march in Eb major. The rather conventional melody is accompanied by an obtrusive 3-note figure, this time in ascending whole-tones. The trio only provides a short rest with the most traditionally written part of the piece. The set of parts contains a not very helpful condensed score, but it costs only £12 which I think is good value for money. Unfortunately there is no recording available.

REPERTOIRE

THE BORGSORF CIRCLE

In order to promote the spread of original band works from the composers' side the Borgsdorf Circle was founded after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is a group of mainly East-German composers such as Klaus-Peter Bruchmann, Hans Hütten, Wolfgang Schumann and others who write music of different styles but mostly of an entertaining nature. In the author's opinion some works by **Heinz Arenz**, especially *Eigenwillige Tanzweisen* ("Odd Dances") (grade 4, 10:00, HeBu Musikverlag, Kraichtal-Münzesheim), deserve attention. This is a very witty suite of seemingly familiar short dance movements treated in an unfamiliar way and therefore called "Boisterous Bolka", "Comical Laendler", and "Grotesque March". Although the piece is a few years old it has not been edited or recorded yet but a printed edition is in preparation.

Another interesting piece from the Borgsdorf Circle is the late **Volkmar Müller-Deck's** *Concertino für Blasorchester* ("Concertino for Winds") (grade 3.5, 4:20, MSH Publishing Martin Scherbacher, Hechingen-Boll).

As it is based on a hymn by J.S. Bach the work is also suitable for church concerts. Because of his numerous lighter pieces the advocates of original band music in Germany did not take the composer seriously in his lifetime. But I think that *Concertino*, his last and definitely best piece, deserves being noticed. Unfortunately there is only a copy of the manuscript available and the work has not been recorded yet.

COMMISSIONS FOR THE 1994 GERMAN BAND MUSIC FESTIVAL

A fantastic work written for this occasion as a test piece for the bands of the highest category and maybe one of the most important additions to the German repertoire is *Mouvement symphonique* (grade 5, 12:00, Schott) by **Stephan Adam**. It was also played in the final concert of the 1997 WASBE Conference in Schladming and is the composer's second work for wind band. Stephan Adam was born in 1954 and teaches harmony, ear training and organ in Bavaria. The characteristics of this piece are best described in the composer's own words:

"Instrumentation:

- the instruments are treated as individually as possible.
- the composition largely does without doublings, especially of narrow bore brass instruments by large-bore brass instruments

- The groups are played off against each other
- solo sections of one or more instruments in a polyphonic setting

- extreme combinations, e.g. low trombones with high flutes
- involvement of a wide range of percussion [.]

Rhythm: The most obvious feature is the change between slow planes of sound in 2/2 and fast parts with pulsating movement in different quaver bars

Harmony: In this piece simple chord formations and complex dissonant chord structures up to cluster-like sounds can be found [.]

Melody: Apart from the omnipresent semitones and whole tones the minor third and the fourth [.] had a forming influence on all motifs and themes of this piece."

Alois Bröder's *Chorahl* (grade 5, 8:00, Blasmusikverlag Schulz, manuscript library, Freiburg) is more uncompromising than the composition mentioned before and this may have been one of the reasons why - despite its undisputable quality - this piece was not included into the list of test pieces for the festival. The composer describes *Chorahl* as follows:

"I tried to establish a connection between the two fields of 'new music' and 'wind band music' which sometimes are thought of as opposing. I wanted to initiate a stimulating development by using elements of one and material from the other. The piece consists of five parts:

1 Abrupt changes of hymn-phrases and a wind band-clichè; the wrong spelling in the title of the piece indicates that there

is something wrong with the hymn.

2 Taking over of the activity of the clichè into an aggressive and edgy agitato-section.

3 'Gloomy': A four-phase, lonely melody in an even bar is accompanied by a curiously shifted waltz-motif which at the same time prepares the next section; a low sustained note illuminates the scenery.

4 'Waltz': The only largely undisturbed situation of the whole composition; at the end melody and movement dissolve.

5 The hymn returns, this time uncut and with a big crescendo. On the climax it leads to the wind band clichè of the beginning with which the piece ends."

Der Traum des Oenghus was a commission for grade 3 to 4 bands. Although by no means restricting himself to this medium Rolf Rudin can be regarded as the most interesting serious German composer for wind band. With more than thirteen compositions of high quality in eight years he is certainly one of the most diligent authors. As the description of his pieces would go beyond the scope of this article, another contribution will be dedicated to Rolf Rudin.

OTHER WORKS

Bertold Hummel's *Symphonic Overture* (grade 4, 06:00, Schott) whose original name was "Oregon Overture" as it was the first movement of a symphony commissioned by the Southern Oregon State College Band. The revised version was published in 1987, 9 years after the premiere of the symphony.

Bertold Hummel was born in 1925. From 1963 on he taught composition at the Würzburg state academy of music whose president he became a few years later. He has written free-tonal but easily accessible music for all kinds of instruments and ensembles. Like most of his compositions this is a very sensuous and interesting work, full of melodies and harmonies which use the fourth frequently, and bitonal passages.

Karl-Heinz Köper (grade 4.5, 10:00, Karl-Heinz Köper, Schneekoppenweg 12, 30916 Isenhagen) has written 26 works for wind band so far. If you are looking for a piece featuring timpani you should consider his *Mytho Logica*. The three movements and their titles are influenced by Greek mythology:

I Cerberus - guard dog of the underworld,

II Orcus - realm of the shadows,

III Jupiter tonans - thundering Jupiter

Originally conceived for symphony orchestra, the work was rescored for band by the composer. Like almost all of his works it uses jazz rhythms and is full of sound effects and interesting colours. The piece is a real challenge for a good timpani player and good fun for both players and audience. Karl-Heinz Köper's catalogue lists 11 more solo works with wind band, some of them for mid-range instruments or unusual combinations (e.g. cor anglais, Eb-clarinet, four bassoons, three trombones, etc.). Among these the ones with the self-explaining titles *Pop Corn Concerto* and *Tuba-Tabu* (both grade 5 to 6) are noteworthy.

Another interesting piece, this time for the whole percussion section, is **Axel D. Ruoff's** *Inferno* (grade 5, 11:00). Apart from good percussionists and woodwind soloists this really contemporary, colourful and stirring work requires an excellent baritone saxophone player.

Richard Heller, born in Vienna in 1954, wrote *Diskurs* ("Discourse") op. 39 (grade 5, Loosmann-Musik, Eettenheim-Aldorf) for the 40th anniversary of the Sonthofen Youth Wind Band. It is "a piece in which different groups of instruments act like participants in a conversation. Although several themes or motifs are assigned to certain groups, an exchange takes place like in a real conversation as positions change, are given up and taken up again or are taken over by other participants; they penetrate or overlie each other so that certain motifs can appear in a totally different light. New points are added and confronted with earlier statements. The statements develop and change. Of course, there is no conclusion but an end in harmony." It is obvious that there cannot be a predictable form

REPERTOIRE

for a piece like this one, but "this is why all classic forms (rondo form, sonata form, A-B-A-form) can be found in it"

In 1962, **Bernd Alois Zimmermann** wrote his *Rheinische Kirmestänze* ("Fair Dances from the Rhineland") (grade 5, 5:30, Schott) for 13 players (double woodwind quintet plus trp., trb., tb). They are a good opportunity to spotlight your best players and are good fun for both musicians and audience.

Of course this list of interesting German pieces does not claim completeness. Some more works could have been added but this would have gone beyond the scope of this article. This very personal compilation only reflects the author's personal taste and only lists his favourite works and records.

RECORDINGS ON CD

Works for Donaueschingen: Landesblasorchester Baden-Württemberg - Harry D. Bath "Donaueschingen 1926", Bauer Records, "Animato" series, ACD 6005-3, 1995.

Adam *Mouvement symphonique*: on Nordbayerisches Jugendblasorchester - Ernst Oestreicher/Munich Brass - Richard Steuart "Bilder einer Ausstellung".

Köper *Mytho Logica*: on Landesblasorchester Baden-Württemberg - Harry D. Bath "Salute to the lone wolves", Bauer Records, BCD 7054-3

Ruoff *Inferno*: on "Corciano in Banda", Tirreno Records, P.O. Box, CH-6902 Lugano 2, CNB 051

Zimmermann *Rheinische Kirmestänze*: on Sinfonisches Jugendblasorchester Baden-Württemberg - Felix Hauswirth *creation*, Audite Records, MAS 337

● *Eduard Oertle is a horn player, and has studied conducting at Canford Summer School and in Stuttgart where he is a schoolteacher.*

Maecenas Music

for bands & ensembles
Editor **Timothy Reynish**

Two stunning new wind classics

for release Summer 1998

Nigel Clarke **The City in the Sea** (Euphonium Concerto)

"So many elements, thoughts, strands, innovative scoring combined to superb effect the most exciting experience (British Bandsman)"

Adam Gorb **Elements** Suite for Percussion and Wind Ensemble

"Substantial and full of inventiveness and an extraordinary sense of tone colour (Manchester Evening News)"

Also new and available on sale now

Judith Bingham - **Three American Icons** Wind Ensemble

Malcolm Binney - **Timpanaglio** Wind Orchestra

Adam Gorb - **Ascent** Wind Ensemble

Adam Gorb - **Concerto for Euphonium** and Wind Orchestra

Gareth Wood - **A Wiltshire Symphony** Wind Orchestra

Philip Wilby - **A Passion for Our Times**
Wind Orchestra, Choir and Organ

for a copy of the most exciting wind music catalogue you have ever seen, please contact

Maecenas Music

5 Bushey Close, Old Barn Lane, Kenley, Surrey CR8 5AU, UK.
telephone 0181 660 4766 fax 0181 668 5273



INSTRUMENT
INSURANCE
NEED NOT BE
EXPENSIVE

Brass Band
Insurance Services,
312 High Street, Harlington,
Hayes, Middlesex UB3 5BT



Tel: 0181-759 0825
Fax: 0181-564 9063