University of North Texas
SYMPHONIC BAND

Dennis W. Fisher, Conductor

Ira Hearshen, Visiting Composer

Dr. Lowell Graham, Col., U.S. Air Force, Retired, Guest Conductor

MUSIC OF IRA HEARSHEN

Thursday, March 29, 2018
7:30 pm
Winspear Hall
Murchison Performing Arts Center

All concerts begin at 7:30 pm and are held in Winspear Hall unless noted.
Members of the *Symphonic Band* are listed alphabetically to acknowledge each performer’s unique contribution. Every individual is considered to be a principal player.
CONDUCTOR BIOGRAPHIES (cont’d)

In February 1996, he was inducted into the University of Northern Colorado School of Music “Hall of Honor.” This distinction was bestowed on only 18 alumni and faculty who have achieved greatness as musicians, educators and humanitarians in the school’s first 100 years. He received The Catholic University of America’s 1998 Alumni Achievement Award in the field of music. This award, which is presented annually by the Board of Governors Alumni Association, recognized his accomplishments and honored him for his life’s work. In 1999 he received the University of Northern Colorado Alumni Association Honored Alumni Award in the category of “Contributions to Music.” In 2001, he was the recipient of the Award of Distinction for Contributions to Music Education from the Illinois Music Educators Association. The two previous recipients were Sir Georg Solti and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Meryl J. Isaac. In 2003 he was the recipient of the Phi Beta Mu International Outstanding Bandmaster Award. In 2008, he was honored by the American School Band Directors Association with the A. Austin Harding Award for “making significant and lasting contributions to the school band movement.” In 2013 the University of Northern Colorado Graduate School honored him with the “Century of Scholars Award” in performance representing excellence and achievement in the previous 100 years of the Graduate School.

In 2005 Graham was named the Supervising Editor for LudwigMasters Music Publications, Inc., a division of Edwin F. Kalmus & Co., Inc. Masters Music Publications that includes rare, out-of print, and foreign editions as well as offering one of the finest catalogs of original works and arrangements for concert band and wind ensemble available today.

Graham has released recordings on six labels (Naxos, Telarc, Klarier, Mark, Altissimo and Wilson) that have been recognized for both their artistic and sonic excellence. These recordings have been recognized in Stereophile’s “Records to Die-For” list, The Absolute Sound’s “The Super Disc List,” as well as one having won a Grammy.

PROGRAM

Strike Up the Band (1927/1995)...............................George Gershwin (1898-1937)
arr. Ira Hearshen

Dr. Lowell Graham, Col., U.S. Air Force, Retired, 
Guest Conductor

Divertimento (1996)................................................Ira Hearshen (b. 1948)
Ragtime
Blues
Mambo Loco
Susan’s Song
March of the Little People

Symphony on Themes of John Philip Sousa (1991)......................Ira Hearshen
After Washington Post
After The Thunderer
After Fairest of the Fair
After Hands Across the Sea

The UNT College of Music - serving our diverse musical culture with excellence, integrity, and imagination. 
Photography and videography are prohibited.
Ira Hearshen’s (b. 1948) first arrangements were for the Wayne State University Marching Band of Along Comes Mary, a pop song of the time, and concert band transcriptions of the entire Rodeo ballet suite by Copland and the 2nd (scherzo) movement of the Shostakovich Tenth Symphony. He also became interested in jazz and pop arranging in college, having played proms with his high school dance band.

At this time, Hearshen started gigging around the Detroit area, playing and arranging for bands who were doing Motown, and covers for such groups as Blood, Sweat & Tears and Chicago. During the “20 Grand,” Ira had to “fill in” or “invent” horn parts for visiting acts such as the Dramatics, the O’Jays, or the Temptations when they did their shows, because most of the horn parts to the arrangements they carried were missing, and the idea was to ‘cover’ the record. This generally took place at a 1-2 hour rehearsal about an hour before the show was to begin and was a great opportunity to learn to “think fast,” which became a valuable commodity much later.

Hearshen moved to Los Angeles in 1972 and started playing trumpet on casuals and the Latino club scene. He started studying commercial and film music at the Grove School with Kim Richmond, Allyn Ferguson, Dick Grove, and Albert Harris. It was through studying orchestration privately with Harris that Hearshen got his first opportunity for television/film work. In 1983, Harris recommended Ira to composer Joe Harnell who needed orchestration help on two concurrent series he had going: “Cliffhangers” and “The Incredible Hulk.” It was this experience that began Hearshen’s career as a film music arranger/orchestrator.

He has steadily worked since, as an arranger/orchestrator in motion pictures, television, and recordings, for such composers as Randy Newman, Lalo Schifrin, John Debney, Stanley Clarke, Lee Holdridge, and others. His most recent credits include all of the rhythm section arrangements of orchestral film cues in Undercover Brother, many cues including the final action sequence in The Scorpion King, the complete orchestral scores for both Rush Hour and Rush Hour 2, as well as orchestrations on A Bug’s Life and Toy Story 2, which included the Sinatra style arrangement of the movie’s theme “You’ve Got a Friend in Me” by Randy Newman, sung by Robert Goulet. He was also co-orchestrator on Monsters Inc. and was the arranger for both the rhythm section and the orchestra on “If I Didn’t Have You,” which won Randy Newman the Oscar for best song at the 2001 Motion Picture Academy Awards.

Most recently, he has arranged the strings for composer/bassist Stanley Clarke’s upcoming album.
Dennis W. Fisher is the Conductor of the Symphonic Band, Associate Director of Wind Studies at the University of North Texas, and Professor of Music in Conducting and Ensembles. A Kansas native, he has been a member of the faculty since 1982.

Fisher has a wide variety of experience and expertise as a conductor, arranger, clinician, educator, and consultant. He has conducted extensively and lectured in 32 states along with international appearances in Thailand, Japan, China, Great Britain, Europe, Scandinavia, Canada, Greece, Brazil, Cuba, and Russia. Fisher was appointed principal guest conductor of the Volga Professional Wind Band in Saratov, Russia, and has served in that capacity continuously since 2006.

Fisher has recorded extensively on the Mark, Klavier, G.I.A., and Eurosound labels with the University of North Texas Symphonic Band and Wind Symphony. He is co-author of Teaching Music Through Performance in Beginning Band, Volume 2, and has been a contributing author of teaching guides for the series. Fisher recently collaborated with composer David Gillingham to co-author Beyond the Chorale, a comprehensive warm-up series for band, published by C. Alan Publications. Additionally, he serves as recording and editing producer of the Teaching Music through Performance in Band series compact disc recordings, and editor of the Master Conductor DVD series, published and distributed by G.I.A. Publications. Fisher and the CD recordings of the UNT Symphonic Band have received entry inclusions for Grammy Awards over ten times. In addition, he has been entered into nomination for classical recording producing more than six times.

Fisher holds professional memberships in the Texas Music Educators Association, Texas Bandmasters Association, College Band Directors National Association, and Phil Mu Alpha Sinfonia. He has been honored by being elected to membership in the prestigious American Bandmasters Association and with invited membership in Phi Beta Mu National Band Fraternity. He is a voting member of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences and is past-president of the Southwest Division of the College Band Directors National Association.

In 2008, Fisher was awarded the Gagarin Medal of Honor from the Society of Cosmonauts of the Russian Federal Space Agency. In December 2017, he received the Outstanding International Contributor Award from Phi Beta Mu, International Band Fraternity. He has also been honored by being awarded the Meritorious Achievement Award from the Texas Bandmasters Association, for contributions to the field of music education and to bands. Other honors include twice being named “Top Prof” by the Mortarboard Society at UNT, receiving the University of North Texas Community Award, and being named to Who’s Who in America.

His works for the concert stage include the original compositions Symphony on Themes of John Philip Sousa, a 45-minute four-movement symphony nominated for the 1997 Pulitzer Prize in music; Divertimento for Band, a patriotic overture; and Fantasia on the Army Blue, commissioned by the U.S. Army Field Band to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the founding of the West Point Military Academy.

It is Hearshen’s sincere belief that not only is the art of music arranging not “dead” as some would have us believe, but it is more alive than ever as it is changing with the times in the new world of electronics, world music, computers, the internet and multi-media entertainment.

George Gershwin (1898-1937) was the son of Russian immigrants. Fueled by a passion for music, he began studying the piano at the age of 12. Not being academically inclined, he convinced his parents to let him quit school at 15, and he became a pianist in Tin Pan Alley, demonstrating songs for the Remick Publishing Company. He began to compose popular songs while still a teenager and produced a succession of musicals, including Strike Up the Band (1927), with his brother Ira as lyricist. Gershwin was a sensitive songwriter of great melodic gifts and blended jazz, folk, and classical styles into a uniquely American musical form.

Strike Up the Band (1927/1995) is the title song for a musical interpretation of George S. Kaufman’s satire about a proud American owner of a cheese factory who is outraged when Switzerland protests a tariff on imported cheese and convinces the U.S. government to declare a war he would finance. George and Ira Gershwin saw this as an opportunity to write in the style of W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. The 1927 production never made it out of Philadelphia, as political satire was a hard sell even in an operetta style.

Divertimento for Band (1996) applies a musical form that found prominence in the classical period. The form was often used by Haydn and Mozart. The title was taken up by several twentieth-century composers as well. With Vincent Persichetti’s Divertimento as the model, Hearshen’s work is illustrative of the multiculturalism that embodies twentieth-century America. The five movements tie together popular and traditional musical styles indigenous to the United States, Europe, and Latin America.
Symphony on Themes of John Philip Sousa (1991) is dedicated to Col. Lowell E. Graham. The work uses familiar tunes from various Sousa marches, including The Thunderer, Hands Across the Sea, Washington Post, Fairest of the Fair, and even The Stars and Stripes Forever.

Hearshen includes the following note in the score:

Stirred and fascinated by the music of John Philip Sousa since childhood, I still get a chill upon hearing the piccolo obbligato in the trio of The Stars and Stripes Forever. While the thought of transforming popular march music into a legitimate piece for concert stage had a lot of intellectual appeal, I figured that any attempt I made to pay homage to Sousa would be misunderstood. But artistic challenge won out and I started working on what was to become the second movement of the symphony in the winter of 1990-1991.

I began this piece by taking the “trio” theme of the march The Thunderer, slowing it down to a tempo of 48 beats per minute and casting it in the style of the Finale of Mahler’s Third Symphony. From the audience reaction to the first performance of (after) The Thunderer, I knew I was involved with something unusual in the realm of band music. The weight of the piece and its 8-minute time performance meant that the idea of a light concert suite of four to six movements as originally commissioned was out of the question. It was at this time, I realized that I had the beginning of a full-scale symphony in both length and depth.

I began to envision this work as a four-movement symphony classically constructed. It would have the first movement written in “sonata-allegro” form, a slow movement, a scherzo, and a finale. Each of the four sections would be based on a different Sousa march and the outer movements must be at least twice as long as the internal two so that the work would have integrity of true symphonic form.

There are two problems that had to be solved: each movement had to be playable as a separate piece, and there needed to be some unifying melodic material that could bring four different Sousa marches together. I found the solution in Sousa’s scores. There was a four-note melodic fragment common to virtually every tune I wanted to use, the same four notes that begin the “Dies Irae” portion of the Catholic Requiem Mass. The intervals are a minor second down, a minor second up, followed by a minor third down. In the key of C Major or A minor, these notes would be C-B-C-A. This melodic motive occurs in the trios of both Hands Across the Sea and Washington Post as well as in the introduction to Fairest of the Fair. In fact, these are the first four notes one hears in The Stars and Stripes Forever.

I used this four-note Sousa "signature" to introduce and end the symphony, in the construction of the scherzo, and to create the finale. The coda of the last movement became extended as a prologue to the entire symphony preceding the first movement. Thus, the symphony became a cyclical work unified in its construction, with each movement playable as a separate entity.

Sousa's melodies are all strong and of a wide variety of architectural styles. They range from complex (Hands Across the Sea), to simple (Washington Post), and are all stirring, intense and, above all, really fun to listen to. This is what makes Sousa's music "classic." I hope listeners have as much of an adventure listening to this as I did putting it together.