

WASBE 1995

Nelson	Passacaglia (Homage on B A C H)	Ludvig	11.35
Bonfa arr Mashima	Samba de Orfeu	Atelier	4.13
Clarke	Samurai	Maecenas	11.26
Hiroshi Ohguri	Fantasia on Osaka Folk Tunes	Shawnee	11.43
Hoshina	Koshi;An Ancient Festival	Kosei	12.59
Hoshina	Symphonic Metamorphosis	Masters	12.24
Ito	Gloriosa	Ongakuno Tomo Sha	
Miyoshi	Stars Atlempic '96	Kosei	9.05
Miyoshi	Subliminal Festa	Maecenas	4.05
Nelson	Passacaglia (Homage on B A C H)	Ludvig	11.35
Ohguri	Rhapsody for Band	Shawnee	6.28
Shih-Hsien	Lamentation	unpublished	10.43
Stanhope	Folk Songs for Band Suite no 1	H.L.Music	15.24
Ticheli	Pacific Fanfare	Manhattan Beach	5.17
Yiu-Kwong	Festive Celebration	unpublished	9.53
Zimmermann	Rheinische Kirestanze	Schott	5.01

Conference Review WASBE 1995 Japan

David Whitwell's 1989 edition of the WASBE Journal dedicated to the subject of "Emotion in Music" contained a moving paragraph from Warren Benson expressing the wish that more conductors and teachers would use better and larger vocabularies that

...relate to beauty, aesthetics, to charm, to gentleness, strength and power without rancor or anger, to useful tonal vibrance, live sound, to grace of movement, to stillness, to fervor, to the depth of great age, the exultation of great happiness, the feel of millennia, the sweetness and purity of lullabies, the precision of fine watches, the reach into time-space of great love and respect, the care of phrasing, the delicacy of balance, the ease of warmth, the resonance of history, the susurrus of wind in the pines and whisperings in churches, the intimacy of the solo instrument, the kind weight of togetherness and the rising spirit of creating something, bringing something to life from cold print, living music, moving music.

I take issue with Warren on one thing only; I wish that composers would give us music which invoked these feelings and emotions, because I came away from one of the best ever WASBE Conferences longing for charm, beauty, power, fun. We all know that the wind band or ensemble can be noisy, and too many of our composers pander to noisiness, equating it with excitement.

WASBE 99 in California was as enjoyable as any conference, well organised, with some superb playing, but without quite the quality of music which we might expect after paying a couple of thousand dollars to attend. I went back to the discs of 1995 in Japan and 1997 in Austria to see how much music there approximated to Warren Benson's aesthetic criteria.

WASBE 95

The Box set ten discs drawn from the WASBE 1995 Conference in Hamamatsu, Japan, is available from Kosei Publishing. It runs the whole gamut of music from the traditional music of the Japanese Gonin-bayashi which accompanies the Noh and Kabuki theatre, to the Royal Tonga Police Brass Band playing *Hootenanny*. A few pieces seem to turn up regularly at WASBE Conferences, Ito's *Gloriosa* has been played three years in succession, Jan van der Roost's "*Spartacus*", Respighi's "*Pines of Rome*", Wilcox's "*American Overture*" are regularly programmed, without the justification of the large works of Karel Husa which also often appear and make an enormous impression.

There are of course major works in the set, the Hindemith *Symphony* and the Konzertmusik, the Dahl *Saxophone Concerto*, *Rhapsody in Blue*, and there are contemporary works which have met with critical success elsewhere. However, below I have isolated the recordings which appealed to me, works which either moved, amused or intrigued me in one way or another, and which I would like to programme in the coming years.

DISC 1 - Osaka Musicipal Symphonic Band

One of the most interesting concerts for me was that given by the Osaka Municipal Band of an all-Japanese programme. Works by Ito and Kushida, both very good composers whose best music is well worth exploring, did not make a big impression on me, and an operatic excerpt by Hara was too diffuse, but there were three works which I very much enjoyed.

- Hoshina / Symphonic Metamorphosis / Masters/ 12.24
- Miyoshi / Subliminal Festa/ Japan Band Association/ 4.05
- Hiroshi Ohguri / Fantasia on Osaka Folk Tunes / Shawnee Press / 11.43

Hiroshi Hoshina's music is very typical of a great deal of "serious" contemporary Japanese music, beautifully scored, owing a great deal to the melodic and harmonic idiom of Debussy and Ravel; for me the *Symphonic Metamorphosis* functions well as a piece, despite a rather trite fanfare section and a "Hollywood" ending. Some of the woodwind solo writing is very eloquent. Akira Miyoshi I believe is a composer of considerable substance; two of his works were played at the Conference and both are well worth bringing into Western repertoire, *Subliminal Festa* and *Stars Atlempic*. Ohguri is more commercial, but he writes well and the idiom is evocative.

DISC 2 - Baden-Wurttemberg Youth Wind Ensemble & Australian Wind Orchestra

- Zimmermann / Rheinische Kirestanze / Schott / 5.01
- Stanhope / Folk Songs for Band Suite no 1 / H.L.Music / 15.24

Zimmermann is a major figure in German music; his Trumpet Concerto *Nobody knows the Troubles I've seen* is spectacular, and extremely difficult, but these dances for chamber ensemble are amusing and should be better known. Stanhope is an Australian conductor, horn-player and composer whose folk based suites take the idiom of Grainger right up to the 1990's. They are outrageous and full of Australian verve and good humour, again well worth programming.

DISC 3 - China Youth Corps Youth Band & WASBE International Youth Wind Orchestra

- Shih-Hsien / Lamentation / unpublished / 10.43
- Yiu-Kwong / Festive Celebration / unpublished / 9.53
- Ito / Gloriosa / Ongakuno Tomo Sha

Two pieces here from China, using some traditional material but in a most creative way, and I hope that somebody of WASBE will make sure that they are published. The Shih-Hsien piece intrigues me; it's in a tough uncompromising idiom but full of passion, with a virtuoso drumming section which would excite any audience. Yiu-Kwong's piece has moments of trite pentatonic material which contrast with the most virtuosic percussion passages, and the whole piece again is worth playing. As in 1999, only part of Ito's masterpiece was played; the whole of *Gloriosa* is incredibly expensive to purchase, but well worth the investment. It is based on a great story, that of a Christian community founded in the 16th century and living on through Japanese persecution, and its combination of traditional Japanese flute solo playing, Japanese modal themes with Catholic plainchant, result in one of the most successful of WASBE platformed pieces.

DISC 4 - Royal Northern College Of Music

Clarke / Samurai / Maecenas / 11.26

Despite having commissioned and conducted this piece, I am happy to recommend it to any group which has a fine percussion section. It is a three movement evocation of both belligerent and poetic side of the Samurai warriors; it is loud, but so is the *Rite of Spring*, and it has some of the animal energy of Stravinsky without quite the rhythmic complexity.

DISC 5 - University Of Colorado Wind Ensemble

Ticheli / Pacific Fanfare / Manhattan Beach / 5.17

This is from the school of the Copland *Fanfare for the Common Man*, and is nearly as effective. It is useful to have a Fanfare which can serve as an overture to a concert, but the brass must be good at double-tonguing as well as having good solo nerves, as in the Copland.

DISC 6 - Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Tokyo Band & Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Central Band

- Bonfa arr Mashima / Samba de Orfeu / Atelier / 4.13
- Nelson / Passacaglia (Homage on B A C H) / Ludvig / 11.35

The *Samba* could be very useful for a professional, community or University band wanting a pop dance item which shows off the wind band in big band style. It has terrific energy and is very effective - not my cup of tea but useful entertainment piece. The Ron Nelson *Passacaglia* makes impressive use of band sonorities and has the benefit of being quite slow and euphonious, unlike much of our repertoire.

DISC 7 - Ikebukuro Junior High School Band

Ohguri / Rhapsody for Band / Shawnee / 6.28

This disc has nothing much to do with WASBE, including as it does a Stage Drill Version of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, unbelievably crudely played, and a repertoire ranging from Andrew Lloyd Webber to an upbeat versions of *Londonderry Air* and *In the Mood*. However, the Ikebukuro Band played the shortened version of the *Ohguri Rhapsody* which is very attractive.

DISC 8 - Kanagawa University Symphonic Band

- Hoshina / Koshi - An Ancient Festival / Kosei / 12.59
- Miyoshi / Stars Atlempic '96 / Kosei / 9.05

Two Japanese composers here which I have mentioned before with enthusiasm, Hiroshi Hoshina's piece is in one movement but five sections, a rather evocative and sombre introduction followed by an energetic section, rather Spanish sounding melodically, and an impressionist third section; Hoshina recapitulates the music of the second section, then the first. Miyoshi's work begins with the rhythmic energy of Stravinsky, ends with a movement which is a little trite and repetitive, but again his music is for me quite compulsive and interesting.

DISC 9 - Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra

Bach / arr John Boyd / Fantasia in G minor / Ludwig / 6.37

The transcription by John Boyd of the Bach is an extremely useful addition to the repertoire of Baroque arrangements for wind orchestra. *Daikugura* by Koyama had some interesting sounds but in the event is not satisfying. Frederick Fennell gets a superbly athletic account of the *Hindemith Symphony*, and the performance of the *Dahl Concerto* by Nobuya Sugawa confirms his position as one of the world's leading saxophone players.

DISC 10

DISC 10 is devoted to traditional Japanese music for fue, kotsuzumi and otsuzumi, or flute and drums, a fascinating soundworld. In all, the ten discs paint an accurate picture of the concerts in Hamamatsu, and will provide interesting listening and some thought-provoking programme ideas.

Available from **Kosei Publishing Company**
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