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Texas A&M Concert and Symphonic Band Report

I attended the TAMU Concert and Symphonic Band recital on March 2nd. Walking into Rudder Auditorium I could already feel the anticipation from the audience members waiting for the concert to begin, most of them seeming to be family members of the performers. The atmosphere was lively and energetic, yet calm and formal. I was instantaneously nostalgic for my years as a percussionist in my high school band. The attire was generally formal, which amplified the importance of the event. The prevailing demographic of the audience was an elder crowd, most likely the grandparents of the band members. The purpose of the concert, was simply to present the talents of the performers for the enjoyment of their family, friends, or any spectator in need of auditory pleasure. The concert was divided into two parts; first the Concert Band performed and following was the Symphonic. The Concert band performers began to warm up, some fidgeting with their music stands in a nervous manner, and others focused on their scales in a confident, concise effort. I sympathized with the former considering the stage fright I often encountered at recitals like this one. However, once the first note of the performance was played, I was blown away by the confidence that illuminated from the stage. The auditorium itself was a large room, with the seats nearly filled. Russel Tipton, the conductor, seemed baffled by the large turnout, considering it was a Friday evening. He thanked us for our spending our Friday night supporting the Bands multiple times. Considering it was mostly family members in the crowd, with very few student turnout, the attendance number seemed justifiable. The audience was very orderly and, per the conductor's request, we all quieted down, silencing our devices and patiently awaited the concert to begin.

The Concert Band began with a piece called *Queen City*, written by William. H. Boorn. The song started with a heavy use of Brass instruments. The trumpets were noticeably taking control of the melody, making them easiest to follow along to. I could faintly hear the sound of belles in the background and the snare drum and cymbals kept a consistent rhythm. This reminded me of a parade or march due to its melodious, upbeat sound. Following was an interlude lead by the clarinets which created a smooth sound. The song followed an ABA pattern, for the most part, going back and forth between the brass and woodwinds dominating the melody. My emotional reaction to this piece was one of joy and amusement, most likely due to the lively and parade-like atmosphere the song created. The next piece was *Songs of Old Kentucky*, written by Brant Karrick. This song conveyed a contrast of passion and humor. It started out with a clarinet solo and transitioned, with the help of an elegant stroke of windchimes, to a cohesive sound with brass dominating. The dynamics in the first movement of this piece are very prominent as the volume moves from forte to piano and decrescendos back on many

occasions. The second movement is initiated by clapping of the band members while the clarinets carry the melody, followed by the brass. This movement reveals the humor element of the piece, as it elicits a whimsical feeling. As humorous as it may be, the second movement still enraptures the beauty of the piece with various elements such as the marching beat of the snare drum and cymbal crescendo. Towards the end of the second movement, there is a fugue, where the instruments reveal themselves one at a time, adding to the whimsicality of the piece. The next song played by the concert band was the *Green Folk Song Suite*, written by Franco Cearini. For this particular piece they had guest conductor, Travis Albany, take the stage. There are three movements to this piece. The song starts out with a heavy tambourine presence and a homophonic texture. The beginning of this song is upbeat and cheerful. The first movement begins with an oboe solo with cowbell accompaniment, creating a solemn and mischievous feeling. The cowbell is being played at a somewhat irregular beat, conveying a sense of disjunct within the movement. The next movement begins with a flute solo soon to be accompanied with other woodwind instruments. Again, this elicits a solemn, yet majestic mood. As the brass join in and the dynamics increase, the power of this movement begins to take place. The third movement was initiated by a trumpet solo. Carrying the down beat was a short puff of the tuba every half note with percussion matching the upbeat on what sounded like the hi-hat. Towards the end of there is a gradual but drastic change of both dynamics and tempo. The original harmony from the beginning of the song is played faster and faster while getting louder. The last song the Concert Band performs is *café 512*, written by Ryan George. It starts with a clarinet solo accompanied by various percussion elements such as what sounded like a woodblock, tambourine, and ratchet. This song has a strong percussion presence, which is why it was my favorite song of the night. There was an irregular meter which generated a curious, but eerie tone. The song transitions into a constant and fast beat created by percussion drumming on a cymbal while the band crescendos and then abruptly stops. From there a new harmony is introduced throughout all the instruments making a united sound. More percussion elements are introduced such as shakers, bells and marimbas. The piece ends with the same integrated sound and homophonic texture as the latter half of the performance.

Next to perform was the Symphonic band. Their first piece was *The Klaxon* written by Henry Fillmore. It started out at a fast tempo with a steady meter being held by the snare drum. There was a series of crescendos and decrescendos, which for me symbolized a ride at a carnival. The piece transitioned to a piano dynamic for the brass and woodwinds, while the snare remained at piano forte. The snares roll out and the piece moves into a flute based, chaotic melody. Next, they played *October* by Eric Whitacre. It begins with a clarinet solo accompanied by windchimes. The other instrument gradually join in. The sound created is quite beautiful and graceful and evokes a feeling of overwhelming passion. The latter theme of the piece has many brass elements with a more alto pitch. The song has contrasted thin and thick textures, constantly fluctuating the audiences' emotion. The last song of the concert was *English Folk Song* by Ralph Vaughan Williams. There are 3 movements to this song. It starts out at a fortissimo dynamic, but the dynamics often fluctuate throughout the song. This movement has a fast tempo, starting out with the woodwind section. The form of the first movement is ABCBA. The second movement begins with an oboe solo eliciting a peacefully sad tone. It transitions into a cheerful sound played by the flutes, later accompanied by other woodwind instruments. The third movement has

a bouncy, optimistic tone. It begins by a clarinet solo followed by the rest of the band repeating the melody. It transitions to a flute solo at mezzo forte with woodwinds accompanying at pianissimo and ends after continuous repetition of the harmony.

I had an amazing experience at the TAMU band recital. The performance was carried out flawlessly and I was rather surprised by the talent encompassed in my fellow classmates. The conductor, Russell Tipton, also did an excellent job making the recital run smoothly. My favorite piece of the night was Café 512 because of its strong percussion elements, which I found intriguing due to my percussion background. There is nothing I could even dare to suggest the band do better, considering my utter awe and amazement of their performance. I would recommend this concert to anyone willing to appreciate the beauty that music can bestow.