



John L. Whitwell: the Life and Career of a Music Educator, Mentor, and Inspiration

JT Womack

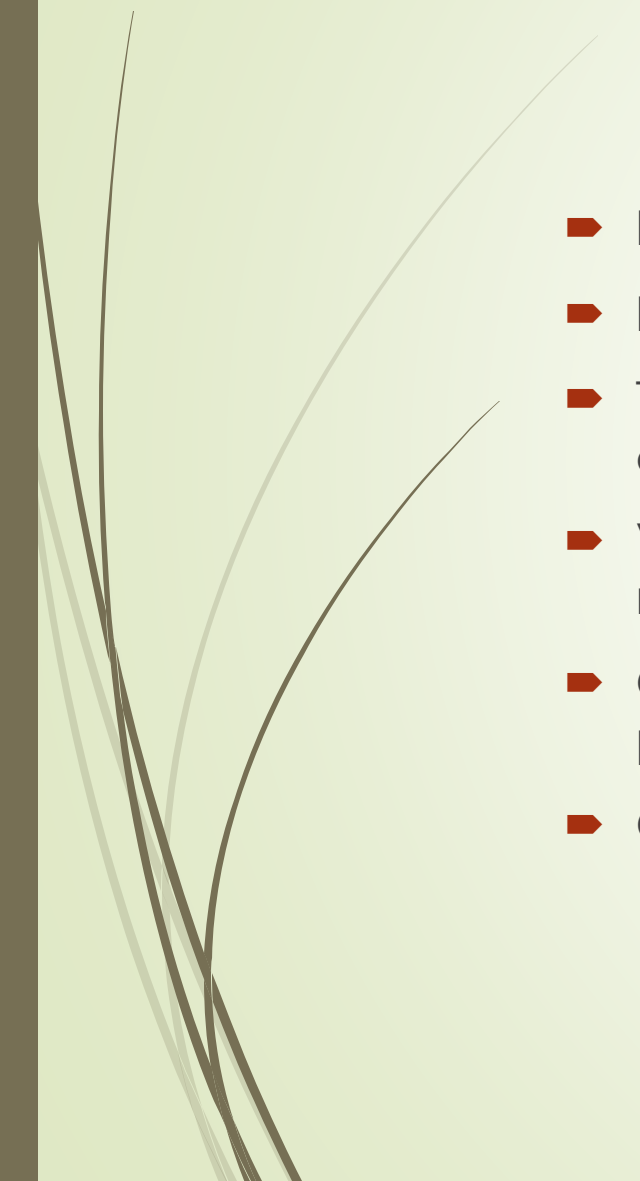


Why this study?

- Personal connection with Whitwell.
- Whitwell's career warrants study:
 - Provides connection to predecessors.
 - Unique time that bridges different eras of the wind band.
 - Serves as a model for other conductors and educators.
 - His career path is similar to others who have been studied.



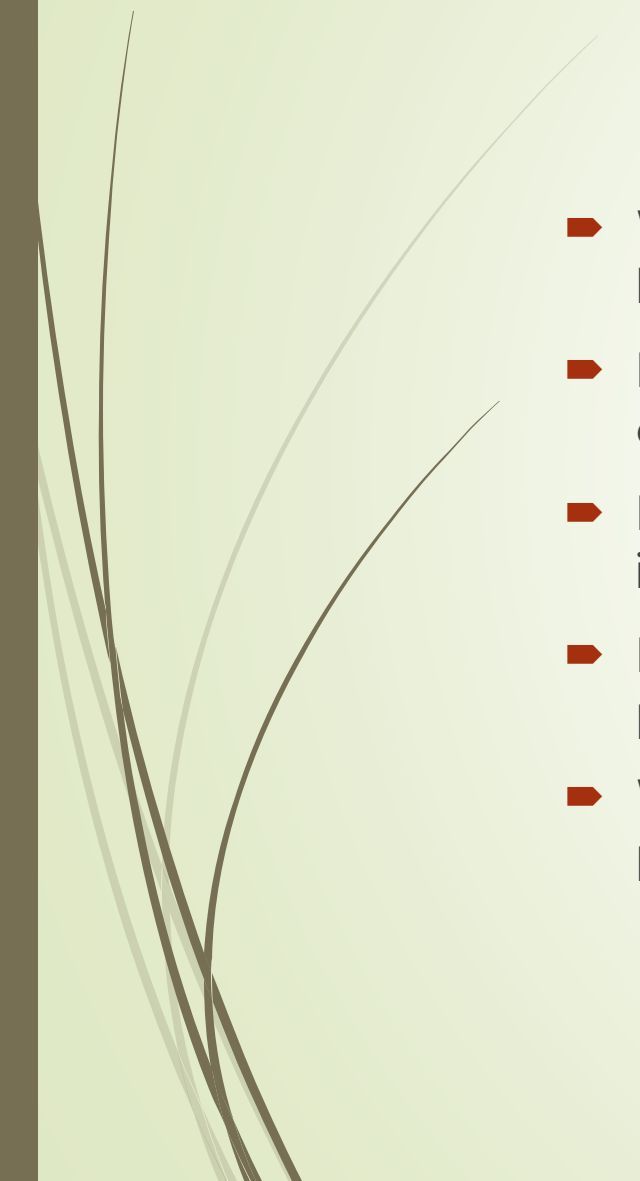
Methodology



- In depth, structured interviews with John Whitwell
- Interviews with former students and colleagues
- Transcribed through AI software, then edited, sent back to subjects for accuracy
- Verified information through programs, personal correspondences, newspaper articles, memorabilia, and yearbooks
- Organized data according to chronology and salient themes that were present
- Only data corroborated by printed sources was used



Guiding Questions



- What experiences from Mr. Whitwell's life provided the catalyst that led to his career as a music educator?
- How did Mr. Whitwell's tenure in public school music education impact his career as a collegiate music educator?
- How did Elizabeth Green, William D. Revelli, and H. Robert Reynolds influence Mr. Whitwell?
- How did Mr. Whitwell impact the conducting and instrumental music programs at Michigan State University?
- What was it within Mr. Whitwell that enabled him to influence so many people musically, professionally, and personally?



Early Family History

- ▶ Thomas Whitwell (b. 1750, d. 1774)
 - ▶ Robert and Thomas Whitwell – moved to Kentucky.
 - ▶ Pleasant Whitwell – founded Pleasantville in Hickman County, Tennessee
 - ▶ William Harry Whitwell – (John's grandfather)
 - ▶ Owned Sawmill
 - ▶ Only way of life in Hickman County
- ▶ John Harvey Whitwell – (John's father)
 - ▶ Left school for CCC before World War II
 - ▶ Married Annie Lee Barber
 - ▶ Both worked at Vultee Aircraft in Nashville during WWII



John Harvey and Annie Lee
Whitwell



Vultee Aircraft in Nashville, TN.

Early Family History (cont.)

- John Lee Whitwell (b. October 14, 1942)
 - Stayed with Horner Family, cousins while his parents worked in Nashville
- After WWII, family moved back to Hickman County and settled in Cow Hollow, a valley near the town of Coble
- Hard life, no running water or electricity
- Church of Christ faith was central to life in Hickman County
- Larry Doyle Whitwell, John's only sibling





Move to River Rouge, Michigan

- John Harvey's older brothers moved to Michigan to find work in post war steel industries
- Encouraged them to move to River Rouge, eventually did in 1951
- Found work hauling slag for Eugene C. Levy Company



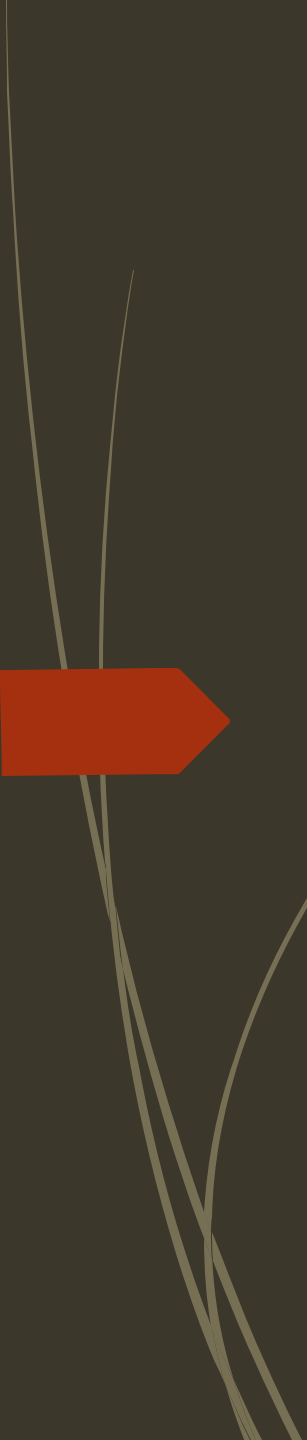
Fourth of July Parade, 1951

- Whitwell's previous experience with music was his father and uncles playing folk music, or of music on the radio.
- First time Whitwell saw a marching band
 - Quote: "it was maybe the most singular, most exciting thing that I can remember up to that point in my life, hearing and seeing this band. It was a combination of all those things, the shiny brass instruments, the self-discipline, the sonority of the band..."
 - Transformational in his life
 - He knew he wanted to be a member of the band



River Rouge (cont.)

- Stuttering
 - Whitwell stuttered his whole life
 - He felt he was unable to communicate effectively
 - Through patient and positive teachers, he was never held back
 - Later in life, apparent to students
 - Always had an emcee for performances
- 4th grade – sought music teacher to ask about band
 - Piano class once a week after school
 - Cardboard piano keyboard



River Rouge Bands

- ▶ Mr. Gilbert, Beginning Band teacher
 - ▶ Trombone instead of trumpet
- ▶ Mac E. Carr, High School Band Director
 - ▶ Major influence in Whitwell's life
 - ▶ Private Lessons every Saturday through 9th grade
 - ▶ Teaching opportunities
 - ▶ Guest artists and soloists
 - ▶ Ties to University of Michigan
 - ▶ "Old school" teacher

Wyandotte, Michigan

- At end of 9th grade year, Whitwells moved to Wyandotte.
 - Larger band program
 - More opportunities
- Kenneth Hauer, Band Director at Theodore Roosevelt High School
 - Not as demanding, but influential with his connections
 - Introduced Whitwell to Interlochen for Post Camp
- Edward Downing (pictured).





North Central Christian College (Michigan Junior College/Rochester College)

- Whitwell wanted to attend University of Michigan
 - Quote: "I wanted to go to [the University of] Michigan after high school, and my parents, being wonderful Christian people, thought state schools were evil. If it wasn't a Church of Christ school, it wasn't to be considered."
- Fred and Claudette Alexander
- No band, only choir and piano
- Individualized instruction
- Recommendation to attend Abilene Christian College
- Met Carole Blackburn, his future wife
- Received Associate of Arts Degree

Abilene Christian College (Abilene Christian University)

- Douglas Fry, Band Director at ACC
- Tradition of Texas Bands
- James Lynn Whitwell (b. August 20, 1963)
- Full time job and completing bachelor's degree
- Earned Bachelor of Music Education Degree



Northwest Jackson School District, Michigan

- The return to Michigan to visit parents
 - Inquired about attending University of Michigan as graduate student
 - Emil A. Holz told him to stay and find a job to avoid out of state tuition
- Northwest Jackson School District
 - Beginning Band Director (1965-1967)
 - Junior High Band Director (1967-1969)
 - High School Band Director (1969-1975)

PROBATIONARY TEACHER CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT

This Agreement Made this day, June 9, 1965 between

NORTHWEST SCHOOL DISTRICT

Legal Name of School District

hereinafter called the District, and **John Whitwell**

hereinafter called the Teacher. For the school year **1965-1966**

WITNESSETH:

1. **CERTIFICATION**—It is represented that the said Teacher holds all certificates and other qualifications required by law to teach in said School District and hereby contracts to be employed by said District in the capacity hereinafter designated, for the Contract period hereinafter set forth. This Contract shall terminate if the certificate shall expire by limitation and shall not immediately be renewed or if it shall be suspended or revoked by proper legal authority.
2. **EMPLOYMENT AND DUTIES**—Said Teacher agrees to perform the duties required of the Teacher by law and to obey and fulfill the rules and regulations as established by the Board of Education of the District and to carry out its education program and policies during the entire term of this contract. The Teacher is subject to assignment and transfer at the discretion of the Superintendent of Schools or the Board of Education.
3. **TENURE ACT**—The Teacher agrees to obey the provisions of the School Code, including provisions of the Tenure Act (P.A. No. 4 of 1937, extra session, as amended).
4. **COMPENSATION**—The District agrees to pay a basic annual salary as a Teacher in installments in the amount and term of months designated below. The District shall be authorized to make such payroll deductions as shall be required by law or authorized by the teacher.
5. **EXTRA DUTIES**—It is understood between the parties that a Contract stipulating extra compensation, for a teacher performing extra duties, has a non-tenure status. For a teacher who has attained continuing tenure, failure of the Board of Education to re-employ such teacher in a capacity other than as a classroom teacher shall not be deemed a demotion within the provisions of Act 4, Michigan Public Acts of 1937, extra session, as amended.
6. **SICK LEAVE**—The Teacher will be afforded the same emergency and sick leave of absence granted to teachers under the policies established from time to time by the Board of Education of the District.
7. **PROBATIONARY STATUS**—The Teacher is herewith retained on a PROBATIONARY basis as defined in the Tenure Act (Act 4, Public Acts of 1937, extra session, as amended), said probationary period of _____ duration. Continuing Tenure is not herein afforded to the Teacher at this time, but is specifically withheld pending satisfactory performance during the probationary period.
8. **CONTRACT AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Length of Contract	Starting Date	Termination Date
9½ Months	Sept. 7, 1965	June 10, 1966

Said sum (total salary) shall be paid in equal installments, the first payment to be made about **Sept. 17** 19 **65** with subsequent payments to be made as follows:

Every other Friday in 26 equal installments.

Base Annual Salary \$ **5,000.00**

_____ \$ _____

_____ \$ _____

_____ \$ _____

TOTAL SALARY \$ 5,000.00

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the parties hereto have set hereunto their hands and seals this day and year above written.



Northwest Jackson School District (cont.)

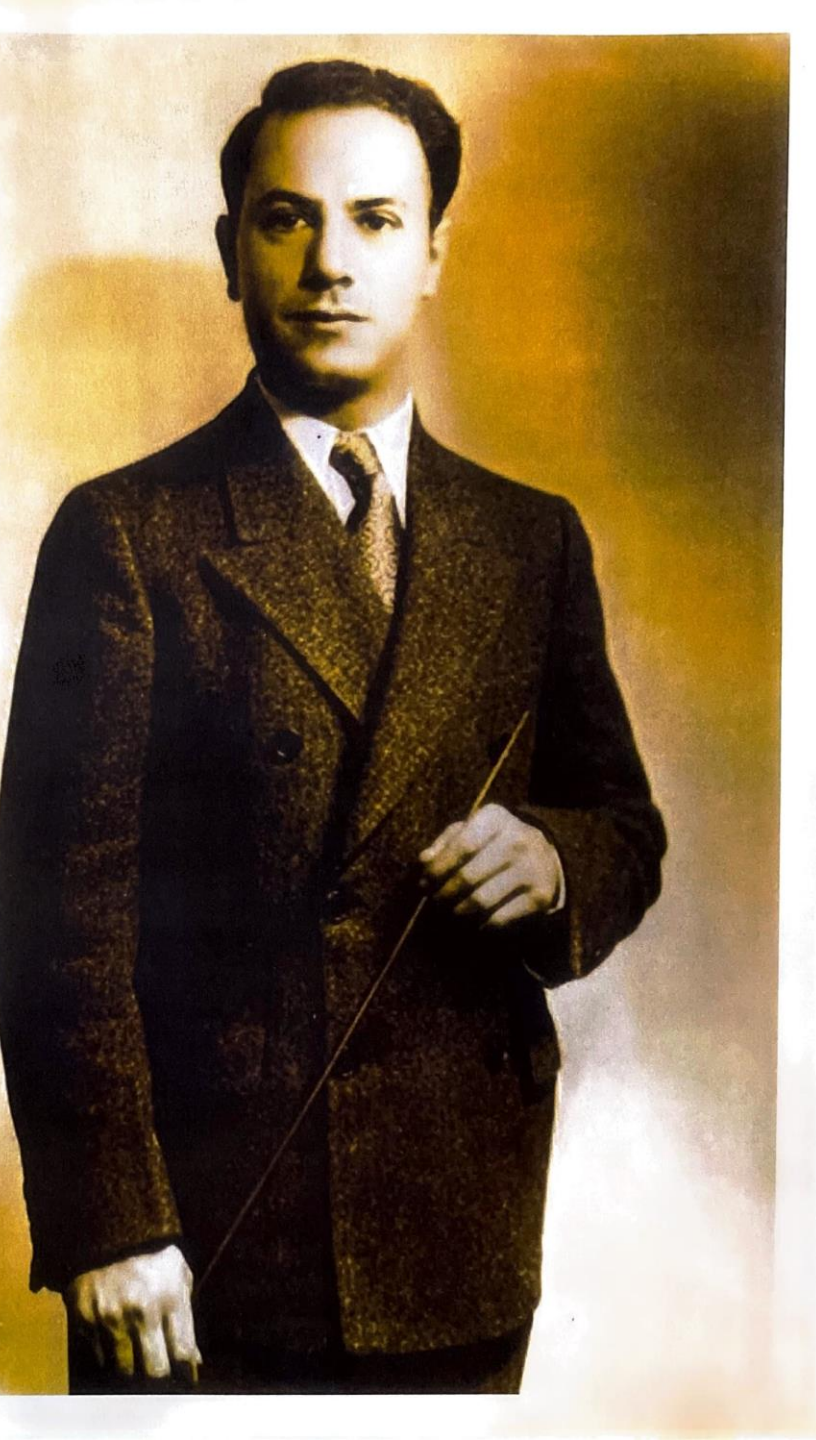
- Whitwell looks to find other jobs/felt administration was taking advantage of him.
- Search for another director/Edward Downing's letter
- Myles Mazur
- Major Performances with Northwest High School
 - European Tour (1971)
 - Midwestern Conference (1974)
 - Mexico Tour (1974)



Patricia Brumbaugh

- Student of Whitwell at Northwest Jackson School District
- Whitwell's impact on her life
- Quote from Brumbaugh





University of Michigan

- ▶ William D. Revelli

- ▶ Quote: "He just [was] a great teacher... and I came to just adore him. I mean, he conducted my band everywhere I ever taught, either in a clinic or in concerts. He was... an amazing person."





University of Michigan (cont.)

- Elizabeth Green

- Quote:" We have to be able to hear the pitch, and in order to be able to hear the pitch, we have to think it and sing it.

Ann Arbor Huron High School (1975-1981)



- Reasons for leaving NWJS
- Replacing Edward Downing
- The Influence of H. Robert Reynolds
 - Conducting
 - Literature Selection
 - Education Process
- Collaboration with Myles Mazur and Pioneer High School
- Midwest Clinic Performance of 1980 with Pioneer High School.

Midwest Performance Photo, 1980





Abilene Christian University (1981-1987)

- Reasons for leaving Ann Arbor Huron
- Teaching assignments
 - Two concert bands
 - Marching band
 - Instrumental Conducting
 - Percussion and Brass Methods
 - Low Brass Studio
 - Supervising Student Teachers

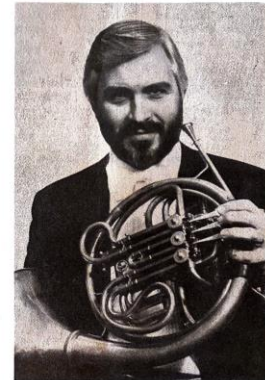
ACU (cont.)



ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Department of Music
presents
Elizabeth A. H Green and Dale Clevenger
February 16 - 21, 1984



Elizabeth A.H. Green
Professor Emeritus
The University of Michigan



Dale Clevenger
Principal French Horn
Chicago Symphony

- Marching Band
 - Learning a new style
 - Arrangements
 - Performances at professional football games
- Concert Bands
 - Both majors and non-majors
 - Being away from mentors
- Conducting Symposia
- Dale Clevenger Connection
- Building the studio faculty
- TMEA Performance in 1985
- Guest soloists

PRE-PROGRAM MUSIC

Le Bal de Beatrice d'Este — Reynaldo Hahn

For the past century and a half the French have been turning out unusual works for wind ensemble, from the Napoleonic patriotic excesses to chamber works such as Poulenc's Sextet for Wind Quintet and Piano. Reynaldo Hahn, although born in Caracas, Venezuela in 1875, was brought to Paris at age 3 and remained there the rest of his life, thus becoming by translation a French composer. This work utilizes harp and piano, instruments which are seldom used with winds because of the problems of balance. Hahn's extensive experience in writing operas and incidental music for plays taught him the necessity for thinning textures so the important lines could sound through. This particular piece was inspired by a late Renaissance painting Hahn viewed. He fell in love with the image of a woman in the painting, and this 20th century recreation of a Renaissance dance suite is the result.

PROGRAM

Circus Overture — William Schuman

When *Circus Overture* was first performed in Philadelphia in 1944, Schuman was the fastest rising star in the American composing firmament. In less than five years he had seen his works performed by the Boston Symphony under Koussevitsky and the Cleveland Orchestra under Rodzinsky. He was later to become, in 1943, the first recipient of a Pulitzer Prize in music. His music has been inspired more by the American Way than American folk music, although his musical style is generally cosmopolitan. From 1935 until 1945 he was music instructor and choral director at Sarah Lawrence College. He wrote many works for his choirs, and this experience with voices colored much of his instrumental works. *Circus Overture*, as with many of his works, has a great rhythmic drive and individuality of sound. This arrangement for band is by Don Owen.

The Passing Bell — Warren Benson

Mortality and human transience have inspired many musical works. The *German Requiem* of Brahms and *Ives' The Unanswered Question* spring to mind. We all wish to know something of what is "on the other side." *The Passing Bell* was commissioned by Luther College Concert Band in memory of a student. The work begins on a single pitch, and then is joined in strong harmonic sonorities at the peak of the first section. Two chorales, "Jesus, meine Zuversicht" (Jesus my confidence) and "Merthyr Tydvil," alternates with strong chordal sections as the piece climbs again toward the final percussive finale.

Colonial Song — Percy Grainger

Grainger, an Australian by birth, was an internationalist by design. His philosophy in both artistic and human fields demanded the widest possible communication between individuals and communities. His interest in folk music is legendary, to the extent that he is more often remembered for his settings of folk songs than for his concertizing and more serious compositions. *Colonial Song* was originally written in 1912 for orchestra, but Grainger made his own transcription for military band in 1918. Although the work contains none of the folk song components for which he was justly famous, he still stated; "Much of my music was composed as a tribute to the scenery and the people of my favorite countries. Thus *Colonial Song* was an attempt to write a melody as typical of the Australian countryside as Stephen Foster's exquisite songs are typical of rural America."

Concerto for Horn No. 1 — Richard Strauss

In 1885, at the age of 21, Strauss found himself the assistant conductor of the Meiningen Orchestra under the famous Hans von Bulow. That was to be the last year of his musical "youth." The next year both his compositional style and his world view would change drastically (he would wait 53 years, until 1943, to write Horn Concerto No. 2). It is a well known fact that Strauss' father was the relatively famous horn player Franz Strauss, and the sound of a well-played horn was mother's milk to the young Richard (the notorious horn solo at the beginning of *Till Eulenspiegel* is supposed to have been a warmup run used by his father). The First Concerto, which is dedicated to his father, is in the style of his other early works, based primarily in classical models, although with an astonishing degree of mastery and confidence. Strauss was only 19 when he finished this concerto. Dale Clevenger, Principal Hornist for the Chicago Symphony, is the soloist.

The Free Lance March — John Philip Sousa

Sousa's career with the Marine Band, his own touring band, his publications and general musical leadership was completely entwined around marching bands and march music. Even his autobiography was titled *Marching Along*. What is less well known is that his true wish was to become a light opera composer. He had originally studied violin and had been a violinist in an orchestra under Jacques Offenbach. He wrote eleven comic operas, and virtually all of them featured a march somewhere in the score. The march from *El Capitán* has long outlived its libretto. *The Free Lance* (1906) was his eighth operetta, and again, the march is all that has survived. This arrangement is by Richard Franko Goldman.

Programs courtesy of

caldwell music company inc.

Abilene, Texas 79604
P.O. Box 2198, 221 Grape Street
Phone 915/677-2471

Odessa, Texas 79762
625 East 42nd
Phone 915/368-4084



ACU – TMEA Performance 1985

Stephen F. Austin State University (1987-1993)

- Reasons for leaving ACU
- Steve Peterson
- Goals for SFA were similar to ACU
- Hiring new studio faculty



SFA (cont.)

- The SFA Summer Band Camps
 - Mel Montgomery
 - William D. Revelli and Colonel Arnald Gabriel
- SFA Conducting Symposia
 - Importance of Symposia to students
 - Importance of Symposia to Mr. Whitwell

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

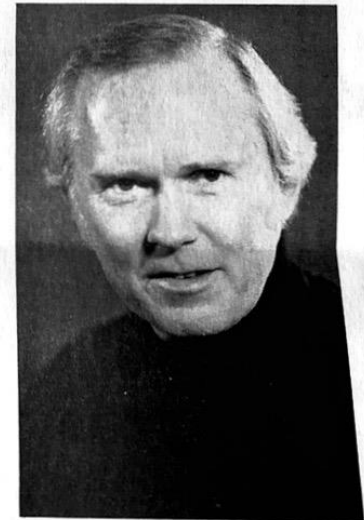
Conducting Symposium

Saturday, April 15, 1989
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. • SFA Band Hall

**LEARN FROM OUTSTANDING CONDUCTOR
H. ROBERT REYNOLDS
DIRECTOR OF BANDS
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**

PARTICIPATING CONDUCTORS

Patricia Brumbaugh, *Arkansas State University*
Harvey Benstein, *McNeese State University*
Brent Cannon, *T.J. Rusk Middle School, Nacogdoches*
Scott Deppe, *Nacogdoches High School*
Gary Doherty, *Brenham High School*
Ronnie Ferguson, *Henderson High School*
Bobby Francis, *University of Texas at Arlington*
Dennis Hopkins, *Leander High School*
Mark Jordan, *Beckville High School*
Gary Lewis, *Abilene Christian University*
Sarah McKoin, *Wichita State University*
Gary Robbins, *Rusk High School*



H. ROBERT REYNOLDS

*Participating conductors will conduct
the SFA Symphonic Band
in the following literature:*

Trauersinfonie	Richard Wagner
Chester	William Schuman
Children's March	Percy Grainger
Irish Tune from County Derry	Percy Grainger
Shepherd's Hey	Percy Grainger
Suite Francaise	Darius Milhaud
William Byrd Suite	Gordon Jacob

Please feel encouraged to bring your own scores to these works.

SFA – Major Performances

- TMEA Performance of 1990
 - William D. Revelli and *Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral*
- National CBDNA Performance of 1991 in Kansas City
 - Michael Daugherty, Frank Ticheli, Karel Husa, John Whitwell (David Whitwell – not pictured)
- Meyerson Center Performance of 1992



Photos from SFA Performances





Michigan State University (1993-2006)

- Reasons for leaving SFA
- The search for a replacement for Kenneth Bloomquist
- Vying for rehearsal time with orchestra
- Befriending studio faculty members, Elsa Verdehr, Curtis Olson, etc.

MSU (cont.)

- Working with James Forger on a bigger band budget
- Commissioning Projects and Frank Ticheli's *Amazing Grace*
 - John Harvey Whitwell's passing
 - Connecting with Frank Ticheli
 - *Amazing Grace*
- Recording projects with Frank Ticheli





MSU (cont.)

- Chamber Ensembles and the CBDNA National Conference of 1997
- Rewriting of the Graduate Conducting degree programs
- Hearing Loss, Depression, and Retirement



Post Retirement Activities and Interim positions

- Awards and Honors
- Interim Director at several schools:
 - Northwestern University
 - Baylor University
 - University of Georgia
 - Louisiana State University
- Professional Memberships
- Guest Clinician/Conductor/Adjudicator



Conclusions

- What makes Whitwell stand out as a Band Director?
 - What was it within Whitwell that allowed him to impact so many people?
- 