

# The Modern Band Transcription



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# History of the Transcription

- Before his tenure as leader of the Marine Band, John Philip Sousa was famous for his original operettas and transcriptions for band
- When the Marine Band went on their first nationwide tour in 1891, the popularity of the band skyrocketed because the concerts were outdoors and free to the public, and the music was more accessible than typical symphony or opera programs
- The popularity of Sousa's programming and transcriptions led him to leave the Marine Band in 1892 to establish the touring Sousa Band, which encouraged other band-leaders like Edwin Franko Goldman and Patrick Gilmore to do the same

# History of the Transcription

- The Sousa and Goldman bands became the most popular musical ensembles in the country, and gave rise to the transcription because it allowed wind bands the opportunity to perform staples of classical literature for the first time ever
- Mayhew Lake, Eric Leidzen, Lucian Cailliet, Mark Hinesly, and Guy Duker became some of the early pioneers of the band transcription, especially for university and upper-level high school bands
  - The University Symphonic Band tradition gave rise to the school band movement nationwide in the 1930's and 40's

# How the “Band Sound” Has Changed

- **Symphony Band vs. Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Winds**
  - Revelli bands at Michigan compared to Fennell’s Eastman Wind Ensembles
- In 1960, CBDNA called an “emergency meeting to define the instrumentation of the concert band”
- Today’s most common wind band is a blend of the large symphony band and Fennell’s true wind ensemble
  - Less dependence on “color” clarinets
  - Expanded use of percussion in both instruments and writing style
- There were almost no true band composers until the beginning of the 20th century, when composers like Holst and Grainger began to write for bands as their own medium, instead of just as the wind section in an orchestra

# The Evolution of Musical Values

- Bands began to take 20th century orchestral composers seriously, and wanted the ability to perform their music
  - Bernstein, Barber, Rachmaninov, and Copland
  - Classic movie score composers like Franz Waxman, Max Steiner, Erik Korngold, and John Williams
  - Newer classical composers like John Adams, Michael Daugherty, and Philip Glass
- In the early years of the band movement, there were very few quality transcriptions for developing bands

# Goals for Transcriptions

- Remain true to the original source material
  - Understand the limitations of the grade level you are writing for
  - Write in the style of the composer
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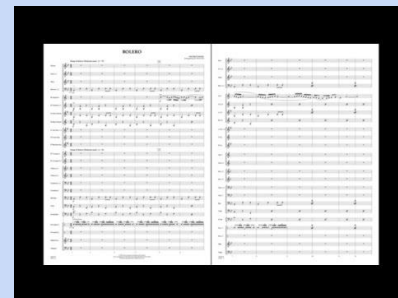
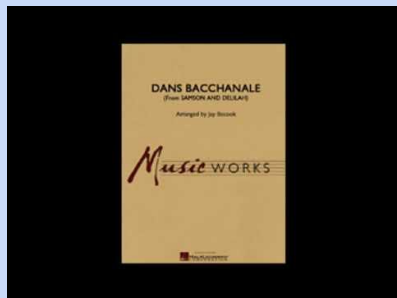
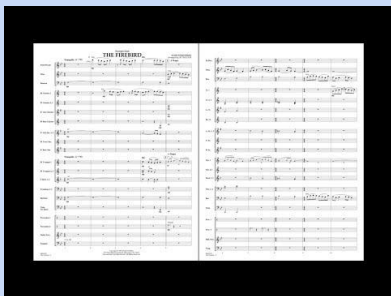
# The “Authentic” Transcription

- No range or technical limitations
- Should remain as close to the original as possible
- New ways of looking at the same material
  - Experimenting with color and dynamics
  - e.g. Grainger's folk song transcriptions



# Grade 3-4 or “Lite” Transcription

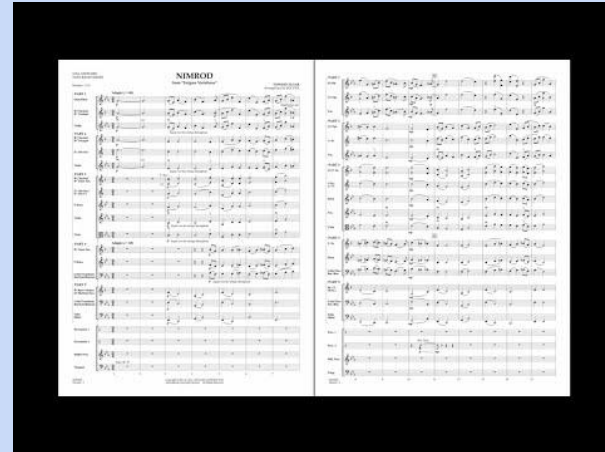
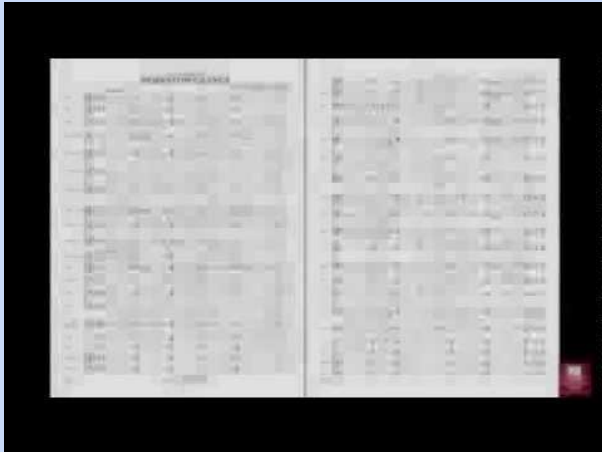
- Some range and technical restrictions
- Typically shorter in length, but should remain aurally true to the original
- Don't change the power or emotion of the source





# Grade 1-2 or “Highlights From”

- Significant range and technical restrictions
- Be careful in choosing the material, because sometimes these limitations are so restrictive that the music loses its integrity



# Ultimate Goals

- Maintain musical integrity
- Aim for seamless transitions when shortening a piece
- Write in the style of the composer
- Simplify without sacrificing the musical intent

# Final Thoughts?

- There are great transcriptions available at every level, and because of the musical value they offer our students, they should not be overlooked
- There are 1,000 new pieces written for concert bands every year, but they don't sound like the great works of classical music from the past 200 years. Our students deserve exposure to a wide range of music, which includes music from all styles and eras, not just today's conventional "band" music.