Wind Ensemble
Eddie R. Smith, conductor

Wednesday, October 5, 2016 - 8 p.m.
Memorial Chapel

American Salute
Morton Gould
(1913-1996)

Satiric Dances
Norman Dello Joio
(1913-2008)

Sleep
Eric Whitacre
(b. 1970)

Scotch Strathspey and Reel
Percy Aldridge Grainger
(1882–1961)

Festive Overture, Opus 96
Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)
Trans. Donald Hunsberger
(b. 1932)

Program Notes

American Salute
Morton Gould

Morton Gould (1913-1996) was an American conductor, composer, and pianist. He was recognized as a child prodigy very early in his life, and as a result he published his first composition before his seventh birthday. His talents led him to become the staff pianist for Radio City Music Hall when it opened in 1932. He went on to compose movie soundtracks, Broadway musicals, and instrumental pieces for orchestra and band while also cultivating an international career as a conductor. Among the honors he received were the 1995 Pulitzer Prize, the 1994 Kennedy Center Honor, a 1983 Gold Baton Award, and a 1966 Grammy Award. By the time of his death in 1996 he was widely revered as an icon of American classical music. American Salute is based on the patriotic tune “When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again”. Written in 1943, one can only guess that it was meant as a morale booster during the uncertainty of World War II.

Satiric Dances for a Comedy by Aristophanes
Norman Dello Joio

A significant figure in American music, Norman Dello Joio composed several works for band that have become part of the standard literature. This composition from 1975 features Mediterranean folk dance influences and offers a distinctive and dramatic setting for band. Commissioned by the town of Concord, Massachusetts who wished to make a tangible recognition of the Bicentennial.

Sleep
Eric Whitacre
(b. 1970)

“Sleep began its life as an a cappella choral setting, with a magnificent original poem by Charles Anthony Silvestri. The choral-like nature and warm harmonies seemed to call out for the simple and plaintive sound of winds, and I thought that it might make a gorgeous addition to the wind symphony repertoire.”

- Eric Whitacre

Scotch Strathspey and Reel
Percy Aldridge Grainger

“It is curious how many Celtic dance tunes there are that are so alike in their harmonic schemes (how-ever diverse they may be rhythmically and
melodically) that any number of them can be played together at the same time and mingle harmoniously. Occasionally a sea-chanty will fit it perfectly with such a group of Celtic tunes.

If a room-full of Scotch and Irish fiddlers and pipers and any nationality of English-speaking chanty-singing deep-sea sailors could be spirited together and suddenly miraculously endowed with the gift for polyphonic improvisation enjoyed, for instance, by South Sea Island Polynesians what a strange merry friendly Babel of tune, harmony and rhythm might result! My setting of the strathspey mirrors the imagination of such a contingency, using 6 Scotch and Irish tunes and halves of tunes that go well with each other and a chanty that blends amicably with the lot. These 7 melodies are heard together in the second climas of the strathspey – bars 103-110.

In the reel no such conglomeration of traditional tune-stuffs is undertaken, but the South Sea Island type of improvised harmonic polyphony is occasionally reflected, the reel tune occurs in augmentation on the hammerwood (xylophone), and towards the end of the work. I have added a counter-tune of my own to the words of the sea-chanty.’’

-Percy Aldridge Grainger

Festive Overture, Opus 96
Dmitri Shostakovich

The Festive Overture, Op. 96, was written by Dmitri Shostakovich and premiered in 1954 at a concert held at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow to commemorate the 37th anniversary of the October Revolution (which took place in 1917).

The Bolshoi’s conductor, Vassili Nebolsin, found himself without a suitable new work to open the concert, and contacted Shostakovich just days before. The composer set to work on the overture with great speed, completing it in three days. He apparently based it on Glinka’s Ruslan and Ludmilla Overture (1842), and it features the same lively tempo and style of melody. Whilst the style reflects Shostakovich, the piece as a whole uses very conventional classical devices of form and harmony.

The work is a standard piece of the orchestral repertoire. A transcription for concert band was prepared by Donald Hunsberger, and is played by many bands all over the world.