National Emblem
Edwin Eugene Bagley
(1857-1922)

Ye Banks and Braes o’ Bonnie Doon
Percy Grainger
(1882-1961)

Divertimento for Winds and Percussion
Roger Cichy
(b. 1956)

Riptides
Katahj Copley
(b. 1998)

The Hounds of Spring
Alfred Reed
(1921-2005)
**National Emblem (1902)** is the best known of the dozens of marches written by American composer and cornetist Edwin Eugene Bagley. As the story goes, it was written on a train while touring with his family band. Bagley dismissed the initial draft of the work after disliking the ending and tossed it out entirely. However, his musicians found it and put it on their program minutes before the concert that day. It later became one of the most beloved marches of the “March King” John Philip Sousa and has been a staple of the marching band repertory ever since. With its homage to the American National Anthem in the first strain, its absence of a dogfight section in the trio, and no concluding shot note at the end of the piece, it provided a creative twist on the typical march form. Frederick Fennell, the founder of the Eastman Wind Ensemble and director of the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra, described the march as “perfect as a march can be,” and created his own edition which added dynamics, distinct articulations, and percussion nuances not included in the original street march version.

Bagley was born in Vermont in 1857 and died in 1922. He spent the majority of his career as both a cornetist and trombonist touring with his band and various other ensembles in the Boston area.

Australian composer Percy Aldridge Grainger originally arranged the Scottish folk song Ye Banks and Braes O’ Bonnie Doon at the start of the 20th Century and completed the version for band in 1936. Based on The Banks of Doon, a poem by Robert Burns, this lyrical and flowing work is meant to emulate the Doon River in Scotland. Grainger captures the simplistic and strophic nature of the folk song through the use of two short melodic statements that are dynamically shaped, repeated, and supported by drone-like harmonies. Subtle shifts in tempo and the use of compound meter help to depict the ebb and flow of this infamous Scottish river.

Grainger was born in Melbourne, Australia in 1882 and died in White Plains, New York in 1961. Grainger was known to travel to various parts of the world to transcribe and record folk songs. His collection of English folk songs became the inspiration for his best-known work Lincolnshire Posy (1937). In his compositions, he sought to “reflect the irregularities of the natural world” by incorporating inventive harmonies and became known for replacing Italian terms with his own English vernacular to denote tempo and other expressive markings. In the late 1930s, Grainger experimented with the sound of various electronic instruments, including the theremin, which led to the creation his own instrument contraption called the Reed-Box Tone Tool which explored microtonal gliding effects.

First commissioned as an orchestral piece by the Des Moines Symphony Orchestra in 1993, Divertimento for Winds and Percussion by Roger Cichy is a four-movement work inspired by prominent American composers Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, and George Gershwin. The initials of each of these composers (C, B, and G) serve as the basic building blocks for both the melodic and harmonic material of this piece and employ other jazz idioms including the blues scale, syncopation, and seventh chord harmonies. As found his other works including Geometric Dances (2007), this piece moves creatively through a wide selection of simple, compound, and asymmetrical meters, at times purposefully blurring the metrical pulse and, at other times, playfully manipulating beat groupings to create moments of surprise for the listener. Its fanfare-based opening movement gives way to a playful scherzo-like second movement highlighted by the juxtaposition of various meters and counterpoint. This is followed with a serene third movement, reminiscent of a jazz ballad which sets the audience up for an energetic final movement with hints of ragtime, the strong use of syncopation, and subtle echoes of motifs from previous movements.

Roger Cichy hails from Ohio and earned both his Bachelor of Music and Master of Arts degrees from Ohio State University. He held several public school and university-level teaching positions before pursuing composition full time in 1995. Since then, he has composed over 300 works for various ensembles including orchestras, concert bands, chorus, and film. In addition to the several ASCAP awards to his credit, he earned an Emmy Award for his scoring of the PBS documentary “The American St. Nick” after studying with Disney’s acclaimed film composer Buddy Baker.

Riptides (2000) is a contemporary work that explores American composer Katahj Copley’s fascination and fear of the various myths and unexplored depths of the ocean. The work opens with a soundscape created by ocean drum, a conch shell horn, and a “call to the sea” by the solo flute. The piece gradually moves into a fury of activity complete with glissandi brass effects, pulsating ostinato lines, and dissonant harmonies evoking a sense of panic. Following what the composer dubs “a mermaid call” in middle section of the work, the piece continues to build tension through harmonic dissonance and growing dynamics as it reaches its climatic conclusion.
Katahj Copley premiered his first work in 2017 and has since written over 100 works for various types and sizes of ensembles. He has been commissioned by several organizations including the Cavaliers Brass, California Band Director’s Association, and the Atlanta Wind Symphony and his works have been performed across the globe. Copley earned two bachelor’s degrees, one in Music Education and the other in Composition, from the University of West Georgia and is currently studying with Omar Thomas at the University of Texas at Austin.

American composer Alfred Reed wrote The Hounds of Spring in 1980 for the John L. Forster Secondary School Symphonic Band in Windsor, Ontario. This vibrant work, written in an A-B-A form, was based on the following poem by Algernon Charles Swinburne:

When the hounds of spring are on winter’s traces,  
The mother of month in meadow or plain  
Fills the shadows and windy places  
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain.

And soft as lisp that laugh and hide  
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,  
And screen from seeing and leave in sight  
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

From its first notes, Alfred captures the exuberance of youth through woodwind flourishes, lilting meters, and the occasional interjection of hemiola rhythms. The beautiful middle section employs sweeping melodic lines, exposed timbres, and orchestrated crescendos leading to several musical peaks. A brief transition section sets up the return of the opening motives with the lyrical themes of the middle section superimposed atop them. The piece comes to a triumphant close with the reintroduction of tutti textures, timpani solos, and variations on the previously heard woodwind embellishments.

Reed began his music studies as a trumpeter at a young age and by high school was performing professionally. He completed his bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Baylor University and was a student of Vittorio Giannini while at Juilliard. Reed also served as a military musician during WWII and was the staff composer/arranger for the National and American Broadcasting Corporations. Throughout his storied career, he amassed a catalogue of over 250 works for a wide array of ensembles including concert bands, wind ensembles, choruses, and orchestras and his works still continue to grace concert stages around the world today.
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Serena (Ziqi) Liu
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Flute
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