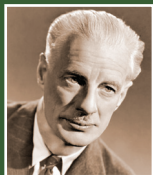
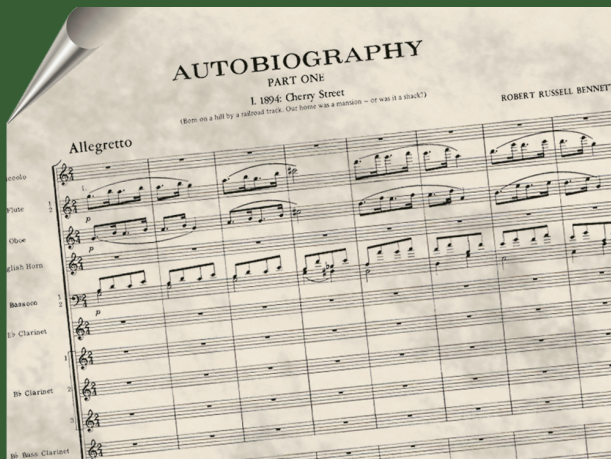

THE UNITED STATES ARMY FIELD BAND



The Legacy of **ROBERT RUSSELL BENNETT**



Washington, D.C.



“The Musical Ambassadors of the Army”

From Boston to Bombay, Tokyo to Toronto, The United States Army Field Band has been thrilling audiences of all ages for more than half a century. As the premier touring musical representative for the United States Army, this internationally-acclaimed organization travels thousands of miles each year presenting a variety of music to enthusiastic audiences throughout the nation and abroad. Through these concerts, the Field Band keeps the will of the American people behind the members of the armed forces and supports diplomatic efforts around the world.

The Concert Band is the oldest and largest of the Field Band's four performing components. This elite 65-member instrumental ensemble, founded in 1946, has performed in all 50 states and 25 foreign countries for audiences totaling more than 100 million. Tours have taken the band throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, South America, Europe, the Far East, and India.

The group appears in a wide variety of settings, from world-famous concert halls, such as the Berlin Philharmonie and Carnegie Hall, to state fairgrounds and high school gymnasiums. The Concert Band regularly travels and performs with the Soldiers' Chorus, together presenting a powerful and diverse program of marches, overtures, popular music, patriotic selections, and instrumental and vocal solos. The organization has also performed joint concerts with many of the nation's leading orchestras, including the Boston Pops, Cincinnati Pops, and Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

The United States Army Field Band is considered by music critics to be one of the most versatile and inspiring musical organizations in the world. Its members, selected by highly-competitive audition, represent some of the finest musical talent in America. More than five decades as the military's most traveled musicians have earned them the title,

*The Musical Ambassadors
of the Army*

The Legacy of
ROBERT RUSSELL BENNETT

About this Recording

The United States Army Field Band proudly presents the fourth in a series of concert band recordings honoring the lives and music of individuals who have made significant contributions to the band repertoire and to music education.

Designed primarily as educational resources, these recordings are thoroughly researched to authenticate standard performance practices and to reflect the original intent of the composers. The biographical information, detailed program notes, and historical photographs are included to provide music educators and their students with insight into the compositions that they hear and perform.

Although he achieved his greatest fame as an arranger, Robert Russell Bennett always considered his true calling to be a composer. In addition to hundreds of Broadway and film arrangements, Bennett created operas, symphonies, and concertos among other original works. His lifelong involvement with music and reputation as a generous and gentle man left an indelible impression on friends and colleagues. Rather than focusing on the often recorded *Suite of Old American Dances* and *Symphonic Songs for Band*, lesser-known compositions as well as familiar arrangements were chosen to give a broader view of Bennett's vast creative range. Honoring his memory and his innumerable musical contributions, the Musical Ambassadors of the Army proudly pay tribute with *The Legacy of Robert Russell Bennett*.

This compact disc was recorded in June 2006 at Devers Hall, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, using multi-track digital equipment.

The Legacy of

ROBERT RUSSELL BENNETT

Wherever the real values lie in this, it all comes back to what can't be taught or imitated: Talent, that miserable word that accounts for tears, laughter, and monuments.

—Robert Russell Bennett

Introduction

Robert Russell Bennett was born in 1894 to a tremendously musical family in Kansas City, Missouri. His father, George Bennett, played violin in the Kansas City Symphony and trumpet at the Grand Opera House, while his mother, May, worked as a pianist and teacher. She taught young Robert piano, while his father taught him violin and trumpet.

The Bennett family moved to a farm in Freeman, Missouri, when Bennett was four to speed his recovery from polio.¹ By that time, he had demonstrated his aptitude for music and his remarkable ear by picking out the finale of Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 14, no. 2, on the white keys of the piano. In his autobiography, Bennett recalled finding a ragtime tune on the piano at age ten and being informed by his mother that such music was trash—this lesson taught him to be, as he called it, a “life-long musical snob.” His mother also taught his academic lessons until he was twelve, due to health concerns; his health remained an obstacle when Bennett later decided to join the Army. By early adolescence, his father often called upon him



Bennett with his mother and sister

to play any given instrument as a utility member or substitute player within Bennett's band in Freeman.

After completing his secondary education, Bennett moved to Kansas City to be a freelance musician, performing with the symphony and other groups within the city. He also began his first musical training outside of a home environment with Danish composer-conductor Dr. Carl Busch. Busch taught him counterpoint and harmony until 1916, when Bennett took his savings and moved to New York City. He eventually found a job as a copyist with G. Schirmer while continuing to freelance and build a network of contacts.

In 1917 Bennett volunteered for the Army.² Although he yearned for an active role, his health issues caused the draft board to mark him for limited service. However, he successfully appealed this classification and became the director of the 70th Infantry Band at Camp Funston, Kansas. He valiantly attempted to improve the “disgraceful”³ musical standards of the unit, but found his efforts thwarted when the Spanish flu swept through the post in 1918. Upon his discharge several months later, he returned to New York. His relationship with Winifred Edgerton Merrill, a society matron who had been the first woman to receive a doctorate from Columbia University, led to rewards both financial and emotional—she had been one of his first employers in the city, and she introduced him to her daughter Louise, whom he married in 1920. Their daughter, Jean, was born two years later.



*A bass drum and flags
from Bennett's band*



Camp Funston, 1918

His career as an arranger began to blossom in 1919 while he was employed by F.B. Harms, a prominent publishing firm for Broadway and Tin Pan Alley. Dependable yet creative within the confines of formulaic arranging, Bennett soon branched out as an

orchestrator and arranger for Broadway productions, collaborating particularly with Jerome Kern.



L to R: Richard Rodgers, Bennett, and Henry Salomon

Although Bennett would work with several of the top names on Broadway and in film including George Gershwin, Cole Porter, and Kurt Weill, his collaborations with Jerome Kern and Richard Rodgers stand out both for sheer volume and for highlighting different facets of an arranger's relationship with a composer. Bennett described his own philosophy: "The perfect arrangement is one that manages to be most 'becoming' to the

melody at all points."⁴ Through this, he kept his commercial arrangements simple and straightforward, with a careful ear for balance and color.⁵

Kern's working relationship with Bennett serves as a clear illustration of this point. For example, when orchestrating *Show Boat*, Bennett would work from sketches laid out quite specifically by Kern, which included melodies, rough parts, and harmonies. The original sketches appear remarkably close to Bennett's completed scores; as one scholar puts it, "Bennett didn't have much to make up."⁶

In contrast, Rodgers allowed Bennett a greater degree of autonomy. The pair had first collaborated in 1927, but the majority of their partnership occurred in the 1940s and

1950s. While scoring *Oklahoma!* in 1943, Bennett proved himself invaluable by reworking an elaborate and possibly out-of-place selection into the title song.⁷ His most legendary contribution to the partnership, however, occurred during the scoring of the television series *Victory at Sea* (1952–3). Richard Rodgers contributed twelve basic themes for the series, with three earmarked for the first episode, but those who worked on the series attribute thirteen hours worth of music to Robert Russell Bennett.⁸ Rodgers himself wrote, “I give him [the credit] without undue modesty, for making my music sound better than it was.”⁹

Schooled by his mother to disdain popular music, Bennett found the dichotomy between his serious compositions and his arranging work to be a lifelong struggle. In spite of his prolific output, which included the opera *Maria Malibran*, more than seven symphonies, a large variety of chamber works, and at least five concertos, his reputation today as a classical composer rests primarily on two frequently recorded pieces, the *Suite of Old American Dances* and *Symphonic Songs for Band*. This may be attributed both to the modesty so characteristic of Bennett and to the Eastman Wind Ensemble recordings which popularized them.¹⁰

Robert Russell Bennett once spoke of the most valuable lessons to be learned by any orchestrator, but these words apply equally well to his work as a composer. “The first thing you study, to become a famous music arranger, is to do without sleep. . . The second: Learn to do without regular food.”¹¹ In his composing, Bennett brought to bear his considerable talent for orchestration as well as a gift for conceiving melodies and harmonic structure in his head; his biographer, George Ferencz, relates Bennett’s ability to write parts in score order, as opposed to filling in leftover parts and doublings as he completed primary melodic lines.¹²

Many of Bennett’s original works came about through direct commission; the 1939 World’s Fair, the Works Projects Administration Music Project (*Abraham Lincoln Symphony*), and the Goldman Band (*Suite of Old American Dances*, among others)



Bennett playing yard tennis as a young man

provide prominent examples. A significant number of commissions were initiated by Robert Boudreau, a former member of the Goldman Band, and his American Wind Symphony (AWS). The AWS traveled via American rivers and waterways, inspiring several works with nautical themes, including the *Ohio River Suite* and *West Virginia Epic*. Boudreau would provide a basic concept to Bennett, who would complete the new work rapidly and who would always attend the premiere. Boudreau recalls, “We never offered him a lot of money for those commissions. . . He was an elegant person. He was always more interested in music than in dollars.”¹³

In later years, Bennett again developed major health issues. “He never talked about it, but always showed joy,” Boudreau states. “It wasn’t just a business relationship we had, it was more than just music. We were pals, and he would treat me as a son.”¹⁴ Bennett did not slow his output, creating original works for the nation’s bicentennial celebrations and accepting commissions from a variety of sources, including a Presbyterian church in Florida, for which he accepted only a modest fee.¹⁵ In 1981, with quiet grace and dignity, Bennett succumbed to liver cancer.

Robert Russell Bennett’s memory today rests largely on the popular arrangements which so conflicted the serious composer. Those who knew him remember him as a close friend and gracious mentor. “And it is just as certainly because of his kindness, honesty, humor, and wisdom that our hearts are warmed to see Robert Russell Bennett without peer in his field.”¹⁶

Program Notes

1939 World's Fair: Fountain Lake Fanfare A TNT Cocktail (1939)

Robert Russell Bennett won the job of writing music for the 1939 World's Fair during a dinner at the home of Chairman of the Board of Design, Architect Stephen Frank Voorhees. Mrs. Voorhees took a particular liking to Bennett when she saw the immediate and mutual fondness between the composer and the family cats. He wrote tone poems for band to be synchronized with the elaborate fountain displays at the Lagoon of Nations.¹⁷ In addition, short fanfares would be interspersed throughout. Bennett's only works for wind ensemble to predate World's Fair pieces are those written for his father's band in Freeman, all of which are presumed lost.¹⁸

An outstanding group of wind players from a number of prominent orchestras were selected as the World's Fair Band.¹⁹ This band performed "Fountain Lake Fanfare" and "A TNT Cocktail" for the opening day festivities on April 30, 1939, a date chosen to commemorate the sesquicentennial of George Washington's inauguration in New York City. "A TNT Cocktail" illustrates an anecdote from David Sackman, conductor of Carousel's pit orchestra, who acknowledged that Bennett frequently incorporated Tchaikovsky quotations in his Broadway orchestrations.²⁰ In the case of this short fanfare, Bennett included quotations from Beethoven (beginning of the fourth movement of



Fountain displays at the Lagoon of Nations

Symphony No. 9), Kern (“Old Man River”), a traditional children’s tune (“The Muffin Man”), Wagner (“Ride of the Valkyries”), and, of course, Tchaikovsky (*Overture 1812*). By contrast, “Fountain Lake Fanfare” merges a series of short, jaunty themes with graceful interludes, invoking the spirit if not the specific imagery of a fountain.

Four Preludes (1974)

Robert Russell Bennett paid tribute to the friends and colleagues who had been so supportive, particularly in the early stages of his career, with *Four Preludes*. Written in 1974, the work was premiered in 1978 by the Goldman Band, probably under the direction of Ainslee Cox, a conductor of the band from 1964 to 1988.

“George” (Gershwin) captures the flavor of *An American in Paris* or the finale of *Rhapsody in Blue* through an angular melody set over insistent eighth notes, as does the quirky recurring clarinet solo. “Vincent” (Youmans), with a light swing feel, pits a jazzy first theme against a more expressive second theme. The movement also quotes Tchaikovsky, one of Bennett’s favorite composers. Bennett’s “salutation” theme, lush and nostalgic in “George,” becomes snappy and businesslike for “Vincent.”

In the third prelude, Bennett pays a reflective tribute to “Cole” (Porter) with a warm English horn solo followed by a melancholy trumpet. Short motifs develop into an opulent tutti prior to the conclusion. With the marking “tragic,” this salutation ends on a wistful note. The splashy introduction of “Jerome” (Kern) stands in marked contrast, as a clarinet choir leads the way through a vivid tarantella. Although longer than the other salutations, this farewell carries a sense of temporary, rather than permanent, separation from a good friend.



George Gershwin, 1937

S.S. Eagle March (1969)

Following the success of *Victory at Sea*, NBC initiated a periodic series to examine large-scale trends of the twentieth century. Appropriately titled *Project XX*, the series premiered in 1955 and ran through 1976. Many of the creative team of *Victory at Sea* collaborated on the new series; most notably, Robert Russell Bennett now bore the responsibility both for original themes and orchestration.

S.S. Eagle March was originally the finale of the episode *Down to the Sea in Ships*, which aired in 1968, and of the five-movement suite sharing its name. Bennett wrote of the episode, “it had a lot to tell us about our struggles, triumphs, and defeats on the mighty ocean.”²¹ In this march, extrapolated by Bennett from the suite, a lengthy introduction leads into a quotation from Franz Schubert’s melody “Am Meer (By the Sea)” within the traditional march structure.

Autobiography (1977)

“The suggestion that I write my autobiography was made at a time when anyone who did not write one risked being called eccentric. . . . The only answer I could think of with any degree of enthusiasm was this one, written purely for whatever pleasure it could give. My own part of the pleasure is mostly in utilizing the musical language of the concert band, with its apparently inexhaustible colors and its fabulous vitality. The form is seven short pictures, each about two minutes long, of my own personal seven ages. The two-minute idea may be the result of the loudspeakers spread all over the hotel in Arizona where the piece was composed.”²²

Robert Russell Bennett composed this work in 1976 for a 1977 premiere by the Goldman Band. Each movement carries a specific title and chronology, starting with “1894: Cherry Street” and concluding with “1935: What Was the Question?” Each movement also carries a signature melody or rhythm, but the only music he obviously quoted appears in “1916:

Mo. to N.Y.,” in which Bennett borrowed “what the bugler at Camp Funston played every morning while we put on our shoes.”²³ This tribute to his own life and musical development stands as the last of Bennett’s major compositions.

Carousel (1957)

Rodgers and Hammerstein invited Bennett to orchestrate their new Broadway production, *Carousel*, which would open in April 1945. However, Bennett’s time was already committed to the Ford Show airing on CBS. He willingly orchestrated the two numbers which had been written—“Prologue (Carousel Waltz)” and “Mister Snow”—and enthusiastically championed Don Walker to arrange the rest of the show. Bennett arranged “Waltz” for concert band in 1949, unintentionally creating a staple of popular concert band repertoire.

Departing from Broadway tradition, the “Prologue” here serves not as an overture but as an introduction to the story proper. Intermingling pantomime and dance, this prologue establishes the setting in an 1870s mill town in New England. The waltz allows for a romantic meeting between the two main characters, Julie and Billy, and the development of their courtship. Offbeat accents and atypically built chords foreshadow the couple’s struggles within society and with each other.

Porgy and Bess (1942)

Bennett spent the better part of 1942 arranging portions of George Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* at the request of Fritz Reiner, then music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Bennett initially felt reluctant, due largely to his self-confessed “musical snobbery,” but at the behest of his employer, Max Dreyfus, accepted.²⁴ Reiner planned the work’s structure, which creates an independent musical portrait rather than an

accurate rendering of the show's plot. Premiered by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra on February 5, 1943, it later appeared to have cemented Bennett's recognition with "the man on the street."²⁵ Gershwin's own concert suite of the opera did not receive widespread attention or acclaim until 1953, when his brother Ira reintroduced it as *Catfish Row*.

"Summertime" and "A Woman is a Sometime Thing" stand out for their prominent cornet solos, leading into the sassy euphonium of "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'." Alto saxophone, alto clarinet, cornet, euphonium, and oboe solos share prominence in "Bess, You is my Woman," followed by the cornet/trombone dialogue of "It Ain't Necessarily So." "Picnic Parade" provides a splashy introduction to the medley's grand finale, "Oh Lawd, I'm on my Way."

Victory at Sea (1954)

Robert Russell Bennett described the experience of *Victory at Sea* as "orchestrating a complete Broadway musical every ten days to two weeks, instead of three to four weeks."²⁶ Each week, the television program explored a different aspect of the failures and triumphs of the U.S. Navy during World War II. The twenty-six episode series became so popular that the network received complaints—viewers had to plan entire Sunday afternoons to coordinate with the mid-afternoon airtime!²⁷

Three themes from the series, included in this 1954 transcription for band, became popular in their own rights. "Song of the High Seas," one of the primary themes, depicts the dramatic journey of the warships across the windswept ocean, while "Beneath the Southern Cross," a romantic tango, later reappeared as "No Greater Love" in *Me and Juliet*. "Guadalcanal March" has become a classic in the concert band repertoire, contrasting spirited themes with sharp brass punctuation depicting the struggle for this lonely island in the south Pacific.

Endnotes

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3. The description is attributed to Bennett's commanding officer at Camp Funston in "The Autobiography..."
4. Robert Russell Bennett, "A Pretty Girl Is Like A Melody," The Broadway Sound, 298.
5. George Ferencz, correspondence with this author, April 4, 2006.
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21. Bennett, "The Autobiography..." 232.
22. Bennett, introduction to Autobiography for Band (New York: G. Schirmer, 1979).
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26. Hawkins, 121.
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His Legacy Remembered

Over the years I've corresponded or spoken with countless individuals who knew Russell Bennett: copyists and conductors, members of the original cast of *Oklahoma!*, NBC Symphony musicians he conducted for *Victory at Sea*, Richard Rodgers and Irving Berlin's daughters, and instrumentalists who brought his scores to life for network radio, television, Broadway, Hollywood, and the concert stage. They recall the man and his scores with equal fondness, corroborating Robert Shaw's appraisal of him as "so exceptional a human being... that it takes sort of an inverted hindsight to see that perhaps once a generation nice guys finish first."

Renewed attention to Bennett's career has yielded a fuller scholarly appreciation of his contributions, revivals of acclaimed symphonic works, and long-awaited full scores for the *Suite of Old American Dances* and *Symphonic Songs*. With this welcome addition to its Legacy series, The U.S. Army Field Band provides those who perform and appreciate concert band literature a thoughtful survey of Bennett's compositions and arrangements, including better-known works and rarities—several recorded here for the first time.

—George J. Ferencz

I came to the music of Robert Russell Bennett as a convert. While a college student, I didn't think too much of his music—as with many university students who think they know everything, I considered Bennett a journeyman composer and an adequate arranger. When I became a conductor and discovered the vast amount of bad music there was to choose from, I began to note the expertise in his writing, and when I had the opportunity to participate in theatrical productions he had orchestrated, I heard what I had missed. In his original writing, I saw a miniaturist who used craft and wit to entertain an audience and challenge the performers. I now see myself as Bennett's greatest fan.

It is pointless to compare a miniaturist like Bennett to a composer of huge canvasses like Mahler, but compared to composers who flourished in small forms (like Mendelssohn, Schubert, and yes, Leroy Anderson), Bennett stands with the best of them. Let's listen again to the clarity and charm of the small pieces comprising *Autobiography* and *Four Preludes*, and thank whatever gods sent him our way that Bennett produced masterpieces of writing for winds when arranging the music of George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Jerome Kern, and so many others.

—R. Mark Rogers

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*Colonel Finley R. Hamilton and the
Concert Band in the recording studio*

Educational Outreach

The U.S. Army Field Band is strongly committed to education and the arts, supporting the *National Standards for Arts Education* through an extensive outreach program that ranges from preschool to postgraduate. Each year, the Musical Ambassadors of the Army present more than 650 educational activities throughout the country, reaching over 100,000 students annually.

In addition to performances for school assemblies, programs include presentations for elementary students, instrumental and vocal clinics, chamber music recitals, and college master classes. On evening concerts, outstanding students from local schools are often invited to perform with the Musical Ambassadors. For music educators, guest conducting opportunities and professional development workshops are available.

As a long-term benefit for both students and teachers, the Field Band produces an ongoing series of educational resources. These instructional videos, reference recordings, and classroom posters are distributed free of charge to schools throughout the United States.

Inquiries concerning the Field Band's outreach programs should be addressed to:

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SSG Diana Powers ^Δ

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SFC Jennifer Gabrysh ^Δ
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SFC Matthew Kanowith
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THE UNITED STATES ARMY FIELD BAND



The Legacy of ROBERT RUSSELL BENNETT

Colonel Finley R. Hamilton, Commander and Conductor

1. 1939 World's Fair: Fountain Lake Fanfare (1:36) Robert Russell Bennett
- Four Preludes Robert Russell Bennett
2. I. George (2:42)
3. II. Vincent (3:15)
4. III. Cole (2:57)
5. IV. Jerome (3:09)
6. "S.S. Eagle March"
Down to the Sea in Ships (2:09) Robert Russell Bennett
- Autobiography Robert Russell Bennett
7. I. 1894: Cherry Street (2:13)
8. II. 1899: South Omaha (2:02)
9. III. 1900: Corn, Cows, and Music (1:49)
10. IV. 1916: Mo. to N.Y. (2:23)
11. V. 1919: The Merrill Miracle (1:53)
12. VI. 1926: A Parisian in Paris (1:50)
13. VII. 1935: What Was the Question? (2:15)
14. "Waltz" from Carousel (8:03) Richard Rodgers, arr. Robert Russell Bennett
15. Porgy and Bess (11:27) George Gershwin, Dubose Heyward, and
Ira Gershwin, arr. Robert Russell Bennett
16. 1939 World's Fair: TNT Cocktail (1:15) Robert Russell Bennett
17. Victory at Sea (11:10) Richard Rodgers, arr. Robert Russell Bennett