

# Wind concert works shine only briefly

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Music Critic

In a generally tedious joint wind concert in McCain Auditorium on Tuesday evening wherein a variety of second rate compositions were sandwiched in between a seemingly interminable series of deployment of personnel on and off the stage, William Walton's *Facade* stood out both for its fine music and for the excellent performance by narrator Ralph Titus.

This brilliant and witty work was first performed in London in 1923, with Dame Edith Sitwell reading her own abstract word-paintings through a megaphone from behind a curtain. As much a work of theater as a concert piece, *Facade* was not well received at first. Even the music that we now find so witty and delightful was received with some skepticism at

the time, but over the years it has come to be treasured for the original and entertaining work that it is.

The narration, which seems so easy in performance, is in fact extremely difficult to bring off, and Ralph Titus not only coped well with the words, but also colored them to dramatic effect. It was astounding that his voice was distorted almost beyond recognition and understanding by a dreadful PA system that seemed to have been picked up from some abandoned movie theater. There had been no such problem when he narrated *A Lincoln Portrait* earlier in the year.

Al Cochran led the KSU Symphonic Wind Ensemble, whose general playing during the evening was untidier than in recent years, in a spirited performance of the music. It was, however, unfortunate that Walton's

brilliantly light-fingered orchestration was performed in an arrangement for band that was bloated and unattractive, destroying the delicate balances of the original.

The same case of inflated instrumentation also affected Beethoven's *Military March*. The program notes, for the provision of which thanks are due to those responsible, contained the statement regarding the arrangement used of this work that "other added parts for instruments of the contemporary band are simply reinforcements of the original setting." And that is equally as simply an appalling statement of a misjudgment.

In the event the stodgy presentation of the *Military March* was one in which the Wind Ensemble, conducted by Deb Barner, seemed to have been shifted into *moderato*, *mezzo forte* and got itself stuck there.

Of the rest of the offerings by the Wind Ensemble, that of Grainger's uninspiring trifle, *Colonial Song*, was graced by a fine brief trumpet solo

and equally brief, but sensitive alto saxophone solos by Candi Massimino.

The concert had opened with a series of selections by the 1st Infantry Division Band under the direction of Otho R. Fields. What the band lacked in elegance it made up for in vigor, a quality that was particularly evident in Ken Whitcomb's *23 Skidoo*, a work that allowed the band to combine circus and vaudeville music into one joyful romp.

But that was it, where the quality of the music was concerned, except that Dale Misenhelter's eloquent trumpet solo during Clifton Williams' *Dramatic Essay* should be noted.

In between all this, the Kansas Bach Choir under the direction of Rod Walker sang a medley from *South Pacific* and as 10 p.m. came around the stage was being reorganized once again for a massed attack on *America the Beautiful* and I confess that I could take no more, having been finished off by the long-winded, pompous raucousness of Alfred Reed's *Russian Christmas Music*.

Enough was enough.