

More About FIRST SUITE FOR BRASS QUARTET

In 1967, when I was an undergraduate music major at Central College, I was very interested in expanding my growing knowledge of composition, but no such class was offered on the curriculum. So my theory teacher and adviser, Dr. Rittenhouse, who had a background in composition, took pity on me and gave me some lessons as a Directed Individual Study. This suite for a quartet of conical bore brass instruments was my project for those lessons. It has since undergone some clean-up revisions, but is still essentially the same composition as written by that 20-year old undergraduate.

But just because **First Suite** is an early work, please don't dismiss it out of hand. A year or so after it was first written, I sent it, along with a couple other pieces (see **Sextuplets** in the piano section), to Vincent Persichetti--who I greatly admired--for evaluation. His encouraging assessment: "I especially liked the brass quartet. The four instruments are well-written for, and there is real 'stuff' in the piece."

Many years later, when I first revisited this quartet prior to starting the revisions, I could scarcely believe that I was able to pull off a composition of that kind way back then. It is much more akin to the work I would be doing a few years later as a graduate composition student at FSU than to other pieces I was writing at the time.

Scored for 2 Bb cornets, F horn, and euphonium, this is a technically and musically challenging work, featuring intricate rhythmic interplay and ambiguous tonal centers. Although playable by musically advanced high school musicians, it is intended primarily as concert material for serious college age players and professionals. There is a unifying motif that appears in each of the five short, contrasting movements.

The movements are given English tempo indications:

1. *Agitated, driving* 2. *Slow, expressive* 3. *Frantic* 4. *Solemn* 5. *Quick*

A year or so after completing this suite, I wrote a second one for cylindrical bore brass...2 trumpets and 2 trombones. But I was not satisfied with it and it has been hiding in the drawer for over 5 decades. Now I have finally taken it out and revised it to my satisfaction, so it is finally available!