

Composer

Audio

Second Symphony for Band

Ensemble

by **Charles T. Neal**

Electronic

World Premiere Performance

Composer's Program Notes

October 7, 1973

"We live in an age when almost anything is considered art music. We have pieces for synthesizer and for B-flat double-clutch bass vacuum cleaner; we have pieces in which it is necessary to burn pianos, honk automobile horns, sit in a certain position, wear certain clothes, or perform extraneous actions like lighting candles. We have techniques of composition designed to destroy rather than create melody, tonality and harmony, and we have at least one so-called composition in which the composer specifies the soloist must be a topless female cellist. Unfortunately what we don't have enough of is music.

My Second Symphony for Band, like most of my large-scale works, is a repudiation of this extremist idiocy. It is my affirmation that the great composers of this century are men like Hindemith, Shostakovitch, Darius Milhaud, Howard Hanson, Persichatti, and Stravinsky--I speak here with the reservation that I believe the last composer's twelve-tone period was a manifestation of senility. My music repudiates Schoenberg and Webern as mere mathematical craftsmen, and the likes of John Cage as cheap hacks. I have instead cast my lot with those men who dare to write a melody, in my belief that music serves as an escape from our times rather than a reflection of an afternoon on the freeway in the concert hall. I have adopted the Russian philosophy that music should appeal to its listeners, and that music which appeals only to a lunatic fringe has no place in public performance. I agree also with Hindemith's philosophy that music is meant to be used, to be played, listened to and enjoyed. It is not an easy task. I have found it far more difficult to work in this medium than to produce a passable tone-row piece or to burn a piano. But I have also found it more rewarding, if only because I feel better for being an artist rather than a charlatan."

Charles T. Neal