



PA Sinfonia Program Notes for Valley Vivaldi
on Saturday, October 10, 2009

"Notes For New Listeners" PSO October 10 2009
by Christina Schmidt

Strike up the band!

Welcome to the very special opening concert of the Pennsylvania Sinfonia Orchestra's 2009/2010 season. For this program of music by American composers, we are delighted to share the stage with the Allentown Band, conducted by Ron Demkee. Also joining us is Greg Funfgeld, artistic director and conductor of the Bach Choir of Bethlehem, who will be the narrator for Aaron Copland's "Lincoln Portrait."

Orchestras include some of the same instruments as are found in most bands, but bands do not include a large group of stringed instruments, which is the basis for an orchestra's unique sound. Bands originally developed in Europe for military purposes, while orchestras grew up largely to serve royalty and religious institutions. The term "band" to describe a musical group may have come from the Latin "bandum," meaning "banner" or "flag." During battles, European military forces would employ musicians to accompany their flag or banner. Often, these groups consisted of double-reed instruments, oboes and bassoons, which were very loud so the soldiers could locate the banner. In this country, the flag was usually attended by the fife and drum during battle.

Larger groups of brass, woodwinds, and percussion instruments that we would recognize as bands developed somewhat later in Europe. They were usually associated with towns and played for special occasions. In the USA, the Marine Band, now known as "The President's Own," was founded in 1798 and became associated with the President when John Adams asked the band to play for him. The Marine Band has played for every presidential inauguration since Thomas Jefferson's in 1801, and for countless patriotic and official occasions. The first civilian concert band is our own Allentown Band, which presented its first concert on July 4th, 1828. Such bands became very popular during the 19th century, playing for patriotic and other events in thousands of American towns and cities. Many composers have written music for concert bands, and Vincent Persichetti's "Divertimento" is a fine example that you will hear tonight. Concert bands also play arrangements of orchestral music, and, of course, the familiar marches by John Philip Sousa and others.

We hope you enjoy our orchestra/band collaboration.