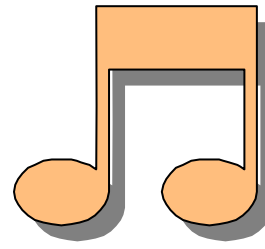


NOTES



No. 10

December 31, 2009

"Perfection in music is illusive, but excellence is attainable and sustainable." (former) "Perfection in music is elusive, but excellence is attainable and sustainable." (revised)

THE QUOTATION

Beth Askew recently questioned the use of "illusive" rather than "elusive" in the quotation given above. Beth has credentials in English and her expertise and her comment are to be taken seriously.

Beth didn't mention that quotations are supposed to be attributed to someone, and this one isn't. But this is not original with me; it was "lifted" from an article in a journal about hand bell choirs. Alas, the source is misplaced. As soon as it is found, attribution will be made.

The quote is accurate. The author (possibly British or Canadian?) said "illusive" and the editor of the journal obviously agreed.

Beth's comment has sent me to several dictionaries, several books on word usage, and the Internet. "Illusive" means "illusory," from "illusion," with synonyms of fantasy, unreal, specious, false, imaginary, and fancied. I've found references to "peace seems illusive," "an illusive transformation," "a seemingly illusive state," "the

illusive American dream," "an illusive answer to questions," "a concept. . . [that] will remain illusive," and "both goals appear to be illusive and elusive." I would join Beth in questioning whether the right word has been used in some, if not all, of these examples.

I am persuaded that whether "perfection in music" is "illusive" or "elusive" depends on what one wants to say. If perfection is "illusive," then it doesn't exist, it can only be imagined. On the other hand, if perfection is "elusive," it is "hard to catch" and "evasive," but it isn't impossible.

The "illusive" wording is an accurate quotation and it may represent what the author intended. But that's not what I believe or intend. From here on, the quotation will say "elusive." Thanks, Beth!

And, with that change I believe we have a much more powerful principle in front of us than is reflected in a statement I found applied to another musical group: *"Mediocrity seems a reasonably attainable goal."*

KNOWN JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

January 13: Ben Henig
January 15: Pat Padilla
January 23: Nathan Sparks
January 25: Erick Starnal

WILLIAM TELL OVERTURE

The theme for our February concert, for which we will begin rehearsals on January 5, is "(Mostly) Fictional Characters." The exceptions to the theme will be the euphonium solos with band to be performed by Adam Frey.

One such fictional character is "William Tell." According to legend, Tell was known as an expert marksman with the crossbow. The ruler raised a pole in the village's central square, hung his hat on top of it, and demanded that all the local townsfolk bow before the hat. When Tell passed by the hat without bowing to it, he was arrested. He received the punishment of being forced to shoot an apple off the head of his son, Walter, or else both would be executed. Tell had been promised freedom if he successfully shot the apple.

Tell split the fruit with a single shot from his crossbow, without mishap. When the ruler queried him about the purpose of a second bolt in his quiver, Tell answered that if he had killed his son, he would have turned the crossbow on the ruler himself. The ruler became enraged at that comment, and had Tell bound and brought to his ship to be taken to his castle. But when a storm broke on Lake Lucerne, Tell managed to escape. On land, he went to the castle, and when the ruler arrived, Tell shot him with his crossbow.

Tell's defiance of the ruler sparked a rebellion, in which Tell himself acted out a leading part, leading to the formation of the Swiss Confederation.

Friedrich Schiller wrote a famous play about this legend and, not long afterwards (1829), Gioacchino Rossini produced an opera in Paris using the drama as the basis for the libretto. Although the

full opera is rarely produced these days, the overture has become one of the "standards" of classical music, with the finale (the "Lone Ranger theme") becoming one of the most overworked pieces of music of any genre.

It is interesting to note that, having composed "William Tell" at age 37, Rossini essentially composed no more during the remaining 39 years of his life, instead enjoying a life of ease.

The overture consists of four definite sections: the serene prelude, depicting a peaceful mountain scene; the tempestuous episode, foreshadowing the storm scene in the opera; the pastorale with its herdsmen singing bits of song between blasts of their horns, as they assemble the grazing cattle; and the brilliant finale with its military march and spirited melodies.

The arranger, Eric W.G. Leidzen, a native of Sweden, was a highly prolific and popular transcriber of orchestral pieces for high-quality concert bands during the 1920's and 1930's. (Note the original copyright date of 1938 on our arrangement.)

There is a recording on YouTube of a community band performing what appears to be the Leidzen arrangement, but with some parts simplified and a number of errors made. (We can do better than that!) You have to listen to it in two parts. These are approximately the tempos that we will use.

Part 1:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fDQkATyPac&feature=related>

Part 2:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sx03H_mCSyM