Aesthetics of Music in Sixteenth-Century Italy, France and Spain

Second Edition

Aesthetics of Music
Volume 4

David Whitwell

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Volume 4

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David Whitwell

Aesthetics of Music

VOLUME 4
AESTHETICS OF MUSIC IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY, FRANCE AND SPAIN

Edited by Craig Dabelstein

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FOREWORD

We define Music to be that form of music performed live before listeners. We define Aesthetics in Music to be a study of the nature of the perception of music by the listener.

We believe the performance of music in actual practice falls naturally into four classes. These are Art Music, Educational Music, Functional Music and Entertainment Music.

I. Art Music

Art Music we believe is defined by four conditions, *all* of which *must always be present*. These are:

1. *Art music is inspired*. Art music is music in which it seems evident that the composer has made an honest attempt to communicate genuine feelings. Feelings, which may range from lofty and noble to superficial and vulgar, must be presumed to be generally recognizable in music, as they are in any other art form, including painting, sculpture, dance, and architecture. In Art Music, lofty and noble feelings are paramount.

   Due to the common genetically understood nature of emotions, it must also be understood that in music emotions or feelings cannot be 'faked.' They will always be recognized as such by any contemplative listener.
2. *Art Music has no purpose other than the communication of its own aesthetic content*. Art Music is free of any purpose or function, save the spiritual communication of pure beauty.
3. *Art Music is that which enjoys a performance faithful to the intent of the composer.*
4. *Art Music must have a listener capable of contemplation*.

If any of these conditions are missing, the performance must result in a lesser aesthetic experience. For example, the *Ninth Symphony* of Beethoven played in a stadium, during the half-time of a professional football game, would fail for the lack of the presence

of Condition Number Four. The same Symphony heard in a concert hall, but in a poor performance, not faithful to the intent of the composer, would fail for the lack of the presence of Condition Number Three.

II. Educational Music

Educational Music may or may not have the same conditions as Art Music, excepting Condition Number Two; it may or may not occur within an educational institution. Educational Music is didactic music, music which has the specific and *additional* aim to educate. In the strictest sense, if the *primary purpose* of Music is to educate, it cannot be Art Music—for Art Music has no purpose.

III. Functional Music

Functional Music is music put at the service of something else. We include here, for example, all kinds of religious music, music for weddings, music for the military, and occupational music. Functional Music may share the same conditions as Art Music, excepting Condition Number Two.

One may ask, How can a Mozart Mass be called Functional Music, and not Art Music? If the observer were not contemplatively listening to the music, but were rather contemplating religious thoughts, then the Mozart Mass becomes merely a very high level of Functional Music. If, on the other hand, the observer is a contemplative listener of music, forgetting about religion, then the Mozart Mass is Art Music, but has failed in its purpose as church music.

Military and wedding music are examples of music in which the contemplative listener is missing entirely. How about airport, supermarket and elevator music where there is no listener at all? According to the definition we have given above, recorded music without listeners is not to be considered music at all.

IV. Entertainment Music

Entertainment Music is music with no object other than to please. It will always be missing Condition Four, the contemplative listener. For this reason, Entertainment Music may be inspired music, but the composer is unlikely to be inspired by lofty and noble emotions, knowing there will be no contemplative listener. Entertainment Music and Art Music can never be the same thing because of Condition Number Two: Art Music has no purpose other than the communication of its own aesthetic content. It is inconsistent with the nature of great art to have any extrinsic purpose, including the purpose to entertain.

The first philosopher to address the impact which Art has on an observer was Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, as part of a discussion of Tragedy, which like music has both a material, written form and a live performance form. In this treatise, Aristotle first considers the nature and contribution of each of the specific components of the written form of the Tragedy in his typically methodical style. His great contribution, however, comes when he has completed this discussion, for he then goes beyond the material form of the play itself to discuss the observer. He makes it clear that not only is the end purpose of the elements of the play to produce a specific experience in the observer, but that the nature of this experience is what distinguishes Tragedy from other dramatic forms, such as Spectacle. It was in this moment that he created a new branch of Philosophy which we call 'Aesthetics.'

Our purpose is to provide a source book of representative descriptions of actual performances, observations by philosophers, poets and other commentators which contribute insights to our understanding of what music meant to listeners during the early Renaissance. It is for this reason that when discussing contemporary treatises on music that we concentrate on those passages which offer insights relative to the aesthetics of music and musical performance rather than the usual technical subjects such as scales, modes and counterpoint which fill most books on Renaissance music.

Since traditional musicology has focused almost exclusively on sacred and secular vocal music of the Renaissance, we have also

included numerous references which we hope will reveal a much wider world of music during this period.

We are also interested in contemporary views on the physiology of knowing, especially with regard to the relationship of the senses and Reason, and related psychological ideas, such as Pleasure and Pain and the Emotions, which might offer a frame of reference for their perspective on the perception of music.

This is the fourth volume in a series of eight, ranging from the music of the ancient civilizations through the Baroque Period.

David Whitwell
Austin, Texas

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This new edition would not have been possible without the encouragement and help of Craig Dabelstein of Brisbane, Australia. His experience as a musician and educator himself has contributed greatly to his expertise as editor of this volume.

David Whitwell
Austin, 2013

1 SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALIAN PHILOSOPHERS

A natural result of the intellectual excitement and sense of cultural rediscovery during the earlier years of the Renaissance in Italy is the courtier of the sixteenth century. The courtier, as he is described in one of the most famous books of the Renaissance, *Il Cortigiano* (The Courtier), by Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529), attempts to become the perfect gentleman or lady not only through deportment but by the acquisition of education and a wide variety of skills. He is, to most of us today, what is meant by a 'Renaissance man.'

Torquato Tasso also wrote of the breadth of knowledge needed by the courtier. Conspicuously missing in his list is music, which he may have regarded as requiring too much work, as indeed was the view of Castiglione.

> He ought to learn mathematics and moral philosophy as well as natural science and theology, and he ought to be well acquainted with the historians,[1] the poets, the orators, and with the noble arts, such as sculpture, painting and architecture. He ought to know enough about all of these subjects so that no one can accuse him of ignorance. Such knowledge will win high honor from his prince, and goodwill will follow honor.[2]

Other writers, such as Guicciardini, saw a clear value in obtaining some musical skills.

> When I was young, I used to scoff at knowing how to play [an instrument], dance, and sing, and other such frivolities. I even made light of good penmanship, knowing how to ride, to dress well, and all those things that seem more decorative than substantial in a man. But later, I wished I had not done so. For although it is not wise to spend too much time cultivating the young toward the perfection of these arts, I have nevertheless seen from experience that these ornaments and accomplishments lend dignity and reputation even to men of good rank. It may even be said that whoever lacks them lacks something important. Moreover skill in this sort of entertainment opens the way to the favor of princes, and sometimes becomes the beginning or

---

1 Pietro Aretino, in a letter to Charles V, made the memorable remark, 'falsehood is the mother of history' [Letter of June, 1536, quoted in Samuel Putnam, *The Works of Aretino* (New York: Covici, 1926), II, 85]. Aretino (1492–1556) was one of the first authors whose books were placed on the Index of Prohibited Books, a development of the Council of Trent.

2 Torquato Tasso, 'Malpiglio, or On the Court,' in *Tasso's Dialogues*, trans. Carnes Lord (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 161.

> the reason for great profit and high honors. For the world and princes are no longer made as they should be, but as they are.[3]

Machiavelli, in turn, recommends in his 'The Prince,' that the wise prince will also show himself to be a lover of the arts by rewarding accomplished men.[4]

For Tasso, the musician was one of several professions which was welcome in court, but again requiring too much effort and specialization to be acquired by the regular courtier.

> Poets, orators, musicians, and the professors of mathematics and natural philosophy can be courtiers just as they can be citizens …
>
> Properly speaking, however, the courtier is the active and prudent man who rules the arts and sciences in a court just as the prudent citizen does in a city.[5]

Too much specialization, even in general knowledge, seems to have been a sensitive characteristic in the presence of rulers who had gained their position by birth or battle, as Tasso warns.

> But since the intellect is meant by nature to rule, it seems that the man who possesses superior prudence ought not to be considered inferior for any reason. And this is why princes usually hate any greatness of mind. When a courtier has great intelligence, which sometimes happens, he ought to cover it up modestly, not show it off with pride. Concealment becomes the courtier more than showing off.[6]

However much the courtier may have appreciated the arts, the genuine artists themselves often lived on the edge of poverty. It was the beginning of the aristocratic patronage system which would remain in place well into the nineteenth century. On advising a correspondent on the life led by poets, Pietro Aretino notes that they are all so poor that a nobleman of Milan once saw a fellow in a ragged cloak and said, 'The man must be a poet.'[7] He continues,

---

3 Francesco Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections*, trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), C, 179. Guicciardini (1483–1540) as a young man served as an ambassador of Florence to the court of the king of Aragon. Later he served under two papal administrations which led to his appointment as governor of Modena, in 1516, and of Reggio, in 1517. His most important literary effort was a *History of Italy*. Aretino, in one of his letters, mentions overhearing a young man state that he has the necessary qualities to be a courtier: 'I am a good musician, have some learning, and I love the chase.' Letter to Ambrogio degli Eusebii, in Thomas Chubb, *The Letters of Pietro Aretino* (New Haven: Shoe String Press [Archon Books], 1967), 103.

4 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Machiavelli, the Chief Works*, trans. Allan Gilbert (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965), I, 84.

5 Tasso, 'Malpiglio, or on the Court,' 187. Aretino, in a letter to Francesco Salviati, in Chubb, *The Letters of Pietro Aretino*, 210, observes that the courtier, Lorenzetto, had to give up his study of poetry for lack of time.

6 Tasso, ibid., 175.

7 Letter to Giovan Gragoncino, in Chubb, *The Letters of Pietro Aretino*, 95. According to Aretino, in Pietro Aretino, *Dialogues*, trans., Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Marsilio, 1971), 255, scholars had the same reputation. He mentions that a scholar flung his purse at someone and it 'hardly made a sound when it hit the floor.'

> But we live in this world, praise God, nor must we despair because our lot is cruel. After all, it is a fine thing to have our name hawked at every fair, and to hear what we have written sung by the mountebanks. It makes us lose our fear of Death, for poets, he admits, are not food for his teeth. Long before he gets them they will have been devoured by cold and heat …
>
> So if you want to go barefoot and naked, turn yourself into an air-eating chameleon and become a singer of rhymes.

For a writer, Aretino points out, one means for survival was to attempt to publish one's own works for profit, although he personally found this offensive.

> As for having printed at one's own expense and one's own urging the books that a man has drawn forth from his imagination, that seems to me to be like feasting on one's own limbs, and he who every evening visits the bookstore to pick up the money earned by the day's sales, to be like a pimp who empties the purse of his woman before he retires to bed.
>
> For that reason, I hope God will grant that the courtesy of princes rewards me for the labor of writing, and not the small change of book buyers; for I would rather endure every hardship than to prostitute my genius by making it a day laborer of the liberal arts.
>
> It is obvious that those who write for money become hosts to, and even porters of their own infamy, and so if you want the advantage of profit, become a merchant. Frankly call yourself a book peddler, and lay the name of poet aside.[8]

While Aretino, above, prays for a generous prince, his descriptions of such service are not flattering. In a letter of October 1545, to an ambassador, he writes,

> Tell your master that as far as barking goes, poets are like dogs. Unbearable hunger is the evil friend which makes the latter bare their teeth and the former wag their tongues. But the pleasant after-effects of bread set before them at the right hour and time, will quiet the rabies of one and smother the anger of the other. So if His Excellency would only have as much liberality as he has gold, it would be very little trouble for him so to act that the howling of wolves was changed into the sweet singing of swans.[9]

Another letter complains of unfilled promises.

> The lies of those princes who promise to help men of talent are even more dangerous than those of physicians who assure their patients that they will escape death. For the latter species of men learned in presumption, play false only with the purses and the lives of those who are groaning on their sickbeds, but the former rabble of magnificos in appearance only, bring despair to the soul and body of all who have grown lean in praising them. Therefore, he who puts no faith in them is rich, and he who trusts them is a beggar.[10]

---

8 Letter to Francesco Marcolini, in Chubb, *The Letters of Pietro Aretino*, 66.

9 Quoted in ibid., 215

10 Letter to Mutio, January, 1548, in ibid., 245ff.

As Aretino's fame grew he began to take revenge in his writings and he liked to think that in so doing he had improved the lot of artists at court.

> But I for my part have written what I have written for the sake of sacred Genius. Up to now she had been hidden in a dark corner by the avarice of the great lords. Indeed, before I began to lash out and to paint these fellows in their true colors, men of ability had to become beggars for the ordinary needs of life. If any one of them was able to stave off want and misery, he did so by being a clown and not because he was a man of talents. By my pen, armed with its terrors, wrought in such a manner that these mighty folk, aware of its powers, were obliged to receive men of intellect and enforced courtesy even though they hated this worse than some deadly disease.[11]

The sense of intellectual expansion seen in the life of the ordinary courtier can also be seen to some degree in the dogma of the Church. While it had strictly held to the concept of only one path to truth during the Middle Ages, now a writer such as Maffei, in his 'De Institutione Christiana,' could argue for varied paths.

> Just as in the Catholic faith, in which all the equally good and faithful meet together in the same spirit to embrace the one God and Father of all, truth is often thought out by different people in different ways and means so that each one lives more or less according to his own nature, humors, fortune, and grace.[12]

Such liberal thinking soon came under attack by the Counter-Reformation, which might as well be called 'Counter-Renaissance,' in so far as Humanism was concerned. The Church, faced with the challenge of Luther, retreated to its strong point—medieval dogma. Some of these retrenchments, such as abolishing the right of the individual to act on his own conscience or judgment,[13] are with us still today. We can see the impact of this primarily in Rome, where the Humanist School of painting begins to disappear, to be replaced by a style called Mannerist.[14]

In addition, the Renaissance itself suffered a significant setback in Italy due to invasions. Between 1512 and 1530, Brescia, Genoa, Pavia, Naples and Florence were sacked. In the famous 'Sack of Rome,' in 1527, looters even entered the Sancta Sanctorum of the Lateran and played ball with the relic heads of St. Peter and St. Paul![15] Rome did not become a center of the arts again until 1600. Stinger finds in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* an expression of the somber mood in Rome following the sack and believes it was ordered to reflect 'a forceful reassertion of theology over philosophy, of faith over reason, of divine grace over human free will.'[16]

11 Letter to Giantonio da Foligno, in Ibid., 52.

12 Quoted in John D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 196.

13 Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450–1600* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 105.

14 Ibid., 106.

15 Charles Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 322.

16 Ibid., 325.

ON THE PHYSIOLOGY OF AESTHETICS

One of the curiosities of this period, in which we are sometimes given the impression that most courtiers were striving to ever extend their skills and knowledge, is that some writers found, on the balance, that knowledge traveled in the company of unhappiness. Consider, for example, these reflections by Guicciardini:

> A superior intellect is bestowed upon men only to make them unhappy and tormented. For it does nothing but produce in them greater turmoil and anxiety than there is in more limited men.[17]
>
> ……
>
> In this world it is undoubtedly true that men of mediocre mind have a better time, a longer life, and are in some respects happier than men of high intellect; for a noble mind is apt to be the cause of trouble and worry. But mediocre men participate more in brute animality than in humanity, whereas the others transcend the human condition and approach the celestial natures.[18]
>
> ……
>
> It sometimes happens that fools do greater things than wise men. The reason is that the wise man, unless forced to do otherwise, will rely a great deal on reason and little on fortune; whereas the fool does just the opposite.[19]

Most writers, however, probably would have agreed with Machiavelli:

> For brains are of three types: the first comprehends for itself; the second comprehends when another explains; the third does not comprehend either for itself or by means of another's explanation. The first is exceedingly good, the second good, the third useless.[20]

There were two philosophers in the older tradition who wrote at some length on the nature of the mind and its relationship to the senses. The first, Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1470–1533), was one of several important philosophers who, as a response to the Reformation, attempted to reconcile the ideas of the humanists with the Church. He was a late medieval Scholastic, but in the dress of the new 'Parisian style,' the Aristotelian School of the University of Paris.

In his treatise, *On the Imagination* (1500), dedicated to Maximilian I, we can see such an effort to combine the Church's 'soul' with the man and his intellect. Pico agrees with most earlier philosophers that all information comes to the mind through the senses, through

17 Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections*, C, 60.

18 Ibid., B, 115.

19 Ibid., C, 136.

20 Machiavelli, *The Chief Works*, I, 85.

images, from which comes the word 'imagination.'[21] The soul then conceives a likeness of the objects the senses have experienced (imagination) and 'places them before the intellect.' The soul employs intellect for contemplating abstract ideas, but Reason for contemplating the information of the senses and for things outside the body.[22]

Imagination also plays a similar communications role with regard to rational and irrational concepts, preparing Reason for the 'inferior nature' of the irrational.[23] Today we know the left hemisphere's presumption that the right hemisphere of the brain is inferior or even non-existent is a fact. Here, according to Pico, imagination plays a vital role, for if it fails to 'apply itself to the business of virtue' and instead follows 'the pleasures which allure the senses,' it robs man 'of humanity, and takes on bestiality.' In such a case, Reason must come to the rescue, enabling us to 'suppress [imagination] if it errs, and not urge it on, if it is hasty.'[24]

In Pico's *Commentary on a Canzone of Benivieni* (1519), he is somewhat more specific in his view of the nature of the intellect. In his general map of the mind, Pico finds:

1. Three types of cognitive faculties: sensation, reason and intellect.
2. Three levels of desiring: appetite, choice and will.
    a. Appetite (irrational animals) follows sensation.
    b. Choice (man) follows Reason.
    c. Will (angels) follows intellect.

> The rational faculty, located between sensation and intellect, as a mean between extremes, can address itself to the desires of either one, according to its own choice, now inclining to one, that is downward toward sensation, now rising to the other, that is upward toward intellect.[25]

The organizational agent for all these faculties Pico assigns to the soul. The ranking he gives them is both a reflection of medieval Church dogma and a value system which remains firmly in place today.

> This same hierarchy of authority can be seen in the microcosm, that is, in the human soul, where lower faculties are corrected and instructed by higher, and as long as each heeds its superior, each faculty carries out all of its functions without any mistakes. Thus the imagination often corrects the mistakes of the external senses; Reason instructs the imagination, and Reason is illuminated by the intellect. The cognitive part of the soul never falls into error except when the imagination is too arrogant and does not trust Reason, or Reason is alienated from the intellect and relies

21 Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *On the Imagination*, trans. Harry Caplan, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1957), I, 25. Pico was murdered by his nephew, Galeotto.

22 Ibid., II, 29.

23 Ibid., VI, 41ff.

24 Ibid., VII, 45. Pico continues the discussion with some 'weird science,' in which he says the functioning of one's imagination is determined by the relative amounts of blood, phlegm, red bile and black bile in the body. [Ibid., VIII, 51ff.]

25 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Commentary on a Canzone of Benivieni*, trans. Sears Jayne, (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 101. In view of this organization, it is interesting that Pico spoke of this book in a letter to Benivieni's brother, saying, 'I wrote it when I was bored and had nothing else to do, as a way of relaxing my mind, not of exciting it.'

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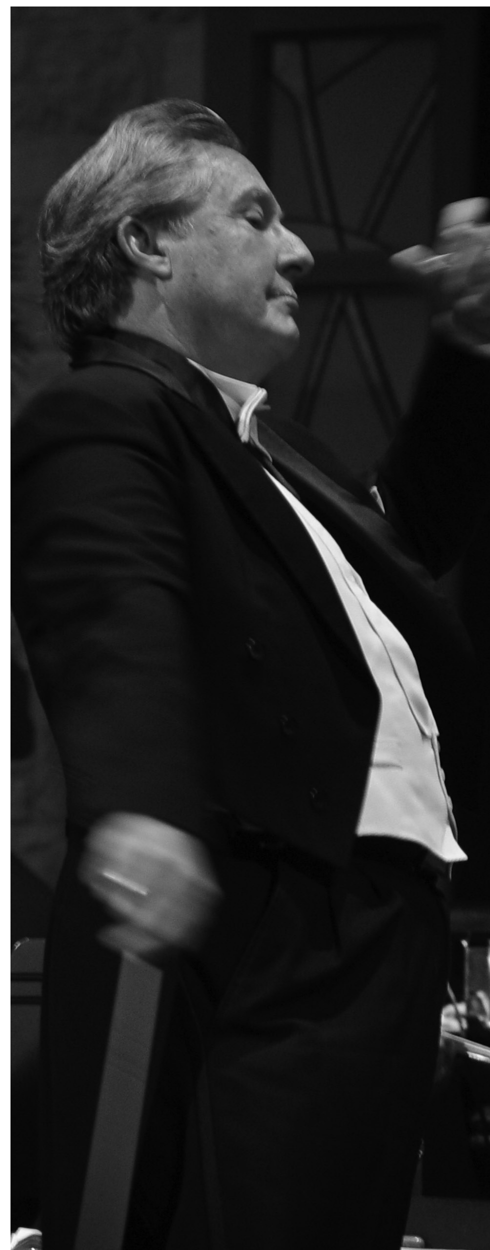

Dr. David Whitwell is a graduate ('with distinction') of the University of Michigan and the Catholic University of America, Washington DC (PhD, Musicology, Distinguished Alumni Award, 2000) and has studied conducting with Eugene Ormandy and at the Akademie für Musik, Vienna. Prior to coming to Northridge, Dr. Whitwell participated in concerts throughout the United States and Asia as Associate First Horn in the USAF Band and Orchestra in Washington DC, and in recitals throughout South America in cooperation with the United States State Department.

At the California State University, Northridge, which is in Los Angeles, Dr. Whitwell developed the CSUN Wind Ensemble into an ensemble of international reputation, with international tours to Europe in 1981 and 1989 and to Japan in 1984. The CSUN Wind Ensemble has made professional studio recordings for BBC (London), the Köln Westdeutscher Rundfunk (Germany), NOS National Radio (The Netherlands), Zürich Radio (Switzerland), the Television Broadcasting System (Japan) as well as for the United States State Department for broadcast on its 'Voice of America' program. The CSUN Wind Ensemble's recording with the Mirecourt Trio in 1982 was named the 'Record of the Year' by The Village Voice. Composers who have guest conducted Whitwell's ensembles include Aaron Copland, Ernest Krenek, Alan Hovhaness, Morton Gould, Karel Husa, Frank Erickson and Vaclav Nelhybel.

Dr. Whitwell has been a guest professor in 100 different universities and conservatories throughout the United States and in 23 foreign countries (most recently in China, in an elite school housed in the Forbidden City). Guest conducting experiences have included the Philadelphia Orchestra, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, the Czech Radio Orchestras of Brno and Bratislava, The National Youth Orchestra of Israel, as well as resident wind ensembles in Russia, Israel, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, England, Wales, The Netherlands, Portugal, Peru, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Canada and the United States.

He is a past president of the College Band Directors National Association, a member of the Prasidium of the International Society for the Promotion of Band Music, and was a member of the found-

ing board of directors of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (WASBE). In 1964 he was made an honorary life member of Kappa Kappa Psi, a national professional music fraternity. In September, 2001, he was a delegate to the UNESCO Conference on Global Music in Tokyo. He has been knighted by sovereign organizations in France, Portugal and Scotland and has been awarded the gold medal of Kerkrade, The Netherlands, and the silver medal of Wangen, Germany, the highest honor given wind conductors in the United States, the medal of the Academy of Wind and Percussion Arts (National Band Association) and the highest honor given wind conductors in Austria, the gold medal of the Austrian Band Association. He is a member of the Hall of Fame of the California Music Educators Association.

Dr. Whitwell's publications include more than 127 articles on wind literature including publications in Music and Letters (London), the London Musical Times, the Mozart-Jahrbuch (Salzburg), and 39 books, among which is his 13-volume *History and Literature of the Wind Band and Wind Ensemble* and an 8-volume series on *Aesthetics in Music*. In addition to numerous modern editions of early wind band music his original compositions include 5 symphonies.

David Whitwell was named as one of six men who have determined the course of American bands during the second half of the 20th century, in the definitive history, *The Twentieth Century American Wind Band* (Meredith Music).

A doctoral dissertation by German Gonzales (2007, Arizona State University) is dedicated to the life and conducting career of David Whitwell through the year 1977. David Whitwell is one of nine men described by Paula A. Crider in *The Conductor's Legacy* (Chicago: GIA, 2010) as 'the legendary conductors' of the 20th century.

> 'I can't imagine the 2nd half of the 20th century—without David Whitwell and what he has given to all of the rest of us.' Frederick Fennell (1993)