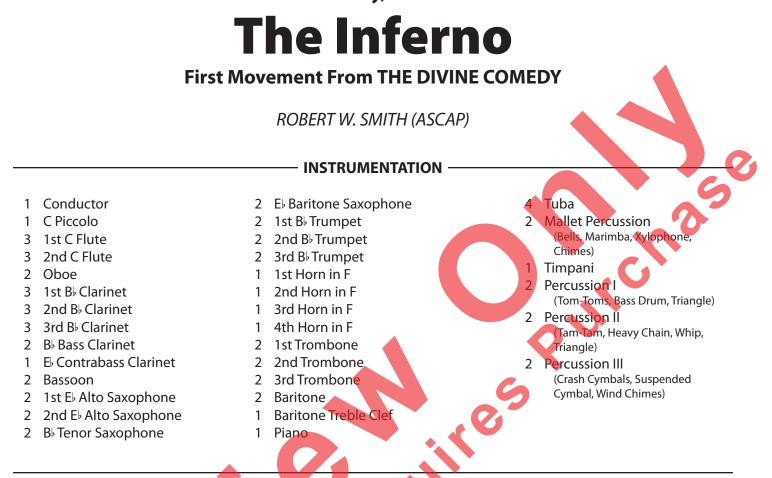


Commissioned by the James Madison University Band, Harrisonburg, VA, Dr. J. Patrick Rooney, Director of Bands



PROGRAM NOTES

The *Divine Comedy* is a four-movement work based on Dante Alighieri's literary classic of the same name. The story of Dante's trilogy is basic: One day Dante finds himself lost in a dark wood. Virgil, a character based on the revered Roman poet, appears and rescues him. Virgil guides Dante to a contemplation of Hell and Purgatory. Dante, having confessed his faults, and with Beatrice as his guide, is led into Paradise and attains a glimpse of the face of God.

"The Inferno" is the first of four movements in *The Divine Comedy*. Dante's vision of hell consists of nine concentric circles divided into four categories of sin. The principal theme behind the literary work is the concept of symbolic retribution. In other words, man's eternal damnation in Hell is directly correlated to the character and weight of his sin on earth.

Like Dante's *Inferno*, the movement is divided into four sections. The opening melodic statement in the oboe represents the sins of "incontinence." As Dante finishes his relatively short journey through the sections of "The Inferno," he is confronted with the Wall of Dis (the gate into Hell). The next section is structured around the sins of "violence" with its incredibly intense storms and fiery sands. The crimes of "ordinary fraud" follow the violent sinners. The composer used the sin of hypocrisy as visual imagery in the formation of this section of the musical work. Dante describes the hypocrites as they file endlessly in a circle, clothed in coats of lead, which represent the weight of the hypocrisy on earth.

The final section of "The Inferno" features the sins of "treacherous fraud." As Dante enters this circle of Hell, he hears the dreadful blast of a bugle. "Not even Roland's horn, which followed on the sad defeat when Charlemagne had lost his holy army, was as dread as this." Dante and Virgil are lowered into the last section of Hell by giants who are constantly pelted with bolts of thunder. As their journey nears the end, they are confronted with the sight of Dis (Lucifer), whose three mouths are eternally rending Judas, Brutus, and Cassius. Dante and Virgil climb down the flanks of Lucifer, exiting to the other hemisphere and leaving the fiery world of "The Inferno" behind.



THE INFERNO (from the "Divine Comedy")



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