

DYNAMO

DYNAMO was written on a commission from the University of Michigan Symphony Band and its director, Jason Fettig. It was to be a surprise 90th birthday tribute to H. Robert Reynolds, their director emeritus, who conducted the band for nearly thirty years. As soon as I got the call, I knew what I wanted to write. Something hot. Bob Reynolds introduced me to the world of wind ensemble and concert band in 2017 when he commissioned ACROSS THE DIVIDE. The first time he conducted that piece, he cranked up the tempo by fifteen or twenty clicks and delivered a high-voltage, high-energy interpretation that I never saw coming. So I wanted my tribute to Bob to reflect that side of him – fast, energetic and fun.

DYNAMO is driven by the timpani, playing a simple repetitive and forward-leaning figure that pushes the whole band from underneath. Xylophone and flute hit a ridiculous little riff right before the main themes hit, just to establish a tiny little bit of quirk, a slight smile. The main theme is a set of broad and powerful chords that floats over the top of the driving rhythm. Both the chords and the rhythm grow, getting more and more intense (quickly – the commission called for a total duration of less than three minutes), before hitting the B section, which is a musical portrait of the engine - the dynamo – featuring an angular bassline, rock toms and some ascending industrial cluster chords.

The whole thing resolves to a gigantic, majestic brass chorale – a nod to the traditional wind orchestra and Bob Reynolds' long and storied career in that genre. After the chorale plays a couple of times, the timpani sneaks back in and re-establishes the driving feel as the piece grows quickly to its final coda.

Happy birthday, Bob. Cheers and thank you for your life in music.