

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RICHARD BALES TO RETIRE
AFTER FORTY-TWO YEARS AS
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC, NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D. C. June 18, 1985. Richard Bales, master composer, arranger, conductor, and a distinguished historian of American music, will retire after forty-two years as Director of Music at the National Gallery of Art. His retirement is effective August 3, 1985.

Mr. Bales' association with the Gallery began in 1943 when he was commissioned to compose a score for the film, Your National Gallery. On June 6, 1943 Mr. Bales conducted his first concert at the Gallery and was shortly asked to head the Gallery's music department. Since then he has produced more than 1700 concerts, many as conductor of the National Gallery Orchestra which he has developed into a major institution. The Gallery's weekly Sunday evening concerts and recitals have been enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people who attend the performances or listen to them via live radio broadcast. For over thirty years Mr. Bales has presented program notes on the air during Sunday concert intermissions.

Mr. Bales established the annual American Music Festival at the Gallery in 1944. As a result, the music of many American composers has been performed for the first time at the National Gallery of Art. Since 1947 Mr. Bales has taken particular interest in the great American composer, Charles Ives. In 1953 he premiered Ives' "First Symphony," and in 1974 he organized an Ives Festival to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the composer's birth.

Mr. Bales has distinguished himself as a composer of music relating to the Revolution and the Civil War. The most important are three patriotic cantatas:

(MORE)

"The Confederacy" and "The Union" which distill the musical heritage of both sides during the Civil War and his stirring celebration of the American Revolution, "The Republic," which since 1955 has been performed for all presidential inaugurations. Mr. Bales has recorded these three works.

Among more than thirty-five original works, he has composed four National Gallery Suites, and "A Set of Jade," a song cycle on ancient Chinese love and New Year poems, which Mr. Bales considers his best work. Other pieces of special note are "God's Presence," an anthem composed on commission by historic Christ Church in Alexandria for its two-hundredth anniversary, and "The Spirit of Engineering," a suite for orchestra commissioned in 1984 by the National Society of Professional Engineers for its fiftieth anniversary. His catalogue also includes over twenty-five arrangements including "Silver Bell," said to have been President Abraham Lincoln's favorite waltz. "Stony Brook," a suite for strings arranged from early American music collected by the artist William Sidney Mount, and "Homage to Giles Farnaby," a suite arranged for strings from pieces by Farnaby in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, are works which were arranged by Mr. Bales and performed alfresco on Saturday afternoons in conjunction with Gallery openings.

Mr. Bales has been guest conductor of many of the nation's outstanding symphony orchestras: National Symphony Orchestra, Rhode Island Philharmonic, Juilliard Orchestra, San Antonio Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, New Mexico Symphony Orchestra, and the Rochester Philharmonic. He also conducted the Washington Cathedral Choral Society for one season.

Mr. Bales has received numerous awards and citations including special recognition from the National Symphony Orchestra, the Award of Merit from National Association of American Composers and Conductors, and the Alice M. Ditson Conductors Award, Columbia University. Mr. Bales has been listed in "Who's Who in America" since 1958. He is the recipient of the prestigious 1985 Cosmos Club Award which is presented to persons of national or international standing in a field of science, literature, or the fine arts, and in 1981 he was named a Washingtonian-

of-the-Year. He is also the first recipient of the Washington Times Art Award in 1983.

Mr. Bales was born in Alexandria, Virginia and graduated from the Episcopal High School in Alexandria where he achieved one of the highest averages in the school's one hundred year history. He graduated from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and won a conducting fellowship at the Juilliard School of Music in New York city. In the summer of 1940 he was one of four private pupils at Tanglewood, Massachusetts, in the first conducting class of famed conductor Serge Koussevitzky.

Mr. Bales has composed "Dirge for Two Veterans" on Walt Whitman's text for chorus, speaker, and orchestra which premieres at his final Sunday evening concert at the Gallery on June 30, 1985.

END