

## **More About SIMPLE GIFTS**

When three students from a local high school wanted to play a trio at church, they had trouble finding music for their particular combination of instruments: oboe, clarinet, and horn. So they asked their choir director for help, and he contacted me to see if I would arrange something appropriate for them. I looked through the **United Methodist Hymnal** and decided on the hymn **Lord of the Dance**, which is set to the familiar Shaker tune **Simple Gifts**.

The once-obscure tune became popular after Aaron Copland incorporated it into his Pulitzer Prize-winning score for the ballet **Appalachian Spring** in 1944. Since then it has been arranged many times in many ways, but in spite of that, I thought it would be a good fit for these students. Although loosely inspired by Copland's score, this is an original arrangement, not an attempt to "dumb down" his masterful variations into a short grade 3 wind trio. The melody polyphonically rotates between the instruments so everyone gets equal chances to play it.

When I went to publish the piece, the unusual combination of instruments was an obvious drawback, so that problem was solved by including alternate parts for flute and alto sax to substitute for oboe and horn.