



NEW MUSIC FOR BRASS BAND



WORKS BY **GEORGE BENJAMIN** **RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT** **JUDITH BINGHAM**
KENNETH HESKETH **MICHAEL TIPPETT** **PHILIP WILBY** & OTHERS

FODEN'S RICHARDSON BAND • BRAMWELL TOVEY, CONDUCTOR

FODEN'S RICHARDSON BAND

1	RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT <i>Flowers of the Forest: Reflections on a Scottish Folk Song</i> (ed. Hindmarsh)	14'25
2	KENNETH HESKETH <i>The Alchemist's Journal</i>	12'25
3	GEORGE BENJAMIN <i>Altitude</i> JUDITH BINGHAM <i>Prague</i>	8'35 12'45
4	St Wenceslas Chapel - The Ancient Crown of Bohemia	3'18
5	Rabbi Löw creates the Golem	2'43
6	Charles Bridge	4'11
7	Wenceslas Square - Defeat and Triumph	2'33
8	PHILIP WILBY <i>Shadow Songs</i>	9'59
	VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF TIPPETT	14'45
9	Michael Tippett (arr. Hindmarsh): <i>Processional</i> (from <i>A Midsummer Marriage</i>)	00'55
10	Bramwell Tovey: <i>Danse des Amis</i>	1'44
11	Edward Gregson: <i>Midsummer Song</i>	2'58
12	Michael Ball (arr. Hindmarsh): <i>Scherzettino</i>	1'30
13	Elgar Howarth: <i>Collage</i>	3'12
14	Philip Wilby (arr. Hindmarsh): <i>Birthday Fugue and Finale</i>	4'26
	Total timing	72'54

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NEW MUSIC FOR BRASS BAND PAUL HINDMARSH

The British style brass band is one of this country's greatest musical exports: its characteristic sound can be heard on all continents. Much of the impetus for this growth has been the competitive spirit that has dominated the brass band culture throughout its history; the provision of test pieces has been the reason for the exponential growth in the creation of new works of substance for the medium. The composition of major concert music has occupied a smaller niche; because brass bands invest so much time in preparing for competitions, opportunities for major concert performances are fewer.

Much of this repertoire came into being through the commitment and imagination of a comparatively small number of champions: conductor and composer Elgar Howarth set a trend in the 1970s by commissioning a number of leading composers to write for the Grimethorpe Colliery Band. The National Youth Brass Bands of Great Britain, Scotland and Wales also regularly commission new writing, and in the 1990s the BBC commissioned a series of works for its Festival of Brass. This recording includes works from all three sources as well as a number which I commissioned or edited for the Festival of Brass when the Royal Northern College of Music took over the event in 1998.

RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT

Flowers of the Forest: Reflections on a Scottish Folk Song

revised edition Paul Hindmarsh

The career of Sir Richard Rodney Bennett (b. 1935) as one of this country's leading composers has embraced many forms and styles: his film music and jazz-inspired compositions have given his work a popular dimension, while his operas, concertos, chamber works and songs are testimony to his wonderfully resourceful technique and rich imagination. Although Sir Richard has written a number of fine works for symphonic wind band, *Flowers of the Forest* is his only contribution to the brass band repertoire. It was commissioned by the BBC to provide a new work for the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain (NYBBGB) to play at a Promenade Concert on 6 August 1989, conducted by Sir Charles Groves, to whom the work is dedicated.

Flowers of the Forest is a series of variations on a Scottish folk-song lament. The tune is thought to date from 1513, the time of the Battle of Flodden Field, during which the archers of the Forest were killed almost to a man. The words linked with the lament over the centuries describe the grief of wives, mothers and children at the loss of their young men: 'The Floo'ers o' the forest are a' wede away'. It is often heard played on bagpipes at remembrance services and that unique sound seems to have inspired the opening of Sir Richard's reflections, which begin quietly, with three 'verses' based on his own vocal setting. A sudden shift of key adds an ominous sense of foreboding and during the subsequent variants, the energy and images of the slaughter grow in intensity. A brief moment of respite follows – a Scottish dance. The war-like march resumes and leads to a searing climax, after which the song returns as a quiet, poignant lament.

The original score was conceived with the massed forces of the NYBBGB in mind. In this new edition, which I prepared with the composer's approval, much of the mid-range has been 'lifted' and higher registers exploited to give the work greater impact when played by a standard 25-piece brass band.

KENNETH HESKETH

The Alchemist's Journal

Over the past decade Kenneth Hesketh (b.1968) has emerged as a leading voice in British music. Born in Liverpool, he studied at the Royal College of Music in London where he now teaches composition. He has received many significant commissions from the Royal Opera House, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, the BBC Philharmonic and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; and his music for brass and wind band has been performed all over the world. I commissioned *The Alchemist's Journal* from Kenneth Hesketh for the Black Dyke Band (conductor Nicholas Childs) to premiere on 18 January 2002 as part of the RNCM Festival of Brass.

The title is taken from a book by the American author Evan S. Connell that fictionalises a number of famous alchemists' writings. As each element develops another's thoughts, the single 'idea' is subject to gradual change and transformation. Hesketh's processes in his variants follow a similar evolution, and each of the nine sections is based on the same six-note 'cell' out of which Hesketh draws his themes and tonal centres. His aim was to provide an abstract musical drama, which has an organic flow and continuity: 'Whilst composing the work, I heard the music from beginning to end, not in smaller sections, so that the overall shape emerged in much simpler terms –

introduction, menacing scherzo, slow reflective section followed by a reprise of the scherzo and a final coda.'

GEORGE BENJAMIN

Altitude

George Benjamin (b. 1960) is one of this country's most gifted composers, regarded in his late teens and early twenties as something of a *wunderkind*, with a series of major successes to his name. Since then he has written a body of carefully crafted, highly individual works through which he has built up a strong international reputation as composer, conductor and festival curator.

In 1977 Benjamin won a competition to write a March for the Queen's Silver Jubilee year; as a result of that success, Elgar Howarth invited him to compose for the Grimethorpe Colliery Band; and *Altitude* was his first published work. It is a short musical portrait of an imaginary flight at extreme height: cold, solitary, tranquil, but swift and mobile as well. In the first two and the final fast sections, the pulse is in a constant state of flux; in the third episode a stable tempo produces an impressive climax. These are separated by a calm refrain, in which high cornet solos soar above the band.

JUDITH BINGHAM

Prague

Judith Bingham (b. 1952) first made her mark as a composer through her choral music; for many years she combined composing with a parallel career as a professional singer and was a member of the BBC Singers. It is not

surprising, therefore, that writing for voices whether solo or in choirs has remained central to her writing. However, she has also mined a rich seam of inspiration in her orchestral, chamber and band compositions.

Prague is the fourth of Bingham's five brass band works. Commissioned by BBC Radio 3 in 1995, it was premiered at Manchester's Festival of Brass by the Williams Fairey Band, conducted by James Gourlay, to whom the work is dedicated. The city is one of the jewels of central Europe – largely untouched by the world wars of the last century and now further restored, to the benefit of increasing numbers of tourists. It was a visit in 1994 that prompted this piece, which uses this contemporary backdrop to evoke powerful and at times disturbing images from the city's colourful history and mythology. As Bingham writes: 'The city is used to symbolise the triumph of the human spirit over adversity. The central figure is the Golem, the creature created from clay by Rabbi Loew in the sixteenth century, which having run amok in the city was laid to rest in the attics of the Old-New Synagogue. It seemed to me to symbolise the turbulent history of Prague with its many invasions from Celts and the Hussites to the Nazis and Communists.'

Prague falls into four clear sections of vivid and powerful imagery. It opens with seven urgent chords, representing the seven locks and seven keys that guard the ancient crown of Bohemia in St. Vitus' Cathedral; next comes a mysterious 'snowy' scene set in the Ghetto with a high trombone solo. The following slow section depicts the Charles Bridge, with its obscure monuments and statues; this cuts abruptly into the final section, set in Wenceslas Square, so often the centre of scenes of defeat and triumph in Prague. The Golem appears to rise again, but is drowned out by the seven chords of the opening.

PHILIP WILBY

Shadow Songs

Philip Wilby (b.1949) composed his first brass band work, *The New Jerusalem* (1990), for the NYBBGB. Since then he has become a leading creative champion of the brass band, working extensively with bands at all levels of accomplishment. His extrovert test pieces have shaped the contesting repertoire of recent years; his larger concert works are eclectic in their style and purpose, ranging from light concert pieces to substantial concertos.

The restraint of *Shadow Songs* reveals aspects of his writing which he has used more often in his orchestral and wind band compositions, especially the unmeasured, semi-aleatoric nature of much of the writing. I asked Philip if he would write something reflective in style for the Besses o' th' Barn Band, which I was conducting at the time, to premiere at the 1992 Lichfield Festival. This 'Elegiac Fragment' was the result. It is conceived as a three-fold memorial tribute, and is unusual in that it takes muted tone as the norm, out of which only the various solos emerge in 'open' tone. As Wilby writes, 'The sound world is thus made indirect and elusive, matching the music's introvert and melancholic disposition'.

The shadow of mourning that is cast over the music is symbolised by the way each of the three solos is shadowed by a second player: The first solo is a lament for baritone horn – a memory of David Brunson, a former solo baritone player of the Foden's Band whose tragic death occurred in 1990. The second solo – on trombone – is more heraldic. In the last section there is a prominent solo for the soprano cornet, supported by a euphonium duet treatment of the evening hymn *Abide with me*. The poignancy of the moment

is enhanced at the end by a valedictory 'last post', on a distant cornet. This is Wilby's tribute that great champion of brass bands in the 20th century, Harry Mortimer, to whom this haunting work is dedicated 'In memoriam'.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF TIPPETT

A centenary celebration for Sir Michael Tippett by Michael Ball, Edward Gregson, Elgar Howarth, Bramwell Tovey and Philip Wilby

<i>Processional (A Midsummer Marriage)</i>	Michael Tippett (arr: Hindmarsh)
<i>Danse des Amis</i>	Bramwell Tovey
<i>Midsummer Song</i>	Edward Gregson
<i>Scherzettino</i>	Michael Ball (arr: Hindmarsh)
<i>Collage</i>	Elgar Howarth
<i>Birthday Fugue and Finale</i>	Philip Wilby (arr: Hindmarsh)

This unique *pièce d'occasion* was conceived for the Foden's Richardson Band to perform at the 2005 RNCM Festival of Brass to mark the centenary of the birth of Sir Michael Tippett on 5 January. The theme I chose for this celebration is a memorable miniature featuring wind and brass, which in the opera *A Midsummer Marriage* marks the entry of the Ancients; it is also included in the orchestral *Suite in D, for the Birthday of Prince Charles* (1948).

I invited five of the leading contemporary voices in brass band music to add their own creative perspectives to the little Tippett theme, with its characteristic rhythms, embellishments and modality. Each contribution was designed to fit into a tonal and formal template to give the whole work a natural flow and continuity. In *Danse des Amis*, Bramwell Tovey (b.1953) has composed a jazzy, humorous variation. Inspiration came from Tippett's love of

jazz and, more personally, from the characteristically syncopated gait of the distinguished music critic John Amis – whom Tovey once observed leaving a performance of Tippett's opera *King Priam* before the end (a performance, incidentally, that was conducted by Elgar Howarth). Edward Gregson (b.1946)'s *Midsummer Song* is redolent of the sound world of *A Midsummer Marriage*, and ends with a brief reference to a favourite of Gregson's, Tippett's Concerto for Orchestra. Michael Ball (b.1945) provides a brief moment of light, airy activity bringing to mind perhaps Tippett's love of Shakespearian fantasy, particularly *The Tempest*, while Elgar Howarth (b.1935) juxtaposes a slowed down version of the processional theme with distant recollections of fanfares from *King Priam*. Philip Wilby (b.1949) rounds off the tribute with a spectacular fugue, during the inexorable progress of which he ingeniously introduces two other birthday references: the three-note musical signature which Elgar Howarth (70 years old in 2005) includes in much of his music, and the characteristic theme which begins *The Trumpets of the Angels* by Edward Gregson (60 in the same year). An elaborated reprise of Tippett's little theme is followed by a dynamic coda.

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BRAMWELL TOVEY

Conductor

A musician of striking versatility, Bramwell Tovey is acknowledged around the world for his artistic depth and his warm, charismatic personality on the podium. Tovey's career as a conductor is uniquely enhanced by his work as a composer and pianist, lending him a remarkable musical perspective. His tenures as Music Director with the Vancouver Symphony, Luxembourg Philharmonic and Winnipeg Symphony Orchestras have been characterized by his expertise in operatic, choral, British and contemporary repertoire.

The 2007-08 season holds many highlights for Tovey. A recent recording with violinist James Ehnes brought a 2007 Grammy Award to the soloist, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, and Tovey. In his eighth season with Vancouver, Tovey collaborated with guest artists Ben Heppner and Evelyn Glennie and led the orchestra through an in-depth six-concert Beethoven festival, featuring performances by Lang Lang and Anne-Sophie Mutter. He also appeared with orchestras across East Asia in 2008 and highlights in the United States include his appointment as Principal Guest Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl.

An esteemed guest conductor, Tovey has worked with orchestras in the UK and Europe including the London Philharmonic, London Symphony, Bournemouth, the Frankfurt Radio Orchestra, and the North Netherlands

Symphony where he will lead the Dutch premiere of Penderecki's 8th Symphony in 2008. In North America, along with his work with the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, Tovey has made guest appearances with the orchestras of St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Seattle, Toronto and Montreal.

With a profound commitment to new music, Tovey has established himself as a formidable composer. He has been commissioned by the Calgary Opera to compose the company's third original full-length opera and has also been commissioned to write a work for the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonic's respective 2008 summer seasons.



Photo: Philippe Hurin



FODEN'S RICHARDSON BAND

Founded in the early 1900s, Foden's Richardson Band maintains a world class reputation in the field of brass music with a traditional and unique style. Its repertoire stretches from light popular music (both old and new) through operatic, film and light orchestral works, to serious original brass band music performed by outstanding soloists and supported by an enviable collection of fine musicians.

As well as performing in its own right the band regularly works with other musical groups, including Promenade-type concerts featuring ensembles such as the Hallé Orchestra and

Camerata. Recent highlights have included radio and television work as well as a Scandinavian tour. New music is promoted and commissioned, as are educational programmes for schools, colleges and other musical organisations.

The origins of the band reach back to 1900 when the Cheshire village of Elworth formed its own band, having been let down in its attempt to secure the services of the nearby town band to feature in the celebrations marking the relief of Mafeking in the Boer War. From among the village musicians, local

industrialist Edwin Foden formed the Fodens Motor Works Band; by 1909 it had achieved Championship Section status, a prestigious position that has been maintained ever since.

The band has been a prize-winner 32 times at the coveted British Open Championships, winning nine times outright, and 37 times at the National Championships of Great Britain, winning outright 12 times; it was also BBC Band of the Year in 1990 and 1992, as well as having won the All England Masters Champions in 1990, 1991, 1994 and 1995 and the Swiss Open Championships in 1993. In addition to this, it toured Europe for ENSA during WWII, and has been ordered to play by Royal Command on three occasions.

In 1997 the band accepted new sponsorship from the French instrument manufacturer Antoine Courtois that also allowed the band to resume its original name of Foden's. With this fresh impetus the band again experienced major Championship success, winning the coveted title Champion Band of Great Britain in 1999.

In recent years it has repeatedly won the North West Area Championship, been a prize-winner and runner-up at the British Open Championships, and in 2002 won the All England Masters Champions; in 2007 the band's successes included the North West Area Championship for a record-breaking fourteenth time, being crowned the International Master Champions, and victory at the Tameside Whit Friday March Contest for a sixth consecutive year.

Foden's Richardson Band

Cornets:

Mark Wilkinson (principal)
Richard Poole, Anna Hughes, Dave Morton (solo)
Alan Wycherley (soprano)
Anita Dale (repiano)
Andrew Rolfe, Fumika Kimura (2nd cornet),
Colin Moody, Lucy Chivers (3rd cornet)

Flugelhorn

Helen Fox, Sheona White (solo)
Robert Fleming (1st horn)
Andrew Howard-Smith (2nd horn)

Trombone

John Barber (solo)
Gareth Westwood (2nd trombone)
Simon Minshall (bass trombone)

Euphonium

Glyn Williams (solo)
Shaun Hudson (2nd euphonium)
Natsumi Inaba (Solo baritone)
Mike Warriner (2nd baritone)

E-flat Bass

Les Neish, Stewart Baglin

B-flat Bass

Toby Hobson, Matt Wade

Percussion

Mark Landon, Liz Haygarth, Chris Bastock,
Daniel Baldwin, Dave Wycherley

www.fodensband.co.uk

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