

Overtures

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|---|--|------|
| 1 | Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)
The Force of Destiny
Arranged by Frank Wright | 7:36 |
| 2 | Franz von Suppé (1819–1895)
The Beautiful Galathea*
Arranged by Gordon Langford | 6:45 |
| 3 | Otto Nicolai (1810–1849)
The Merry Wives of Windsor*
Arranged by George Hawkins | 8:40 |
| 4 | Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)
The Italian Girl in Algiers
Arranged by Peter Parkes | 8:11 |
| 5 | Franz von Suppé
Light Cavalry
Arranged by Gordon Langford | 7:20 |

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| 6 | Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848)
The Daughter of the Regiment*
Arranged by Gordon Langford | 6:27 |
| 7 | Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (1782–1871)
The Black Domino* | 6:56 |
| 8 | Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826)
Oberon*
Arranged by Peter Parkes | 9:25 |
| | | TT 61:59 |

John Foster Black Dyke Mills Band
Major Peter Parkes
David Hurst*



Overtures

Operatic Overtures

The brass band as we know it only became a practical proposition in the middle of the nineteenth century. Until the 1850s, playing a melodic phrase on a brass instrument was a tricky business, and only possible at all in the hands of a real expert. This changed very suddenly when, almost as a by-product of the industrial revolution, the piston valve was perfected. The family of sax horns – cornets, tenor horns, and tubas – appeared quite rapidly on the scene. The stage was set for the brass band to make its entrance, and by 1860, bands were becoming established all over the North of England.

The orchestra had developed gradually over hundreds of years and the music which it played developed with it. The brass band, however, appeared virtually overnight, and had very little music of its own. The solution was obvious: conductors borrowed whatever they needed from wherever it could be found. Almost all the early test pieces were arrangements of operatic music. It became a tradition for programmes to begin with a march followed by an operatic overture. Rossini, Donizetti, Suppé and Verdi all

featured in these early programmes. Their music remains just as popular today.

Verdi: The Force of Destiny

With Verdi the nineteenth-century Italian school of opera reached its zenith. In 1861 he worked throughout the summer on a new opera: *The Force of Destiny*. It received its first performance in St Petersburg on 10 November 1862. The overture is built entirely of melodies from the opera, and unusually for Verdi it does not flow straight into the opera but comes to a decisive end, which makes it capable of standing alone as a separate concert overture. It opens with six hammer blows of destiny and is exciting to the last chord.

The very fine arrangement recorded here is by Frank Wright. It was made for the 1962 National Championships and the winning performance by Alex Mortimer and the C.W.S. Manchester Band is still remembered by all who were there.

Suppé: The Beautiful Galathea

Franz von Suppé wrote many operas and operettas, though apart from a handful of overtures his works enjoy a popularity that

is almost exclusively Viennese. *The Beautiful Galathea* was an exception and was widely popular in the 1860s and 1870s.

Here the overture is arranged by Gordon Langford.

Nicolai: The Merry Wives of Windsor

Carl Otto Nicolai was a flourishing opera conductor and composer in Italy and German-speaking countries. In 1847 he was appointed director of the newly formed Cathedral Choir, and *Kapellmeister* of the Court Opera in Berlin. His opera *The Merry Wives of Windsor* received its first performance on 9 March 1849. It came to enjoy a brilliant success which poor Nicolai did not live to experience. He died only two months later, at the age of thirty-eight. The opera is still regularly performed in Germany and Austria, one of the most popular comic operas in the repertoire.

Rossini: The Italian Girl in Algiers

Rossini's overtures nearly always make use of a standard form. A slow introduction is followed by a quick section in a modified sonata form with long bridge passages featuring the famous 'Rossini crescendo'. The second subject is often a relaxed, graceful tune with a simple accompaniment. All this is ideal material for the brass band. *The Italian Girl in Algiers* is a comic opera.

The story concerns an Italian girl who sets off for Algiers to rescue her lover from captivity. The dash and sparkling humour of the opera is foreshadowed by one of the most brilliant of all Rossini's overtures.

Suppé: Light Cavalry

Light Cavalry is perhaps the most often played of all Franz von Suppé's overtures. It is known and played everywhere, by brass bands, military bands, light orchestras; all can be relied upon to produce it at least once during a concert season. The reasons for its success are not hard to discover: good, strong melodies and plenty of excitement. The opening fanfares for cornets and horns always have me looking for a deckchair!

Donizetti: The Daughter of the Regiment

Three composers dominated Italian opera during the first half of the nineteenth century: Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti. In 1840 Donizetti brought out three new operas, including *The Daughter of the Regiment*. It received its premiere at the Opéra-Comique in Paris on 11 February. Jenny Lind, Sontag, Patti and Albani all appeared with great success in the Italian version of the work.

The overture, with its drum solos and lively march tune, is entirely at home in Gordon Langford's version for brass band.

Auber: The Black Domino

A little more than two years earlier, on 2 December 1837, the French composer Auber also produced a new work at the Opéra-Comique. His opera *The Black Domino* was only a moderate success, but the overture is a firm favourite with every kind of band. The form of the overture is typical of its period: a series of melodies lifted straight from the opera forms a miniature selection of what to expect when the curtain rises.

Weber: Oberon

The last of the overtures on this disc is undoubtedly the finest. Carl Maria von Weber composed his opera *Oberon* at the invitation of Charles Kemble of Covent Garden. The libretto was in English, and though very ill, Weber began to learn the language in order to equip himself for the task. On 4 March 1826 he arrived in London and rehearsals of the new opera began on 9 March. The first performance took place on 12 April. He conducted the first twelve performances himself and the opera was received with great enthusiasm. Weber continued working in London throughout April and May but,

delaying his journey home too long, he died of his illness on the night of 5 June 1826 and was buried in London. His body was later removed to the family vault in Dresden.

The overtures to all Weber's operas are firm orchestral favourites though *Oberon* must be placed at the top of the list. It has everything: gorgeous tunes and a rhythmic vitality and drive, the excitement growing to the very end.

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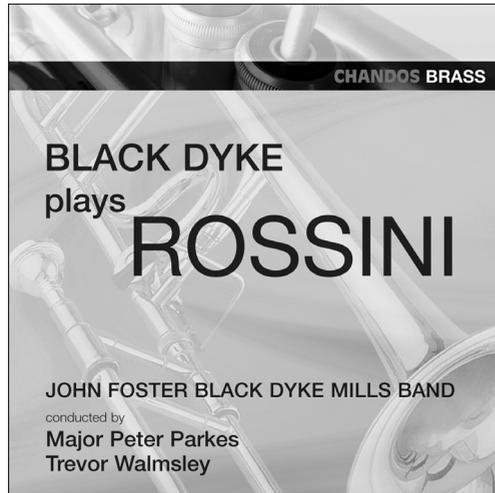


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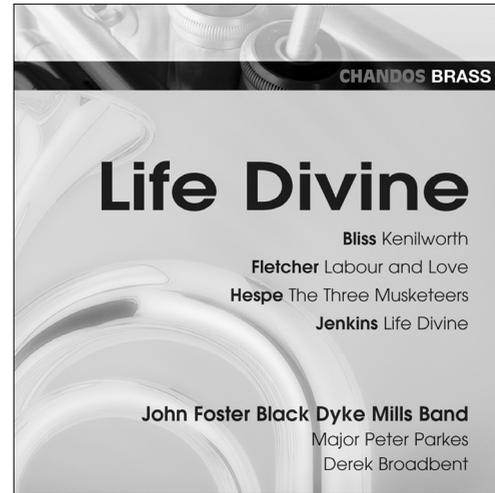


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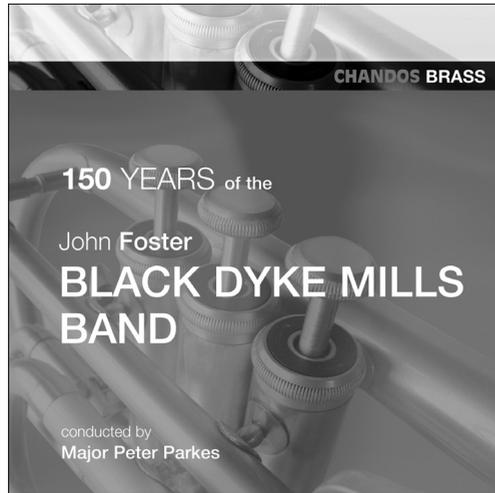
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Chandos Records Ltd, Chandos House, 1 Commerce Park, Commerce Way, Colchester,
Essex CO2 8HX, UK. E-mail: enquiries@chandos.net
Telephone: + 44 (0)1206 225 200 Fax: + 44 (0)1206 225 201

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