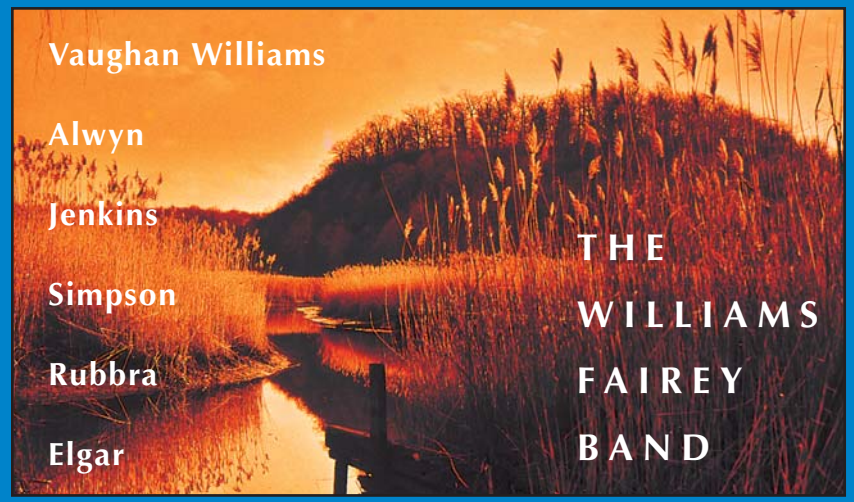
CHAN 4547 Front.qxd 10/1/08 1:26 pm Page 1

Chan 4547

Brass from the Masters

CHANDOS BRASS

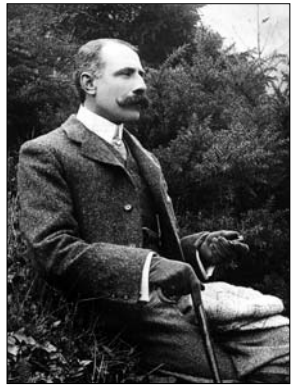
The Williams Fairey Band



Volume 1

James Gourlay
Bryan Hurdley

CHAN 4547 BOOK.qxd 10/1/08 1:28 pm Page 2



AKG

Edward Elgar

Brass from the Masters, Volume 1

1		Cyril Jenkins (1889–1978) **Life Divine†**	**12:55**
2		William Alwyn (1905–1985) arr. Frank Wright **Overture: The Moor of Venice†**	**9:32**
3		Edmund Rubbra (1901–1986) arr. Frank Wright **Variations on 'The Shining River', Op. 101***	**10:40**
4		Robert Simpson (b. 1921) **Energy***	**10:07**
5		Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) **Variations†**	**11:30**
		Edward Elgar (1857–1934) **Severn Suite, Op. 87***	**17:19**
6	I	Introduction: Worcester Castle –	2:23
7	II	Toccata: Tournament –	4:10
8	III	Fugue: The Cathedral –	3:50
9	IV	Minuet: Commandery –	4:50
10	V	Coda	2:06
			TT 72:47

The Williams Fairey Band
James Gourlay*
Bryan Hurdley†

CHAN 4547 BOOK.qxd 10/1/08 1:28 pm Page 4

Brass from the Masters, Volume 1

Life Divine

In style and form far removed from the same composer's *Coriolanus* of the previous year, Cyril Jenkins's *Life Divine* of 1921 demanded a quantum leap from its performers rather than a mere advance in technique; indeed, its difficulties were seen to be so appalling by the publisher's editor that the composer's title *A Comedy of Errors* was discarded as potentially provocative. One reads Jenkins's programme note, therefore, with some reserve, since a musical scenario is whatever the composer says it is, and may conveniently change with the title. His opening *Andante maestoso*, the composer tells us, shows life to be a thing of dignity and seriousness, the succeeding *Vivace* faces its problems with vigorous optimism, the *Andante nobilemente* – a famous solo passage for the cornet – showing the ennobling power of true love. After a review of all these themes Love is shown to be triumphant.

Life Divine exploits one of the band's chief virtues: its capacity for the creation of physically thrilling sound on an epic scale. The work is irresistible and its musical quality, in consequence, need not be questioned.

Overture: The Moor of Venice

This Overture is a condensed musical evocation of the events of Shakespeare's play, *Othello*. The composer described it as follows:

> After a solemn opening, heavy with foreboding tragedy, Desdemona is depicted singing the traditional 'Willow Song', which Shakespeare uses so pathetically in his play. The Moor, a general in the service of the Doge of Venice, is portrayed by the stormy and martial music which follows. A fugal section describes the wiles of Iago, and the protestations of Desdemona, but Othello is maddened with jealousy, and the climax of the music comes with the murder of the innocent wife. She dies in a strangled phrase of her song; and the Overture closes with a solemn coda.

The Overture has been arranged for brass band by Frank Wright.

The composer conducted the Scottish All Star Band, Scottish C.W.S. Band and Foden's Motor Works Band in the first performance at the Usher Hall, Edinburgh on 26 May 1956.

Variations on 'The Shining River', Op. 101

Edmund Rubbra was a pupil of Holst and of Vaughan Williams. His *Variations* are a test of musicality rather than technique, requiring sensitive control not only from solo players – among them the flugelhorn, making the first statement of the theme and showing an early (1958) sign of its emergence as the solo voice it has since become – but from the whole ensemble. There are six variations, among them two *Dances*, a *Pageant* and a final *Lament* with decorative writing reminiscent of the Tudor keyboard, before the work ends with a developed restatement of the theme.

This thoughtful and unusual work has been much neglected. This splendid recording is a revelation which may well restore its fortunes.

Energy

Simpson is wonderfully equipped to write for the brass band, having begun his musical education in the Salvation Army; the sole-known example of a composer of genuinely symphonic stature having thus begun. He might have 'written down' to this medium as have some others. He is not, though, a composer for compromise, and *Energy* represents nothing less than his state of development at the time of composition – so far as that could have been accommodated within its limited duration. That duration was fundamental to the design of the piece, since its basic idea, that of a study in continuous acceleration and crescendo, is hardly capable of indefinite extension.

The germ from which *Energy* derives is stated at the outset in the bass, its vague menace answered by a reassuring chorale-like passage from the rest of the band. The basses try again and again to assert their theme before it is taken up, lyrically, by the soprano cornet. Here Simpson asks for a sound *sempre non vibrato*. The idea is taken up in turn by flugelhorn and then by solo cornet and others. With the music's increasing velocity the germ develops, as germs may, almost beyond recognition. The momentum gathering throughout, *Energy* concludes with the most significant note of its opening motive, a cataclysmic unison G flat.

Variations

It is said that Vaughan Williams declined an invitation to write for the National Brass Band Championships in the mid-thirties because he disliked the sound of the band. Since an overture for brass band, *Henry V*, thought to date from that period and found among works discovered after his death, has achieved no great popularity, he was probably right to

retreat from the idea of a major work for the band at that time. His *Variations* of 1957 were brought about by an encounter with the International Staff Band of the Salvation Army.

Vaughan Williams's theme, fourteen bars long, begins with a modal hymn-like phrase for unison saxhorns in two octaves. Brighter sounds, marked *no vibrato*, respond, again in unison. The theme is then completed with a harmonized phrase which could have come from no other pen. Here is the Vaughan Williams of the Fifth Symphony.

The variations are brief, eleven happening within ten minutes. They make no concession to the showpiece element of the band-contest; here all is discipline – music heard through the brass band rather than notes written to demonstrate it or to entertain with it. Demands made upon soloists are light; even in the *Arabesque* (Variation VII) the parts flow easily under the fingers of the players. Like Rubbra, Vaughan Williams was drawn to the flugelhorn, writing excitingly for it in his Ninth Symphony. The concluding variation is entitled *Chorale*. Beginning *pianissimo*, cornets fanfare over a bass hymn, the full band joining later. The dynamic builds to a majestic close.

Severn Suite, Op. 87

The *Severn Suite* is not heavyweight Elgar. It sits, like *The Wand of Youth* and *The Nursery Suite*, upon the bridge between the symphonic Elgar and the salon-music genius. The movements, played continuously, describe scenes in Elgar's historic native city. Beginning with the Introduction: *Worcester Castle* (Pomposo) we proceed to the Toccata: *Tournament* and thence into the Fugue in which Elgar depicts *The Cathedral*. Here is the quintessential Elgar; thirty-one inimitable bars, their climax a glory of stained-glass. On then to *Commandery*, a courtly reminder of the Royal presence during the Civil War, twice interrupted by *scherzando* episodes. The Suite ends with a richly elaborated restatement of the Introduction.

Commissioned for the National Brass Band Championships of 1930, Elgar's only brass band work is dedicated 'to my friend, George Bernard Shaw'.

© 1997 Bram Gay
© 1997 Mary Alwyn & William Alwyn Archive (*The Moor of Venice*)

Fifteen times British Open Champions, seven times winners of the title 'National Champion Band of Great Britain' and All England Masters Champions for 1996 and 1997, the **Williams Fairey Band** is in constant demand for concerts both at home and abroad. In 1993 the Band were holders of both the National and British Open titles and in 1994 they were European Champions. Apart from its regular appearances throughout the British Isles the band makes regular trips to countries such as Canada, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Germany and Holland. Since its formation the Band has had an illustrious line-up of conductors: James Gourlay is currently Principal Conductor and Bryan Hurdley is Resident Conductor.

After studying at the Royal College of Music **James Gourlay** was a member of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Symphony Orchestra and is currently solo tuba in the Zurich Opera House. As a soloist and chamber music player he has performed all over the world, most notably as a member of the Philip Jones and English Brass Ensembles. Solo engagements have included first performances of works written for him by such composers as Gregson, Horowitz and Sparke. Since living in Switzerland James Gourlay has devoted much of his time to conducting and writing for brass band and is one of the most successful conductors on the Swiss brass-band scene.

Bryan Hurdley won a scholarship to the Birmingham School of Music where he gained distinction in teaching, performing and recital diplomas and was the winner of many prestigious performance prizes. A founder member of the English Tuba Consort he has travelled widely in Europe and the USA. In 1993 Bryan Hurdley was appointed Director of the Birmingham Conservatoire Brass Band and is currently tutor in lower brass at the University of Warwick. Over recent years he has enjoyed an increasing reputation as one of the finest conductors of his generation and from 1989–1995 he was Musical Director of the Sun Life Band before taking up the position of Resident Conductor with the Williams Fairey Band.

CHAN 4547 BOOK.qxd 10/1/08 1:28 pm Page 8

principal conductor	James Gourlay
resident conductor	Bryan Hurdley
principal cornet	Brian Taylor
solo cornets	Philip Chalk
	Paul McDonald
	Gary Parker
soprano cornet	Kevin Donaldson
repiano	Graeme McCulloch
second cornets	Sean Conway
	Mark Peacock
third cornets	James Leggat
	Ray Peacock
flugel horn	Simon Stonehouse
solo horn	Sandy Smith
first horn	Simon Jones
second horn	Robbie Cargill
solo baritone	Keith Muggeridge
second baritones	Nigel Beasley
	Jonathan Webster
first trombone	Brett Baker
second trombone	Andy Gillooly
bass trombone	Jim Cant
solo euphonium	David Welsh
second euphonium	Ian Yates
E flat bass	Shaun Crowther
	Geoff Harrop
B flat bass	Derek Jackson
	Gareth Johnson
percussion	Jason Jones
	Paul Lovatt-Cooper
	Stuart Peacock
celeste	Stuart Peacock

The Williams Fairey Band on Chandos

Sousa Marches
CHAN 4535

Spanish Impressions
CHAN 4544

Bone Idyll
featuring
Brett Baker
CHAN 4543

We would like to keep you informed of all Chandos' work. If you wish to receive a copy of our catalogue and would like to be kept up-to-date with our news, please write to the Marketing Department, Chandos Records Ltd, Chandos House, Commerce Way, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HQ, United Kingdom.

You can now purchase Chandos CDs directly from us. For further details please telephone Chandos Direct on +44 (0) 1206 225225. Fax: +44 (0) 1206 225201.
E-Mail: sales@chandos.u-net.com

Chandos 20-bit Recording
The Chandos policy of being at the forefront of technology is now further advanced by the use of 20-bit recording. 20-bit has a dynamic range that is up to 24dB greater and up to 16 times the resolution of standard 16-bit recordings. These improvements now let you the listener enjoy more of the natural clarity and ambience of the 'Chandos sound'.

Producer Ralph Couzens
Sound engineer & editor Jonathan Cooper
Assistant engineer Richard Smoker
Recording venue Dewsbury Town Hall; 15–16 February 1997
Front cover *Golden Landscape*, photography by Joe Squillante (Photonica, London)
Back cover Photograph of The Williams Fairey Band by Tony Carter
Design Guy Lawrence
Booklet typeset by Michael White-Robinson
Booklet editor Richard Denison
Publisher R. Smith & Co. Ltd (Track 1); Besson & Co. Ltd (Track 2); Lengnick & Co. (Track 3); Boosey & Hawkes (Tracks 4 & 5); Novello (Track 6–10)
℗ 1997 Chandos Records Ltd
© 1997 Chandos Records Ltd
Chandos Records Ltd, Colchester, Essex, England
Printed in the EU

James Gourlay

Bryan Hurdley

CHAN 4547 Inlay.qxd 10/1/08 1:29 pm Page 1

20 bit

CHANDOS DIGITAL **CHAN 4547**

Brass from the Masters, Volume 1

1	Cyril Jenkins (1889–1978) **Life Divine†**	12:55
2	William Alwyn (1905–1985) arr. Frank Wright **Overture: The Moor of Venice†**	9:32
3	Edmund Rubbra (1901–1986) arr. Frank Wright **Variations on 'The Shining River', Op. 101***	10:40
4	Robert Simpson (b. 1921) **Energy***	10:07
5	Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) **Variations†**	11:30
6 - 10	Edward Elgar (1857–1934) **Severn Suite, Op. 87***	17:19
		TT 72:47

The Williams Fairey Band
James Gourlay*
Bryan Hurdley†

DDD

CHANDOS RECORDS LTD.
Colchester · Essex · England

℗ 1997 Chandos Records Ltd. © 1997 Chandos Records Ltd.
Printed in the EU

BRASS FROM THE MASTERS, VOL. 1 - The Williams Fairey Band/Gourlay/Hurdley

CHANDOS CHAN 4547

BRASS FROM THE MASTERS, VOL. 1 - The Williams Fairey Band/Gourlay/Hurdley

CHANDOS CHAN 4547