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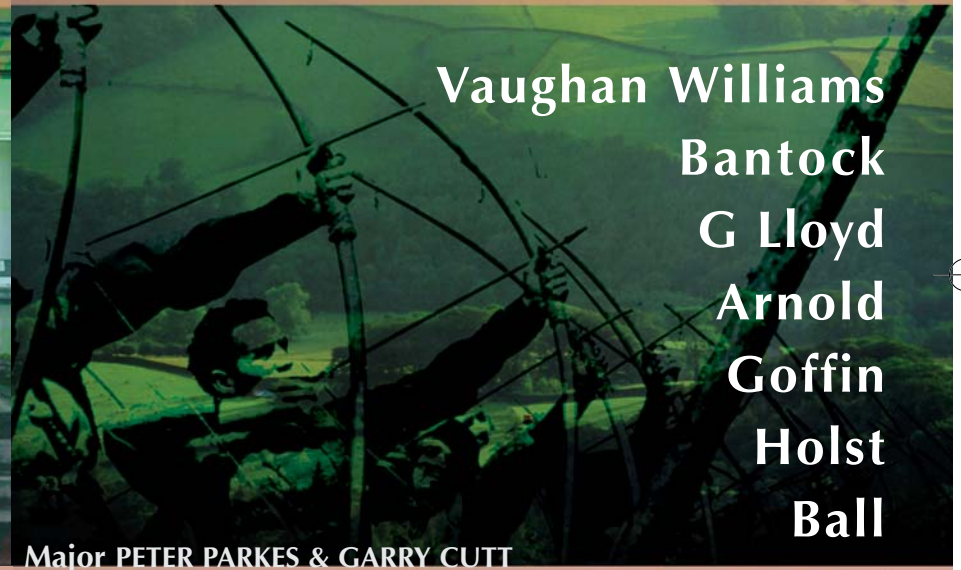
BRASS from the MASTERS Volume 2

CHANDOS BRASS



Vaughan Williams
Bantock
G Lloyd
Arnold
Goffin
Holst
Ball

Major PETER PARKES & GARRY CUTT

GRIMETHORPE COLLIERY RJB BAND

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Hulton Getty

Malcolm Arnold

Brass from the Masters, Volume 2

		Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)	
1		**Overture for Brass Band: Henry the Fifth***	**9:24**
		Malcolm Arnold (b. 1921)	
2		**Fantasy for Brass Band, Op. 114†**	**9:18**
		Dean Goffin (1916–1984)	
		Rhapsody in Brass†	**11:06**
3	I	Allegro giocoso	3:03
4	II	Andante con moto	3:50
5	III	Allegro assai e giocoso	4:09
		Eric Ball (1903–1989)	
6		**A Kensington Concerto***	**11:06**
		Gustav Holst (1874–1934)	
		A Moorside Suite†	**15:12**
7	I	Scherzo: Allegro	3:02
8	II	Nocturne: Adagio	8:03
9	III	March: Allegro	4:01

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Granville Bantock (1868–1946) arr. Frank Wright

10 **Comedy Overture: The Frogs (of Aristophanes)*** **8:24**

George Lloyd (1913–1998)

11 **Diversions on a Bass Theme*** **11:43**

TT 76:56

Grimethorpe Colliery RJB Band
Major Peter Parkes*
Garry Cutt†

Brass from the Masters, Volume 2

The music in this series of recordings was written, for the most part, by the top British composers of the day. How did this come about? How did these composers become convinced that the brass band was a worthwhile medium for their music?

Bands made up of all brass instruments with a full chromatic compass only became a practical possibility towards the end of the 1840s with the perfection of the piston valve. The catalyst which led to the formation of thousands of brass bands throughout the country occurred in 1851 at Prince Albert's Great Exhibition. This took place in a vast Crystal Palace, erected especially for the occasion, in London's Hyde Park. One of the displays was that of Adolphe Sax, a Belgian inventor and manufacturer of musical instruments. Among some eighty instruments of his own design were the Saxhorns, a complete family of fully chromatic brass instruments based on piston valves. These instruments caught the imagination of musicians from the North of England and within a decade brass bands were being established throughout Lancashire and Yorkshire. The new bands were capable of playing nearly anything, but had no repertoire. The solution was to borrow from elsewhere. Nothing was sacred – operatic selections, orchestral overtures, movements from symphonies – if they thought that it could be played then it was quickly arranged for the new brass bands. In 1853 the British Open Championship was established at Manchester's Belle Vue. For the next seventy years the annual test piece was an arrangement of operatic or orchestral music!

The first opportunity for change came with the arrival of John Henry Iles, one of the most important figures in the short history of brass bands. During a business visit to Manchester in 1898 he attended, quite by chance, the British Open at Belle Vue. The quality of the bands and the enthusiasm of the vast crowds of supporters so impressed him that, in his own words '…I came away from the contest a completely converted enthusiast for their cause'. Such was his energy and enthusiasm that by 1900 he had become the owner of the main brass band journal, the *British Bandsman*, and had established a new National Contest at the Crystal Palace. The 1900 test piece *Beauties of Sullivan* was in the old tradition, but Iles soon realised that the time had come for a change and in 1913

he commissioned Percy Fletcher to write an original brass band work as the test piece for the National. Fletcher's *Labour and Love* is itself in the style of an operatic selection, with recitatives and arias, but the important breakthrough had been made.

From 1913 Iles commissioned a new original work for every National Contest. In 1928 he managed for the first time to persuade Gustav Holst to write the test piece. Holst's *A Moorside Suite* led to a succession of outstanding pieces from the country's finest composers – 1930: *Severn Suite*; Elgar – 1932: *Honour and Glory*; Bath – 1932: *A Downland Suite*; Ireland. Bantock, Bliss, Howells, Vaughan Williams all followed in this great tradition down to the present day with George Lloyd, John McCabe, Michael Tippett, Philip Wilby, Edward Gregson and many others writing original works for brass bands. Bands and conductors come and go but the music lives on, surely the most important and long-lasting result of all the endeavours of that great Victorian entrepreneur John Henry Iles.

Overture for Brass Band: Henry the Fifth
The date of this work is uncertain but it is probable that it was composed in 1933/34. In the Overture Vaughan Williams introduces four traditional tunes, two English and two French. The very grand tutti opening, marked *Andante maestoso* is based on an old English battle hymn, 'The Agincourt Song'. It features a number of rousing fanfares marked *quasi trombe* (like trumpets). This leads into the tunes representing France, first a lovely version of 'Magali', which is a folk song from Provence, followed by an old French marching song 'Reveillez vous Piccars'. Some ten years after writing this Overture Vaughan Williams suggested to William Walton that 'Reveillez vous Piccars' would make a good tune to represent the French Army in Walton's film score for *Henry V* – a suggestion which was gratefully accepted! In this Overture the victorious English Army close the proceedings with 'The Earl of Oxford's March', suitably decorated with the occasional triumphant fanfare.

Fantasy for Brass Band
Malcolm Arnold was born in Northampton in 1921. He entered the Royal College of Music in 1938, where he studied composition with Gordon Jacob, and the trumpet with Ernest Hall. He was a professional trumpet player with the London Philharmonic Orchestra for eight years. Since 1948 he has devoted his time to composition. His works include eight symphonies, sixteen concertos, two operas, over a hundred film scores and several fine pieces for brass band. *Fantasy for Brass Band* was written in 1974 as the test piece for the National Brass Band Championships at the Royal Albert Hall when Major Arthur Kenney led The Cory Band to victory.

Rhapsody in Brass
In August 1877 General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, visited the North of England. On his return to London he reported that a cornet player had been placed in the front rank of a procession which 'certainly improved the singing and brought crowds all along the line of march'. From this humble beginning came the worldwide organisation of Salvation Army Bands. By the middle of the 1980s there were some 400 bands in Great Britain. These bands spread quickly throughout the British Empire. New Zealand in particular has a strong brass band tradition, with a number of fine bands, both Salvation Army and secular. Dean Goffin is the best known of the conductors and composers from these bands. He wrote a great deal of music for both types of band and *Rhapsody in Brass* is the piece by which he is best remembered.

A Kensington Concerto
This work was commissioned for the National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain held at London's Royal Albert Hall on 14 October 1972. The score is marked with a dedication which sums up the nostalgic, lyrical style of the music – 'To Olive Rose and that gay company of friends, now scattered, who in times past met annually in the Royal Albert Hall, on the occasion of the National Brass Band Championships'. Eric Ball was born in Bristol in 1903. Trained in the Salvation Army he eventually became the conductor of the famous International Staff Band. In the 1940s he left the Salvation Army, and was persuaded by John Henry Iles to try his hand at conducting secular bands. He had great success as a conductor but his test pieces will be played and remembered long after all else has been forgotten. *Resurgam*, *Journey into Freedom* and *A Kensington Concerto* are typical of his many works which are accepted as an indispensable part of brass band lore!

A Moorside Suite
Gustav Holst studied composition with Sir Charles Stanford at the Royal College of Music. It was here that he first met Ralph Vaughan Williams who many years later referred to Holst as 'a great composer, a great teacher, and a great friend'. As a young man he augmented his income by playing the trombone, and in 1898 he became a member of the orchestra of the Carl Rosa Opera Company. In 1905 he was appointed director of music at St Paul's School in Hammersmith, a post which he retained to the end of his life. Holst is best known for his orchestral suite *The Planets* but his output includes operas,

choral works, chamber and instrumental music and many fine works for wind and brass bands. Gustav Holst was commissioned to write *A Moorside Suite* for the National Championships of 1928 which were then held at the Crystal Palace. The Suite has three movements, a light playful Scherzo, a slow and dreamy Nocturne and a grand and noble March.

Comedy Overture: The Frogs (of Aristophanes)

Bantock was one of the most prolific of all British composers. His works for brass band include *Prometheus Unbound*, *Orion*, and the Hebridean Tone Poem *The Land of the Ever-Young*. In 1935 Bantock composed his Comedy Overture for orchestra and it received its first performance in 1936 at a Promenade Concert. After his death in 1946 it was arranged for brass band by Frank Wright, often described as the finest and most imaginative brass band arranger of his time. In 1952 it was chosen as the test piece for the National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain.

Diversions on a Bass Theme

In 1986 George Lloyd was commissioned, by the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, to write the test piece for the annual Mineworkers National Brass Band Contest. *Diversions on a Bass Theme* was the result. Tuneful, and a great musical challenge, it was given a warm welcome by bands and audiences alike. Included in the printed score is the following comment from the composer:

> This piece is a set of variations. Traditionally variations were what they said they were, i.e. a given tune was treated in a variety of ways. The pattern of *Diversions on a Bass Theme* is made the other way round: a number of tunes grow out of the first bar, played by the Basses, which provides the motif for the whole work.

In 1985, George Lloyd wrote his first major brass band work, *Royal Parks*, for the European Championships in Copenhagen. This was followed by *Diversions on a Bass Theme* which was chosen for the 1998 British Open Brass Band Championships, held in Symphony Hall, Birmingham last September. George Lloyd died on 3 July 1998; he was delighted that his music had been chosen and he would undoubtedly have enjoyed listening to the varying interpretations made by so many of the finest bands. Lloyd's orchestral works include twelve symphonies, three operas, four piano concertos and two other fine brass band test pieces – *English Heritage* and *Kings Messenger*.

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Grimethorpe Colliery RJB Band was formed in 1917. Its headquarters are at the Acorn Centre in the heart of the village. In 1996 the band provided music for the feature film *Brassed Off* which tells the story of a colliery band's fight for survival when the pit to which it belongs is closed. The film's fictional band Grimley was in a situation not so very far removed from that which faced Grimethorpe in recent years. The real difference is that in the film a number of players accepted that the band would have to go, with Grimethorpe it was 'we don't know how we'll survive as a band, but survive we will!' The real breakthrough came in February with sponsorship from RJB Mining PLC. Major Peter Parkes took over as professional conductor in July 1995 and led the band to victory in the Yorkshire Championships and second place at the National Championships in the Royal Albert Hall. Grimethorpe gives concerts almost weekly all over the country and toured through France, Germany and Switzerland in 1997.

Peter Parkes was appointed as the band's Professional Musical Director in July 1995. On 17 October 1996 he conducted Grimethorpe at the National Championships which were held in the Royal Albert Hall. The music was Robert Redhead's *Isaiah 40* and Grimethorpe took second place. As the highest placed English band they represented England at the 1997 European Championships at London's Barbican Centre. Peter Parkes has a remarkable record at this great contest, his twenty appearances have yielded seven first, seven second and two third prizes. He has conducted the winning band at a total of twenty-one European, British Open and National Championships.

Garry Cutt was born in Glossop, Derbyshire in 1959. In 1980 he took up the position of Resident Conductor of the Wingates Band. He held this appointment for five years whilst also gaining valuable experience working with James Shepherd Versatile Brass and Yorkshire Imperial Metals Band.

In 1989 he became the youngest conductor ever to win the British Open Championships when he took Kennedy Swinton to first place in Manchester's Free Trade Hall, a feat which he repeated in 1996 with the Marple Band at the first brass band contest to be held in the new Bridgewater Hall.

Garry Cutt was appointed as Resident Musical Director of Grimethorpe Colliery RJB Band in 1991. This combination has proved to be very successful with many concerts all over the country and tours which have included Switzerland and Germany.

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Soprano cornet	Nigel Fielding	*First baritone*	Robert Archer
Principal cornet	Richard Marshall	*Second baritone*	Cliff Hopes
Solo cornets	Duncan Byers	*Solo euphonium*	Michael Dodd
	Darryl Hobbins	*Second euphonium*	Matthew Grimes
	David Barraclough	*Solo trombone*	Jonathan Beatty
Repiano cornet	Alan Exley	*Second trombone*	Richard Windle
Second cornets	Michael Kennedy	*Bass trombone*	Andrew Snell
	Stewart Kennedy	*E flat basses*	Paul Davies
Third cornets	Stephen Peacock		Roy Bowater
	Colin Brook	*B flat basses*	Roy Batty
Flugel horn	Ian Shires		Andrew Warriner
Solo horn	Melvyn Bathgate	*Percussion*	Mark Arnold
First horn	Ray Curry		David Hartland
	Alan Ball		Peter Matthews
Second horn	Owen Farr	*Secretary*	Terry Webster

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Producer Ralph Couzens
Sound engineer Jonathan Cooper
Assistant engineer Richard Smoker
Editor Peter Newble
Recording venue Morley Town Hall; 31 October–1 November 1998
Back cover The Grimethorpe Colliery RJB Band photographed by Tony Carter
Design D.M. Cassidy
Booklet typeset by Michael White-Robinson
Booklet editor Richard Denison
Publisher Boosey & Hawkes Ltd (tracks 1 & 6), Henrees Music Ltd, London (track 2), R. Smith & Co. Ltd (tracks 3–5, 7–9 & 11), W. Paxton & Co. Ltd (track 10)
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