

ELECTRA

Electra © Studio Music	Martin Ellerby	
1. Lust for Revenge		3.55
2. Laments		6.35
3. Dance to Death		2.55
4. One Star: Sailing West © Kirklees Music	Philip Wilby	12.11
<i>Flugel Horn Soloist Zoe Hancock</i>		
5. Canite Tuba © Boosey & Hawkes	James MacMillan	16.24
Radio City © Gramercy Music	Peter Graham	
<i>Narrator Dale Gerrard, Trombone Soloist Brett Baker</i>		
6. City Noir		4.02
7. Cafe Rouge		3.43
8. Two-Minute Mile		2.22
Vita Aeterna Variations © Opus33 Music	Alexander Comitas	
9. Introduction and Theme (Adagio)		2.30
10. Variation I (Allegro energico)		0.58
11. Variation II (Tempo di valse in modo subdolo)		2.03
12. Variation III (Allegro tempestuoso)		2.19
13. Variation IV (Largo)		3.26
14. Variation V (Adagio)		2.43
15. Variation VI (Alla marcia)		1.53
16. Finale: Fugue and Apotheosis (Allegro vivace)		4.11

Total Playing time: 72.42

Executive Producer: Trevor Caffull
 Producers: Nicholas Childs and Richard Scott
 Engineer and Post Production: Richard Scott
 Assistant Engineer: Stephen Scott
 Production Manager: Nicki Tonge

Project Coordinator: Alison Childs
 Programme Notes: Paul Hindmarsh
 Artwork and Cover Design: GK Graphic Design
 Recorded at Morley Town Hall, February 2013

ELECTRA

Martin Ellerby - **Electra** Philip Wilby - **One Star: Sailing West**
 James MacMillan - **Canite Tuba** Peter Graham - **Radio City**
 Alexander Comitas - **Vita Aeterna Variations**

BLACK DYKE BAND

CONDUCTED BY
 DR NICHOLAS CHILDS • DR ROBERT CHILDS

Electra is the title character in a bloodthirsty play based on Greek myth by Sophocles, dating from 411 or 410 B.C. Driven half mad by the murder of her father Agamemnon, Electra persuades her brother Orestes to join her in a quest for revenge. The murderer is their own mother, the vicious Clytemnestra, who then then plots unsuccessfully to kill her son. In a twist of fate, he kills his mother first before he is brutally murdered. Demented with both elation and grief, Electra dances herself to death. This grizzly story provides the background to Martin Ellerby's test-piece, which was commissioned for the 2012 British Open Championship. Ellerby takes his musical cue from the so-called 'Elektra chord', an angry dissonance in Richard Strauss's 1903 opera *Elektra*, but the music has nothing to do with Strauss's equally grizzly opera.

Electra is in three linked contrasting movements, which Ellerby suggests could be thought of as a miniature ballet, 'with characters, scenes, dramatic developments ever present and evolving'. The highly-charged emotional content might also take its cue from the half-crazed character of Electra herself. The first movement, *Lust for Revenge*, begins with what the composer describes as 'an expressive scream' and unfolds through the unrelieved concentration of irregular changing

time signatures. The relentless, obsessive quality is embedded in the symmetrical construction of the movement, which Ellerby describes as 'a composed rather than an exact palindrome. The music turns back on itself per paragraph'.

The central movement, *Laments*, explores the poetic properties of the 'Elektra chord', in romantically tinged melodies that release all the aggression and tension of the first movement, giving the band's soloists their opportunity for maximum exposure. Ellerby relates the fluidity of the style to the way Hollywood composers like Korngold and Steiner put the Richard Strauss style 'through the mill'. As a bridge between *Laments* and the final *Dance to Death*, Ellerby introduces a paragraph of cadenza-like duets rising through the basses and euphoniums, supported by eerie textures from cornets, trombones and percussion.

The brief *Dance to Death* is all about visceral energy. The musical content is deliberately simpler than in the previous movements, with a pounding beat and a 'basic', driving theme. There is no big tune at the end of **Electra**, as she dances herself to death, but as Ellerby says, "she has definitely got it at the end!"

Personnel

Principal Cornet

Richard Marshall

Assistant Principal Cornet

Rob Westacott

Solo Cornets

Martin Irwin
James McCabe

Soprano Cornet

Paul Duffy

Reptano Cornet

Lee Rigg

2nd Cornets

John O'Brien
Mark Bowater

3rd Cornets

Keith Britcliffe
David Smith

Flugel Horn

Zoe Hancock

Solo Horn

Sheona White

1st Horn

Jonathan Bates

2nd Horn

Alison Childs

Solo Euphonium

Gary Curtin

2nd Euphonium

Ian Yates

Euphonium

John French*

Solo Baritone

Katrina Marzella

2nd Baritone

Ben Wright

Solo Trombone

Brett Baker

Co-Principal Trombone

Paul Woodward*

2nd Trombone

Garry Reed

Bass Trombone

Adrian Hirst

Solo Eb Tuba

Joseph Cook

Eb Tuba

Philip Goodwin

Solo Bb Tuba

Matthew Routley

Bb Tuba

Matt Wade

Percussion

Andrea Price
Matthew Whitfield
Rory Farrell
Kieran Johnson
Adrian Smith

Secretary

Mike Shenton

*Played on Vita Aeterna

Dr Robert B. Childs

Dr Robert Childs is a leading figure in the world of brass music. For over thirty years he has performed at the highest level giving solo performances in many of the world's most prestigious venues. He has given master-classes throughout Europe's finest conservatoires and is now recognised as a leading education specialist within his field. In the year 2000 Robert was appointed Musical Director of Cory Band.



He is currently Director of Brass Band Studies at the Royal Welsh College of Music, Chairman of the National Youth Band of Great Britain and sits on the Board of the Harry Mortimer Trust.

In 2002 Robert was awarded a Doctorate in Musical Arts from the University of Salford. He is also an Associate of the Royal College of Music, a Fellow of the London College of Music, gained a distinction in a Masters Degree from the University of Leeds, holds a Post Graduate Certificate in Education from the Open University and in 2007 his remarkable achievements were recognized by the Worshipful Company of Musicians when he was awarded the prestigious Iles Medal.

Robert has won all the major Brass Band Championships including the British Open five times and a "hat-trick" of wins at the European Brass Band Championships. He also steered Cory Band to the World Of Brass World No.1 ranking for an unequalled five consecutive years!

In 2008 Robert was given 'Freedom of the City of London' and also received the prestigious John Edwards Memorial Award by the Welsh Music Guild for outstanding contribution to Welsh Music.

In 2013 Robert was very pleased to be invited to work with his Brother Nicholas and Black Dyke Band.

Few composers have contributed more for brass bands on the concert or contest stage over the past 23 years than Philip Wilby. **One Star: Sailing West**, composed specially for Zoe Hancock, is the latest in a substantial series of concertos and concert pieces, which Wilby has created for Black Dyke's fine soloists. The music was inspired by an attempted sailing voyage round the Cornish peninsula. When the weather took a turn for the worse, the boat, with some of the Wilby family on board, took shelter in Cardiff Bay.

We join the musical journey in untroubled waters, with some beautiful melodic writing for the soloist. The delicacy of the sound-scape is a world away from the highly-charged writing of some of Wilby's earlier concertos. Soaring flights of melody flow into an accompanied cadenza that explores the whole range of the flugel horn, leading to a substantial and dramatic central episode. We are in choppy waters here. The writing is highly virtuosic and given the restraint with which the supporting material has been voiced, every note is clearly heard. Just as the surges of tutti band sound threaten to overwhelm the soloist's waves of rapid figuration, the music is completely transformed. We have entered calmer, sheltered waters. Evocative lines from the flugel horn are supported by delicate tracteries

of muted textures and enhanced by evocative echoes produced by live digital delay. The music dies away to nothing in one of the most beautiful and wistful endings in all of Philip Wilby's brass music.

As a young man, James MacMillan played the cornet in his local band, in Cumnock. Although he has composed two short works for brass band, and a number of other concert works have been arranged for band, it has been the hope of many that he would one day produce a major work for the medium. Thanks to Black Dyke Band, Nicholas Childs and Philip Wilby, he has now added his unique creative voice to the band repertoire with **Canite Tuba (Sound the Trumpet)**, which Black Dyke premièred at the British Bandsman 125th Anniversary Concert, in Symphony Hall, Birmingham last July.

The music, which is direct and full of incident, draws inspiration from two Vesper antiphons sung during Advent and is based on a quotation from the Old Testament book of Joel. In the first of the linked three sections, fast-tongued scales intermingle with swirling slurs round the top of the band, underpinned by softer, slower moving chords in the lower instruments. A calmer cantabile section, with trills and marimba accompaniment follows before the whole band unleashes a passage of frenzied

hocketting rhythms, recalling the assertive manner of parts of his earlier wind band work *Sowetan Spring* (1990). With a partial reprise of the opening ideas, the music relaxes into a haunting middle section, where the slow chords that had underpinned the opening are developed, as MacMillan describes, "giving the impression of waves coming and going serenely in the lower textures. Above there are other chords in 'distant' muted cornets, and a recurring motif, which is highly embellished and modal". This ornate lyrical line features soprano cornet and horn in octaves. The section ends with the whole lower band intoning in chant-like octaves. MacMillan is a huge Celtic fan and he paid tribute to the team from Glasgow's East End by using a couple of Celtic football chants as the basis for the fast music in the final section. Strains of "Come on all ye boys in green" and "Glasgow is green and white!" are thrown back and forward between cornets and trombones as they might be in the stands at Parkhead. After a calmer central episode, where expansive horns offer a moment of welcome lyricism, the relentless energy of repeated semiquaver patterns drives the simple refrain patterns to a breathless conclusion.

James MacMillan and Peter Graham, who both hail from Ayrshire, were contemporaries at Edinburgh University. As youngsters Peter

Graham and his brother were given an old valve radiogram on which they used to be able to pick up American radio stations. "Through the static, we could pick up a whole range of programmes from across the Atlantic," Peter recalls. "I particularly recall the American accents of the announcers providing a window to an evocative world far removed from our small Ayrshire town. These memories form the basis of **Radio City.**"

The three movements are introduced in the American style of those days with remembered sounds from the period mingling with a specially written narrative by Philip Coultts. However, the star of this entertainment is the trombone soloist, Brett Baker, for whom **Radio City** was composed. *City Noir* is a nod towards Raymond Chandler's private eye Philip Marlow and the dark cityscape of 1940s California. We are whisked next to the *Cafe Rouge* in New York's famous Hotel Pennsylvania, where Glenn Miller is about the broadcast 'live'. Graham conjures up the spirit of Miller and Tommy Dorsey in a vignette of big band jazz. Finally in *Two-Minute Mile*, it's off to Kentucky, from where the radio commentator sets the scene for the Kentucky Derby - often described in the USA as "the most exciting two minutes in sport". Graham's gallop takes well under two minutes. Hold on tightly!

Dr Nicholas J. Childs

Dr Nicholas Childs has achieved the highest international reputation as a performer, teacher/clinician, conductor, interpreter and advocate of new music and producer of pacesetting recordings. Initial success came as a euphonium soloist and partner with his talented brother, Dr Robert Childs, who together have literally toured the world as The Childs Brothers, performing in many of the world's most famous concert halls with the most prestigious bands and orchestras.

Taking up the baton as a conductor, Nicholas has had phenomenal success with many bands, including highly acclaimed national championship successes. His current tenure as Principal Conductor and Director of Music of the famous Black Dyke Band has been marked not only with continued contest success, but with a series of innovative concerts and world premières of major works for brass band with a variety of soloists and musical combinations.

He served as Senior Tutor in Brass Band Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music, where he has taught for more than 14 years, and he is the Musical Director of the RNCM Brass Band.

Further honours have come with his appointment as Associate Conductor of the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain and as Trustee of the Brass Band Heritage Trust. He is also the Artistic Director for the National Children's Band of Great Britain.

With his roots in the British brass band tradition, having first been trained in the Tredegar (Wales) Youth Band, Nicholas continues to give important emphasis to the development of the brass band movement. This comes via his commitment to the training of outstanding young musicians both at the collegiate level and within the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain. He has reached the pinnacle of success with four National Championships of Great Britain with Black Dyke in 2001, 2004, 2008 and 2009.

In April 2005 he guided Black Dyke to first place at the European Brass Band Contest, and again in 2012 winning in Rotterdam. In September 2005 he was victorious with Black Dyke in winning the British Open Championship and again in 2006. Nicholas guided Black Dyke to victory in the English National Championships in 2009, 2011 and again in 2012, winning both testpiece and own choice sections.



the band was proud to be appointed the first ever 'Band in Residence' at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester.

Many 'legends' of the brass world have been associated with Black Dyke Band over the years, together with a significant number who have gone on to enjoy successful careers in the orchestral world, including Jack Pinches (who was solo trombone player in the band at the tender age of 16), William Lang, Maurice Murphy and Rod Franks. Today the band is proud to be associated with a modern day 'giant' of the composing world, Philip Wilby, as Musical Associate.

Black Dyke Band has, throughout its history, enjoyed unparalleled success in the contesting world, being awarded the title 'Champion Band of Great Britain' no less than 22 times, most

recently in October 2009. In 2005, its 150th anniversary year, it also became European and British Open Champions and retained the British Open title in 2006. In 2009, 2011 and again in 2012 the band became English National Brass Band Champions Black Dyke Band are also the reigning European Champions, winning in Rotterdam in May 2012.

The band is relentless in its quest to perform music to the highest possible standard and uphold its long and fine tradition. This desire is summed up perfectly in its motto, taken from the armorial bearings granted in 1857 to John Foster: 'Justum Perficito nihil timeto':

'ACT JUSTLY AND FEAR NOTHING'

For further information please visit www.blackdykeband.co.uk

Black Dyke's musical odyssey of CD premières ends with the first studio recording of the work which brought the band victory at the 2012 European Brass Band Championship, held in Rotterdam. The band's commanding performance of **Vita Aeterna Variations** was the highlight of the entire contest. **Vita Aeterna Variations**, or **Variations and Fugue on an Original Theme**, to give this very demanding work its full title, is by the Dutch composer Alexander Comitas (real name Ed de Boer).

It is based on a hymn-like tune, which Comitas composed as a short memorial work in memory of a young fanfare band euphonium player Jeffrey Lindelauf. 'Jeffrey's parents asked me to express the viewpoint that life goes on after death in the composition,' the composer writes, 'and they proposed that **Vita Aeterna** (Eternal Life) would be an appropriate title.

I had the feeling that the lyrical theme of **Vita Aeterna** would sound very well for brass band, so I decided to use it as a starting point. Not only do I use this musical theme from the previous piece, I also wanted to elaborate a bit more on the subject of ongoing life, now combined with what in Hinduism and Buddhism is called karma. *Introduction and Theme (Adagio)*: The 'eternal life' theme is tonal and traditional. Its 'retro' styling, working out and expressive intentions would not have been out of place a century ago.

Some aspects may bring the spiritual works of Eric Ball to mind, like *Resurgam* or *Journey into Freedom*. We also hear a short but important motif on solo euphonium, described by the composer as the "healing theme, which has a positive connotation but is absent when things go wrong".

Variation I (Allegro energico), where the brilliance of cornet tone is heard for the first time, celebrates life force. While the solo cornets elaborate fragments of the 'eternal life' theme into a joyous higher register, euphoniums and baritones respond by extending the 'healing theme' (double tongued) into their upper register. The music takes a sinister turn in *Variation II (Tempo di valse in modo subdolo)*, where evil, symbolised by an increasingly insidious waltz and a distortion of the E flat tonal landscape, seeks to seduce and gradually succeeds. Angular gestures on tuned percussion and increasingly dissonant muted cornet figurations ratchet up the tension, the full power of which is unleashed in *Variation III (Allegro tempestuoso)*, where Fate strikes. The distortion of phrases of the 'eternal life' melody reaches its most devastating; the constantly changing time signatures create a destabilising effect. The contraction of the opening phrase from the outline of perfect fifth to that of the diminished fifth (or tritone) – the Devil's interval – is powerfully symbolic as well as dramatically expressive.

In *Variation IV (Largo)* we are plunged into the depths of E flat minor despair. The variation begins like a funeral march but evolves into an intense, anguished cry from the full band. In the final bars first the trombone trio and then the solo euphonium offer a ray of hope, as the diminished harmonies of despair recede to be replaced by the beauty of the perfect fifths and major thirds that characterise the 'eternal life' theme, which returns as a redemptive force in *Variation V (Adagio)*. The key is now a 'hopeful' A flat major, allowing the solo euphonium to soar with characteristic lyricism and generous warmth into its high register.

The ever growing confidence and assurance conveyed in *Variation VI (Alta marcia)* offers, musically speaking, a counterbalance to the distortions that gradually undermined the waltz in *Variation III*. As confidence is assured, the contrapuntal writing becomes ever more expansive and organ-like in density. At its climax, a resounding cadential figure – 'like a loud Amen' to coin a phrase – propels the music towards the *Finale: Fugue and Apotheosis (Allegro vivace)*, which is boisterous, overflowing with vitality and delight in the beauty of life. In a well crafted fugue, the 'eternal life' theme dances along in compound time – for the first time in the work. Gradually the whole band enters to join in the fugal dance.



The Apotheosis is achieved with a brilliant display of triple counterpoint, involving the 'eternal life' theme, the 'healing' theme and an elaboration of the fugue subject (an homage to Wagner's *Die Meistersingers Overture*). **Vita Aeterna Variations** ends with the affirmation of the 'healing theme' in the resplendent (and Wagnerian!) home key of E flat major.

© Paul Hindmarsh

Black Dyke Band

In 1816, in the Yorkshire village of Queenshead, later to become Queensbury, Mr Peter Wharton founded a brass and reed band. Amongst the players, on French horn, was John Foster, owner of the John Foster & Son mill in that small village. The life of this band, however, was short-lived through declining numbers of players. In 1837, a new band was formed, the Queenshead Band, and in September 1855 John Foster & Son 'adopted' the band, acquiring for it a new set of instruments and attracting new members. In addition to this, a room was provided for practising; Black Dyke Mills Band had been formed. Most of the band's musicians lived in Queensbury and worked in the mill, ensuring a close link to the community that remains to this day.

The band has been at the forefront of banding development throughout its history, making one of the earliest brass band recordings in 1904 and embarking on a five-month tour of Canada and the USA in 1906 during which it played more than 200 concerts and travelled over 13,000 miles. Since then, it has featured on more than 300 recordings and has toured widely throughout Europe and the rest of the world, including Sierra Leone, Japan, Australia and several visits to Canada and the USA.

Amongst its recordings, the band is proud to have been recognised in wider musical spheres; in 1996 winning the Music Industries Association Award for the best CD in the Orchestral category with its recording of music by Sir William Walton.

In February 1999 the band was nominated for a 'Grammy Award' in the 'Crossover Classical Section' and this was followed a month later by an Oscar nomination when it provided the backing for the song *That'll Do* by Peter Gabriel in the film *Babe 2*. The band has been proud to enjoy success with other recording artists including Paul McCartney and Wings, Tori Amos, The Beautiful South, Evelyn Glennie and, decades earlier, The Beatles on their hit record, *Yellow Submarine*. Television shows, broadcasts, concerts at music festivals, The BBC Proms and other high profile events have also seen the band featured with household names such as Lesley Garrett, Elton John, Evelyn Glennie, James Morrison, Rod Franks, Ian Bousfield, Phillip Smith and many more.

In October 1993, Black Dyke Band created history as the first British brass band to appear at Carnegie Hall, New York, and a year later they became the first brass band ever to perform at the Royal College of Music. In 2004,