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SFZ 150

Front Page (1)

LES NEISH
tuba

Salt
of the
Earth





“ If ever there was a convincing advocate of the tuba, it’s Les. His playing reaches out from the stage, picks you up by the scruff of the neck and says ‘listen to me’ ”

Stephanie Hughes (BBC Radio)

“ The player who most reminds me of John Fletcher today is Les Neish ”

Bramwell Tovey (International Conductor)

National Brass Band Championships.

2007 included victories at the North West Area Championship for a record breaking 14th time, being crowned the International Masters Champions and victory at the Tameside Whit Friday March Contests for a sixth consecutive year. Foden's were runners up at the National Finals, at Brass in Concert, held at the Sage, Gateshead, as well as receiving 3rd prize at the British Open.

2008 proved another successful year with victories at the North West Area Contest, Tameside Whit Friday March Contest, the British Open Championship and runners up at the National Finals at the Royal Albert Hall, London.

2009 has seen victory at the North West Area Contest for a record breaking 16th time, victory at the International Masters as well as winning the Tameside Whit Friday for the 8th consecutive year.



FODEN'S BAND

FODEN'S BAND

The origins of the band go back to 1900 when the village of Elworth, near Sandbach in Cheshire, formed its own band having been let down by 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.

After a couple of years the village band was wound up but from that base local industrialist Edwin Foden formed the Foden's Motor Works Band. For a few years the new band had modest ambitions but in 1908 a fundamental reorganization took place and, by the following year, it had achieved Championship Section status, a prestigious position that has been maintained ever since.

The band has been a prize winner at the coveted British Open Brass Band Championships 32 times, winning nine times - including a hat-trick in 1926, '27 and '28. The band has also been a prize winner 37 times at the National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain, 12 times

as winner, including an unparalleled double hat-trick in 1932, '33, '34 and 1936, '37 and '38.

Under its former title, the band was ordered to play by Royal Command on three occasions: in 1913 for King George V and Queen Mary, in 1938 at Windsor Castle for King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, and most recently in 1983 where the band had the honour of playing for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace. In wartime, the band toured Europe for ENSA and in peacetime it toured Canada, South Africa and Israel.

In July 1986 the band accepted sponsorship from Britannia Building Society, thereby maintaining its position as one of the country's leading bands, becoming BBC Band of the Year in 1990 and 1992, and European Champions in 1992.

Becoming All England Masters Champions in 1990, '91, '94 and '95, the band emerged as the most consistent band in this field, and in 1993 it became the first British band to win the Swiss Open Championships. In March 2006, Foden's became the North West Area Champions and in July of that year made history by winning the inaugural English

INTRODUCTION

For many tuba players the idea of playing solo repertoire might not be something that appeals to them greatly. Usually, they are most comfortable being the foundation of the symphony orchestra, brass band or any ensemble. For me however, it really is not the case. From a young age I have always wanted to play solos and have always been interested in finding out the capabilities of the tuba.

Throughout my career I have had some of the most wonderful experiences and I have met some fantastic people along my journey. It was great for me to be able to call upon many of my colleagues and friends to help me with this disc.

This CD is really a snapshot of the different styles of music that I have performed in concerts and recitals throughout the years, featuring arrangements ranging from classical and romantic periods, moving forward to the title track *Salt of the Earth*, premiered in 2008.

I am delighted to be able to showcase works not just with brass band but with piano too and I hope there is something on this CD that will appeal to all listeners. I really do love music making and performing and I hope that you enjoy listening to this disc too!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people that I would like to thank for all of their efforts and hard work in making this CD possible. I must thank Brian Hillson, Adam Goldsmith and the team at World of Sound for their fantastic work. Andrew Wainwright for the stunning artwork; Foden's Band and conductors Michael Fowles and Garry Cutt. Thanks must also go to my good friend Jonathan Corry for providing fantastic sleeve notes for this CD and also to Nathan Power for typesetting many of the arrangements.

Thanks to Peter Meechan and Andy Scott for their superb additions to the tuba repertoire and also Martyn Parkes for his wonderful piano playing. It really is a pleasure to work with such a great musician.

I must also thank two great people - Gabrielle Horne, my first ever brass teacher and my mentor James Gourlay for their guidance and inspiration over the years. Without a doubt my family have always been there to support and encourage me so thanks Mum, Dad, Lianne, Shelly and Debbie. This CD is for you guys!

Executive Producer: Trevor Cuffull
Producers: Adam Goldsmith & Brian Hillson
Engineer: Adam Goldsmith
Post-Production: Alistair Barker & Adam Goldsmith
Production Manager: Julian Bright
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PROGRAMME NOTES

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Rumanian Dance No. 2

Programme Notes by Jonathan Corry

Fast-paced folk dances have been adopted for many years by instrumentalists to display their artistry and technical wizardry.

Romanian born composer and tubist Dumitru Ionel, himself a virtuosic musician, wrote many works for tuba including a set of six dances, composed in a similar style with each dance having a distinct modal, Eastern European flavour. *Rumanian Dance No. 2* features as an opening work in many of the countless recitals Les has performed around the world and is therefore an appropriate choice to commence this fine recording of a... tuba artist!

Aria for Alto Saxophone

Programme Notes by Jonathan Corry

Noted for his wind writing, French composer Eugene Bozza's music shows familiarity with the capabilities of wind instruments, demanding a great deal of technical skill. Written for the famous French saxophonist Marcel Mule in 1936, his *Aria* has become one of the most popular works in the classical saxophone repertoire and has also been arranged for many other instruments including violin, flute and clarinet.

It is a pastiche of J.S. Bach's third-movement aria from the organ *Pastorale in F*, BWV 590. Both works share the same mood, time and accompaniment style and the aria has a direct extract taken from J.S. Bach's work.

Martyn Parkes is currently on the staff at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, a post he has held since 2006. Previous to this position, he worked for the Royal Northern College of Music, a position he was offered immediately after Post Graduate study there.

The world of piano accompaniment has given Martyn many opportunities, and he has worked, to name a few, with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, Manchester Camerata as well as appearances on BBC Television (*Classical Star* and *BBC Young Musician*), ITV (*The Forsyte Saga*) and on Radio 4 (*You and Yours*).

Martyn is a regular performer with numerous music clubs and societies, and has worked with many performers from all over the world. With Les, he has travelled to a wide variety of venues throughout the UK and highlights of these include their recital at The Bridgewater Hall, which demonstrated the ever increasing 'rise to fame of the tuba' as a solo instrument. His passion for pushing the boundaries of music is an area he continues to explore but he believes that in the increasing world of competition, the most important thing is 'to have fun' and enjoy the gift we have in music – a motto that both he and Les are always keen to promote!



MARTYN PARKES

MARTYN PARKES

Salt of the Earth

Programme Notes by Andy Scott

A blues-tinged tuba cadenza opens *Salt of the Earth* before moving into a Bulgarian-like folk theme, which alternates with a heavier funk feel. The two multiphonics that frame the movement are inspired by a cadenza that the late great saxophonist Michael Brecker played on the album *Some Skunk Funk*. The slower second movement is gospel-influenced, the seven-bar melody being passed around different soloists whilst the solo tuba weaves in and out of the melody in an almost improvisatory way. The third and final movement of *Salt of the Earth* is an explosion of big band latin-jazz, led from the front by the solo tuba!

Composed by Andy Scott for Les and the Foden's Band with funds made available from the BBC Fame Academy Education Bursary and the Worshipful Company of Musicians, in recognition of the composer's success in winning the award in the Wind Band & Brass Band section of the 2006 British Composer Awards. The World Premiere performance was given by Les Neish and Foden's Band on Sunday 27th January 2008 at the Royal Northern College of Music Festival of Brass, Manchester UK.

Praeludium and Allegro

Programme Notes by Jonathan Corry

Austrian born Fritz Kreisler was revered as one of the finest violinists of his day; he composed many works for piano and violin, amongst them *Praeludium and Allegro*. This work is one which an aspiring young conservatoire violinist of today would seek to master.

Many of Kreisler's works were pastiches in an ostensible style of earlier composers. Published in 1910, (the year Kreisler premiered Edward Elgar's Violin Concerto) *Praeludium and Allegro* was falsely attributed to Italian violinist and composer Gaetano Pugnani. Other works at this time such as *Allegretto* and *Andantino* were falsely attributed to composers Luigi Boccherini and Giovanni Battista Martini respectively and it was only in 1935, much to the dismay of critics, that Kreisler revealed that he in fact wrote many of these works.

This work is certainly a test for a violinist, let alone any tuba player and is a piece that Les has always had the ambition to perform and record. Arranged in collaboration with Martyn Parkes, Les wanted to keep as close to the original score as possible, giving him challenges including playing in the higher extremes of the tuba's register and performing with the dexterity and clarity that a violinist would. He hopes this arrangement will feature in many tuba players' recital repertoire in the future.

Serenade from 'The Student Prince'

Programme Notes by Jonathan Corry

Sigmund Romberg's most successful work, the operetta *The Student Prince*, contains some of the most demanding tenor arias in the operetta repertoire. Based on Wilhelm Meyer-Förster's play *Alt Heidelberg*, the operetta became loved on its first opening on Broadway in 1924. This aria, *Serenade* (overhead the moon is beaming) was arranged in 2008 for Les by Irish composer David Catherwood.

Adagio and Allegro

Programme Notes by Jonathan Corry

For Saxony born Schumann, 1849 was one of his most prolific years, not only in terms of the number of compositions, but also rich in the diverseness of works, which included choral pieces, songs, piano pieces, works for soloist(s) and orchestra and several chamber pieces for solo instrument and piano. His *Adagio & Allegro* for Horn and Piano, Op. 70 is a work which had the new valved horn in mind.

The *Adagio* is based on a melody that takes advantage of the instrument's ability to play precise chromatic notes and it has the demeanor of Schumann's wistful songs. The rondo form *Allegro* consists of a bright, vigorous main section juxtaposed with more poetic episodes that share ideas with the *Adagio*. Schumann also published solo violin and cello versions of this work, this version is taken directly from the violin edition and has been performed by Les in many of his recitals.

My Mountain Top

Programme Notes by Andy Scott

My Mountain Top was originally written for the Apollo Saxophone Quartet (with accompanying CD) with words and narration by Lemn Sissay.

Commissioned by the ISCM World Music Days, the piece was premiered by the ASQ and Lemn at the 1998 ISCM Festival in Manchester and recorded on the ASQ CD, *Words & Pictures*.

The piece was subsequently arranged for solo soprano or tenor saxophone for Gerard McChrystal, who premiered it at Dartington Festival in 2001.

My Mountain Top starts with a crackle on the CD, representing lying under the gaze of the sun and feeling the heat on your skin. The rhythmically free opening solo

statements represent a mind that is active with thoughts but which gradually floats into a semi-conscious state. At this point the warm keyboard pads emerge and the stage is set for Lemn's magical words. The solo part weaves its way around the voice, gesturing and supporting, but never overpowering.

It has been a pleasure knowing and working with Les for the past few years, via his work with Tubalate and Foden's Band. *My Mountain Top* requires musical sensitivity, rhythmic and dynamic control, as well as a great sense of shape. I'm delighted that Les has chosen to introduce this work to the tuba world! I can't think of anyone better to do that.

In the 90% (Sturgeon's Law)

Programme Notes by Jonathan Corry

World class artists continue to push the boundaries of their respective instruments by encouraging new and innovative ideas and drawing composers to write for their particular discipline. Having performed in 'Matt and Fred's' jazz bar in Manchester, Les continues to push boundaries when he recorded with popular artist Sting.

Similarly, US tubist Jay Rozen (born in the same era as Sting!), a long time advocate of new music has had many new works written for him and also primarily writes music for, or including, the tuba.

This work, *In the 90% (Sturgeon's Law)*, based on famed science-fiction author Theodore Sturgeon's ideal when speaking of literature, suggests that 90% of everything is nonsensical.

Rozen writes, 'This became Sturgeon's Law, an axiom which I have loosely interpreted as meaning that as little as 10% of all art advances art as art. My piece claims no such distinction. It will not advance music as an art form. My only aspiration for 90% is that it will be fun to play and, hopefully, fun to listen to!'

The work commences with a jaunty jig feel which travels along, challenging the artist with a plethora of time signatures and mammoth interval leaps. This leads into a wonderful section of lyricism where every note is played on one harmonic of the tuba, including a flattened quarter tone on B_♭.

A quasi cadenza ending with a multiphonic passage links us to a recapitulation of the earlier 'jig' section before the coda concludes the work in similar fashion as it began!

Episodes and Echoes

Programme Notes by Peter Meechan

Episodes and Echoes is a concerto in three movements for tuba. The title of the work relates directly to the way the composer approached writing the piece.

Although the work is scored with piano and wind band accompaniments, *Episodes and Echoes* was originally written for tuba and brass band. I had several problems to overcome; the brass band contains four tubas, and two euphoniums, all of which could obscure the solo line, so I decided to write for the soloist in a manner that meant they were either playing alone, in episodes, or repeating/echoing phrases.

In addition to this, I combined the characteristics of the tuba with other instruments: in the second movement the tuba is similar to a singer performing an aria and a recitative, and in the third movement a bass guitar.

Episodes and Echoes was commissioned by, and dedicated to, Les Neish who premiered the work in 2005, accompanied by the Seindorf Beaumaris Band, conducted by Gwyn Evans.

“When Leslie plays the tuba, it’s not only him having fun. He has the rare ability to draw the listener into sharing his passion for music making”

Ewan Easton (Halle Orchestra)

“A world class, state of the art tubist and a superb musician”

Roger Bobo (Tuba Legend)

Les Neish has become one of the leading tuba players of his generation. His endeavours as a tuba player have gained him recognition as a soloist, chamber musician and educator throughout the world. His career has been extremely varied with highlights including a performance at Millennium Park, Chicago and even collaborating on an album with Sting.

He gained a First Class Honours degree, Professional Performance Diploma and a Postgraduate Diploma with Distinction from the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester and after graduating was taken onto the staff as a chamber music coach and tuba tutor at the RNCM Junior School. As a past student of the RNCM and Junior RNCM, Les is delighted to take up these positions at such a prestigious conservatoire.

Les has really pushed the boundaries of tuba playing, being the first ever tuba player to be awarded the Worshipful Company of Dyers Award for Wind and Brass at the Royal Overseas League Competition and the first player to perform a solo tuba recital at The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester.

Away from the recital stage, Les is also a member of the famous Foden’s Band and is privileged to be part of the tuba section of the world renowned, American based, Brass Band of Battle Creek.

His real passion, however, is chamber music. He plays in the brass quintet Polyphonic Brass, which works extensively throughout the north-west of England as part of the *Live Music Now!* scheme and he is also a member of Tubalaté, a tuba quartet that has a busy schedule in the United Kingdom and abroad. He has also worked with the UK’s leading ensembles, including Fine Arts Brass, Onyx Brass and Nemo.

Les is dedicated to raising the profile of an instrument that is sometimes forgotten at the back of an orchestra. He really is proving that the tuba has so much more to offer!



TUBA ARTIST
The website of Les Neish
www.tuba-artist.com

