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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EUROPEAN BRASS BAND CONTEST 2006

2006

EUROPEAN BRASS BAND CONTEST 2006

Live from Belfast Waterfront Hall, Northern Ireland

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SERIES



For the first time since its inception in 1978, the European Brass Band Contest made the trip west across the Irish Sea to Northern Ireland and the city of Belfast. Those who were fortunate enough to make the trip were rewarded with a truly memorable nine days of competition, concerts and ancillary brass related events that will live long in the memory.

This release brings you a flavour of the many musical highlights that occurred, enhanced immensely by the warm welcome provided by the city and its music loving people, the professional organisation of the hosts, the North of Ireland Bands' Association and the magnificent Waterfront Hall venue.

The first major event of the week was the Gala Concert held at the city's wonderful Victorian Ulster Hall. Hosted by Frank Renton, it featured the 3rd European Composer Competition as well as the talents of guest soloist Alan Morrison, the combined bands of 1st Old Boys and Strabane Concert and the truly magnificent aural experience that was the Grand Mullholland Organ.

Malcolm Arnold's *Fanfare for a Festival* provided an appropriate opening salvo to the evening before the first competitive element of the Championships and the Composer's Competition

Three finalists had their works performed on the night, the eventual winner being 29 year old Kevin Houben from Belgium with his composition entitled *Arcana*. It's inspiration came from an untold secret which has for many years remained hidden within his own hometown brass band and Kevin's colourful and atmospheric writing found favour with the panel of experienced judges, winning him the first prize of 1500 Euros.

With the competitive element out of the way, the large and receptive audience sat back and enjoyed the talents of Alan Morrison, one of the brass band movement's finest exponents of the cornet. Alan was on splendid form with an authentically suave performance of the Hoagy Carmichael classic, *Lazy River*.

One of the real success stories of the European Brass Band Contest has been the significant musical development of the B Section Competition. This year each of the competitors had to perform the set work, *Little Christmas* by Elaine Agnew, a complex yet colourful composition inspired by the catastrophic events caused by a devastating storm on 6th January 1839 and its subsequent aftermath. The timing of the storm was significant in that it took place on Epiphany, the day in which Christ made his being known to the world, and an occasion

CD 2

1.	The Promised Land ©SP&S Ltd. <i>Winners of Oun Choice Test Piece, Buy As You View Band, Conductor Dr. Robert Childs</i>	Kenneth Downie	15.05
2.	Academic Fanfare ©Gramercy Music <i>Gala Concert, Black Dyke Band, Conductor Dr. Nicholas J. Childs</i>	Peter Graham	2.00
3.	Virtuosity ©Studio Music <i>Gala Concert, Black Dyke Band, Conductor Dr. Nicholas J. Childs, Cornet Soloist Richard Marshall</i>	Kenny Baker arr. Peberdy Carl Davis	4.30 5.03
4.	Anthem ©Faber Music <i>World Première, Gala Concert, Black Dyke Band, Conductor Dr. Nicholas J. Childs</i>	Arthur Pryor	5.10
5.	Annie Laurie ©Ludwig Music Publishing <i>Gala Concert, Black Dyke Band, Conductor Dr. Nicholas J. Childs, Trombone Soloist Brett Baker</i>	Mark Dougherty	2.48
6.	Belfast Welcome M/s <i>Gala Concert, Festival Brass, Uilleann Pipe Soloist John McSherry</i>	Traditional	3.28
7.	The Dark Island / Mason's Apron M/s <i>Gala Concert, Soloists Robert Watt & Emma Culbert</i>	Traditional	3.18
8.	The Irish Washerwoman M/s <i>Gala Concert, Ballygowan Flute Band, Conductor Dr. Windsor Hylands</i>	Mark Wilson & Lee Lawson	2.53
9.	Duelling Drummers M/s <i>Gala Concert, Soloists Mark Wilson & Lee Lawson</i>	Shaun Davy & Noel Eccles	5.29
10.	The Arrival of the Special Olympics Flag M/s <i>Gala Concert, Noel Eccles Percussion Ensemble & Festival Brass</i>	Paul Lovatt-Cooper	4.07
11.	West Ridings ©Kirklees Music <i>Farewell Concert, European Youth Brass Band, Conductor Alan Morrison</i>	Percy Grainger arr. Wright	3.17
12.	Irish Tune From County Derry ©Schott & Co. Ltd. <i>Farewell Concert, European Youth Brass Band, Conductor Alan Morrison</i>	B.S. Lech arr. Giske	3.59
13.	Bird of Passage M/s <i>Farewell Concert, Eikanger-Bjørsvik Band, Conductor Reid Gilje, Trombone Soloist Grethe Tonheim</i>	Freddie Mercury arr. Giske	2.23
14.	Seaside Rendezvous M/s <i>Farewell Concert, Eikanger-Bjørsvik Band, Conductor Reid Gilje</i>	Gordon Goodwin	4.36
15.	Sing Sang Sung ©Wingood Music Productions <i>Farewell Concert, Eikanger-Bjørsvik Band, Conductor Reid Gilje</i>		
	Total Playing Time CD 2		67.59
	Total Playing Time of Double CD		2hr 20.46

Highlights from the European Brass Band Contest 2006

CD 1

1.	Fanfare for a Festival ©Studio Music <i>Composers Final & Gala Concert, 1st Old Boys Band, Strabane Concert Brass & Stephen Hamill on the Grand Mullholland Organ</i>	Malcolm Arnold arr. Sparke	2.34
2.	Arcana <i>M/s</i> <i>Composers Final & Gala Concert, 1st Old Boys Band, winning performance</i>	Kevin Houben	8.20
3.	Lazy River ©Prima Arts <i>Composers Final & Gala Concert Cornet Soloist Alan Morrison accompanied by Strabane Concert Brass</i>	Hoagy Carmichael arr. Morrison	4.31
4.	Seascape with High Cliffs ©Ricordi <i>Winners of Set Test Piece, Brass Band Willebroek, Conductor Frans Violet</i>	Ian Wilson	14.21
5.	Born on the Fourth of July ©Universal / MCA Music Ltd. <i>Winners of B-section Own Choice Test Piece, Brass Band Oberösterreich, Conductor Hannes Buchegger, Cornet Soloist Hans Gansch</i>	John Williams	5.36
6.	Music of the Spheres ©Anglo Music <i>2nd Place Own Choice Test Piece, Brass Band Fribourg, Conductor Arsène Duc</i>	Philip Sparke	16.52
7.	Little Christmas ©The Music Company Ltd. <i>Winners of B-section Set Test Piece, Brass Band Oberösterreich, Conductor Hannes Buchegger</i>	Elaine Agnew	6.10
8.	Journey to the Centre of the Earth ©Gramercy Music <i>3rd Place Own Choice Test Piece, Brass Band Willebroek, Conductor Frans Violet</i>	Peter Graham	14.12
Total Playing Time CD 1			72.47

known colloquially in Ireland as Nollaig na mBan or Little Christmas. The differences between the elemental effects of the storm and the disturbance of the religious serenity of the day are quite brilliantly brought to life by the composer.

Four bands took part, but for the second successive year it was the brilliant talents of Brass Band Oberösterreich from Austria that won the title and the 2500 Euros first prize. The band is made up of an amalgam of professional musicians, from students at leading conservatoires to former, as well as current principal players of some of the leading professional European orchestras.

Their outstanding performance of the set work, and two of their own choice selections of, *Funky Brass* and *Born on the Fourth of July* which featured the remarkable talents of Hans Gansch, the former Principal Trumpet of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, gave ample evidence of a band that would not have been out of place in the main Championship contest.

That two legged contest provided a quite thrilling competitive climax to the Championships. Friday evening saw the ten competing bands tackle Ian Wilson's elegiac composition, *Seascape with High Cliffs*. This elegant and lyrical work was inspired by a





visit the composer made to the Cliffs of Moher on the West Coast of Ireland and asked demanding questions of the performers in terms of subtle balance and timbre as well as the conductors as they sought to interpret the natural beauty of the cliffs, the playfulness of the seagulls and seabirds that nest there and the immovable sentinel mystery of the Isle of Aran, which the composer could barely see on the horizon during his visit.

It was the Belgians of Brass Band Willebroek under their conductor Frans Violet who produced a most atmospheric account of the work. Broad, lyrical and with great

warmth of sound, the oblique elemental nature of the composition and its subject matter were brought to life with a reading of subtle musical light and shade. It was a performance that found favour with the three judges enclosed in their box, and gave them the narrowest of leads to take into the own choice section of the contest the following afternoon.

The own choice section of the contest invariably produces many memorable musical performances, and this year was no exception. The winning performance came from the Buy As You View Band directed by Dr. Robert Childs, with their scintillating

a fabulously slick and professional display of their many and varied talents.

A stunning piece of trombone playing by Grethe Tonheim on *Bird of Passage* was just one of the musical treats they provided, whilst their brilliant treatment of the Freddie Mercury homage to slapstick summer holidays by the sea in *Seaside Rendezvous* brought the house down. The encore *Sing Sang Sung* put the veritable top hat on a superb musical treat for all of those fortunate

enough to have been there.

It rounded off a truly memorable week of music making in Belfast. The European Brass Band Contest had ambitiously trodden new ground and had been rewarded with a festival of music making that will live long in the memory. With this Double CD you can enjoy that experience too.

Iwan Fox



drumming talents of Mark Wilson and Lee Lawson, all of whom thrilled the capacity audience.

It brought the Gala Concert to a truly memorable climax, made all the more thrilling by the announcement of the results, which included a three way tie for first place in the battle to become European Champion Band.

In the end, and by virtue of their winning performance on the set work, Brass Band Willebroek were declared the 2006 European Champions, with Brass Band Fribourg and Buy As You View Band a hairsbreadth behind them in second and third places respectively.

With all the serious business out of the way the Sunday morning Farewell Concert gave the European Youth Band and Norwegian representatives, Eikanger-Bjorsvik Band the opportunity to entertain in grand style at the Studio Theatre within the Waterfront complex.

The audience were given a concert to remember too, with some wonderful playing from the cream of Europe's young brass talent, led throughout the week by Jonathan Corry and Alan Morrison. Their

performances of the famous Brighouse & Rastrick signature tune *West Riding* certainly blew away any cobwebs on the Sunday morning, whilst their light and breezy treatment of Percy Grainger's



arrangement of *Irish Tune from County Derry* gave the players a chance to seal their wonderful personal experiences of playing in the European Youth Brass Band with an appropriate Irish musical flourish.

Eikanger-Bjorsvik Band meanwhile put the disappointment of not featuring in the prizes at the main contest behind them with



rendition of Kenneth Downie's *The Promised Land*. This tour de force takes its inspiration from the biblical story of Moses leading the Hebrews out of Egypt to the Promised Land amid the trails and tribulations that the journey entailed before reaching salvation. It also cleverly uses two iconic pieces of Welsh choral music as its foundation. The strains of the hymn tune *Cwm Rhondda* and its reference to *Guide me, O thou great Jehovah* and the love song, *Myfanwy*, are obliquely referred to throughout in a stunning performance.

Brass Band Willebroek meanwhile chose Peter Graham's cinematic musical score, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and the audience was rewarded with a performance notable for its sweeping lyricism and brilliant sense of atmosphere. Based on the Jules Verne adventure novel, the Belgian's brought the subterranean elements of the exciting 'voyage extraordinaire' story fully to life, and crucially, as it turned out it, gained them third place in this section of the contest.



Runners up on the Saturday were the Swiss representatives, Brass Band Fribourg, who gave an impressive interpretation of Philip Sparke's immensely difficult *Music of the Spheres* capturing both the sense of excitement and lyrical warmth of the composer's colourful journey through the known and unknown elements of the universe.

With the knife-edge excitement of the main contest over until the announcement of the results later the same night, the appreciative audience had the chance to return to the Waterfront Hall to enjoy a truly spectacular Gala Concert.

The reigning 2005 European Champion, Black Dyke was the featured band in the first half of the evening, and they produced a mini concert to savour. Led by Dr. Nicholas Childs, the band opened with Peter Graham's stirring *Academic Fanfare*, an appropriate aperitif to the evening given their recent partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University.

Black Dyke's stable of world class soloists were on top form all weekend and with the rigours of the contest stage replaced by the more relaxed atmosphere found on the concert platform, Richard Marshall produced a stunning performance of the

Kenny Baker classic *Virtuosity* that the great trumpet player himself would have been proud as punch to have produced. Not to be outshone however, principal trombonist Brett Baker then brushed the dust off the virtuoso Arthur Pryor solo *Annie Laurie* in breathtaking style.

A concert of this importance is never complete without a world première, and the band gave the first performance of *Anthem* by Carl Davis, the New York born internationally renowned composer whose credits include the iconic television series, *The World at War* as well as the Oscar laden

film *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. This stirring music is used by the famous Leeds Rhinos rugby league team as they enter the field of play, and you can hear exactly why it is used to strike fear and foreboding in the hearts of their rivals!

The second half of the concert was a demonstration of the rich and varied tradition of music making to be found in this part of Ireland. The eclectic mix of music featured the combined talents of Robert Watt and Emma Culbert on the Irish pipes and accordion, Festival Brass, the Ballygowan Flute Band and the spectacular

