

BRITISH WIND MUSIC RENAISSANCE 1982 - 1991

The third in a series of Historical surveys of British wind music. One Hundred and Forty Years of Music at Kneller Hall appeared in Winter 1996/1997 British Wind Music 1922-1982 in Spring 1997 Back numbers of WINDS available from Liz Winter £1 50 inclusive of postage and packing

1000 AUSGEWÄHLTE WERKE FÜR BLASORCHESTER UND BLÄSERENSEMBLES

Every couple of years, Felix Hauswirth, President-Elect of WASBE brings out his *1000 Selected Works for Wind Orchestra and Wind Ensembles*, a list which is personal but which gives a splendid birds-eye view of repertoire from 1560 to the present day. In the chronological list, there are no British works apart from arrangements of Byrd or Purcell in the first two pages, which cover 1560-1906, a mere two hundred pieces. The third page covers the period 1906 to 1935, and a massive 22% are British; as Frederick Fennell points out, it is on the works of Holst and Vaughan Williams that the developments of the next seventy years of American repertoire are based. However, between 1935 and 1981, only a handful of works, mainly by Gordon Jacob, appear. As previous issues of WINDS have emphasised, there is a repertoire from that period which is sadly neglected, including the works of Walton O'Donnell and Alun Hoddinott, neither of whom are in this top 1000 list. Perhaps more surprising is the omission of a work such as Philip Sparke's *Year of the Dragon* (1985/Studio); Sparke, enthused by the wind orchestra while a student at the RCM, was one of the first composers to write regularly for the medium, and his earliest work, *Gaudium* (1973, Boosey & Hawkes) is the first of more than forty, ranging from a two minute piece at Grade 2 such as *Mumbo Jumbo* to the virtuoso *Dance Movements* (1995, Studio) written for the US Air Force Band.

D**N GOOD CONTEMPORARY BRITISH MUSIC

Angus Duke, writing in the *British Music Society Journal* last year, reckoned that the Warwick BASBWE Conference was a revelation. *There are still composers who are conserving and rejuvenating the music of uplifting melody, springing rhythms, strength and joy.* The 1996 Conference gave a survey of 14 years of BASBWE Commissioning policy. As Angus Duke reports in his perceptive article *there were inevitably some "duds", longueurs and "heavy" pieces, but most of the items performed, I at least want to hear again. It seems as if the medium itself induces a spring in the step, and a sense of robust appreciation of life such as we have seldom heard since the VW and Holst wind band suites.*

BASBWE REVOLUTION

The last fifteen years have seen a revolution in wind music in the UK. Old works have been restored to the repertoire, new works have been published and recorded, and the supplement with this edition of WINDS lists over 600 works currently available, probably 90% written under the inspiration of BASBWE and WINDS.

The influence of Frank Battisti's 1981 Conference was immediately felt. During 1981, both WASBE, the World Association for Symphonic Bands & Ensembles, and BASBWE, the British Association of Symphonic Bands & Wind

Ensembles, were founded, and it is the initiative of BASBWE in the past sixteen years which has created a new repertoire, no longer based on suites of dances or folk-songs, no longer necessarily dependant on arrangements and orchestral transcriptions. These new works were largely by composers with little or no wind band background, who created new sounds and sonorities. All of the works commissioned have been published, and many are now well established in the International Wind Band repertoire.

DEREK BOURGEOIS

The main commission at the Manchester Conference of 1981 was from Derek Bourgeois' *Symphony of Winds* (1981, R Smith). His scoring here, as in his *Sinfonietta* (1983, R Smith) is brilliantly effective, but it has been suggested by American colleagues that the difficulties for players are not equalled by the intellectual demands. He views the Wind Band almost as an extension of the brass band, with massive doublings and a



luxuriant palette. Bourgeois' language is deliberately traditional, though the relative naivety of both works is seasoned with the unexpected harmonic or rhythmic twist, lacking in the *Trombone Concerto* (1989, R Smith) which is little more than an exuberant vehicle for trombone virtuosity. Perhaps his most effective piece so far, and easily the most economical, is the little *Serenade* (1982, R Smith) in 11/8, sometimes 13/8, but the larger works should be explored by the ambitious and technically skilled band. *Diversions* (1987, Vanderbeek & Imrie) is a very attractive work, sadly neglected, and a wind arrangement of his *Percussion Concerto*, written for Evelyn Glennie, will soon be available.



EDWARD GREGSON

Also played at the Conference was Edward Gregson's **Metamorphoses** (1979, Novello) which remains one of his most experimental and intriguing works, making fine use of simple aleatoric and electronic techniques. Of Gregson's more recent works, the **Tuba Concerto** (1984, Novello) is now firmly in the international repertoire for tuba players in both wind and

brass band versions, **Festivo** (1985, Novello) is a very successful light overture which combines traditional band formulae with a Stravinsky-like energy, and the **Missa Brevis Pacem** (1988, Novello) for SSA choir, treble and baritone soli and band, is a simple yet deeply felt and moving setting of the mass: all are in a more populist vein but none the less very effective. The Royal Air Force has commissioned two significant works, based on his music for Stratford-on-Avon productions of the *Wars of the Roses*; **The Sword and the Crown** (1991, Studio) is very powerful, as is its sequel **The Kings go Forth** (1996, Studio), with its brilliant rock parody of *Sumer is Iucun in*. Like **Metamorphoses** his **Celebration** (1991, Maecenas), a tour de force, was written for orchestral wind, in fact for the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, while his latest work, written for the 1995 BASBWE Conference, is the Piano Concerto, **Homages**, (1995, Maecenas), unashamedly romantic.

FIRST BASBWE COMMISSIONS

1982 found BASBWE at Keble College Oxford, a one day-conference with a tiny trade exhibition, a couple of repertoire classes with the RNCM, a handful of delegates and, over the election of the Chairman, the first BASBWE political wrangle. Two Manchester Conferences followed, with Sir Vivian Dunn as the first guest conductor and speaker; the early commissions, Philip Wilby's virtuoso **Firestar** (1983, Chester, Music Sales) and Guy Woolfenden's **Gallimaufry** (1983, Ariel), set a cracking pace.

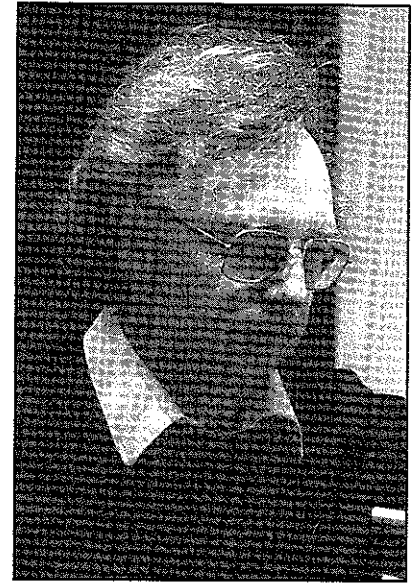
GUY WOOLFENDEN

Guy Woolfenden, sixty this year (1997), is perhaps the most successful commissioned writer yet, bringing his experience of theatre writing to the medium; he is director of music at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford on Avon, with scores for every Shakespeare play to his credit. Two early BASBWE commissions, **Gallimaufry** (1983, Ariel) and **Illyrian Dances** (1986, Ariel) both draw on the Shakespeare canon for strong programmes; the language is a pastiche of late English renaissance, looking back to both 16th century and the early 20th century, but with twists in the metrical structure and a harmonic piquancy which avoid the obvious. More direct are **Deo Gracias** (1985) and **SPQR** (1988); he like Gregson has recorded most of the works on professional disc. The most recent piece is **Curtain Call** (1997), commissioned for performance at the 1997 WASBE Conference.

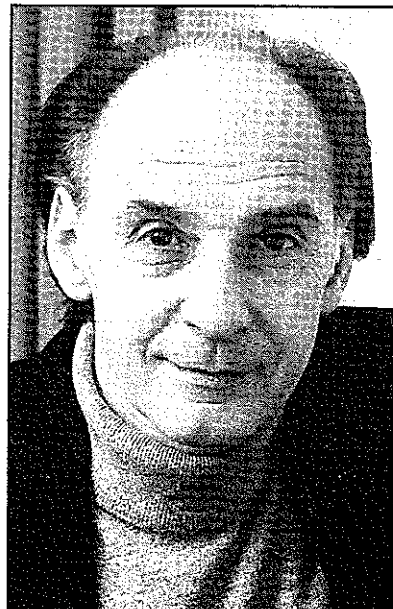
PHILIP WILBY

Philip Wilby has a similar practical background to Woolfenden, but brings a more advanced harmonic language and the occasional use of aleatoric techniques. In **Firestar** (1983, Chester/Music Sales), a virtuoso Scherzo for orchestra, these elements are carefully controlled. In the more ambitious **Symphonia Sacra**, (1986, Chester), two groups of percussion and brass typify the forces of evil, with a fine disregard for the conductor and the wind and horns, who play Messiaen-like chords which eventually overwhelm, finally breaking into folk tunes, before a lone off-stage trumpeter is silenced by the swish of waves from 6 suspended cymbals, and the quiet breathing of the wind and brass.

Easier is his imaginative **Catcher of Shadows** (1989, Chester) for school band, bringing alive the early days of photography, and this again introduces simple aleatoric elements; this is a superb piece for school groups, and has happily been put on sale recently. For the Uster Festival in Switzerland, he wrote **Laudibus in Sanctis** (1993, Chester), specifically for amateur players; like Gregson in his Plantagenet music, in these last three works he makes dramatic use of players moving around the



auditorium, and this is carried further forward with his most recent work, the **Passion for Our Times** (1997, Maecenas), in which players, singers, dancers and audience move through the Cathedral, re-enacting the drama. Premiered on Easter Saturday in Liverpool Cathedral, he describes it as a Miracle Play for Wind Orchestra, choir, narrator and dancers, providing an extraordinary musical and religious experience, combining the narrative of the Passion with elements of the Eucharist. His is an individual voice of great importance in the brass and wind band worlds.



JOSEPH HOROVITZ

The Woolfenden and Wilby premières were followed a year later by Joseph Horowitz with **Bacchus on Blue Ridge** (1983, Molenaar). Horowitz brings to the wind band a keen ear for sonorities, a central European charm and wit, and an elegance of phrase which makes his music sometimes elusive in performance. He is on record as long for a definitive performance of **Wind Harp** (1989, Molenaar), like **Ad Astra** (1992, Smith) a

wonderfully restrained piece, two other works pay homage to the world of the rococo dance, **Fête Galante** (R Smith) and **Dance Suite** (1992, Molenaar). Conductors must bring to all five major works a sensitive feel for balance and restraint. We need a good authorised wind band version of his **Euphonium Concerto** (Novello).

The third BASBWE commission was Arthur Butterworth's evocative tribute to Sibelius, **Tundra** (1984, Vanderbeek). Its restrained tones have led to undeserved neglect, a fate also befalling his **Wintermusic** (1983, Molenaar).

Buxton Orr conducted an early Delegates Orchestra in his very successful pastiche on 18th century popular songs, **John Gay Suite** (1977, Novello/Music Sales), and the Holst **Marching Song** (1930, Novello) was restored to the repertoire, thanks to BASBWE.

DAVID BEDFORD

In 1985, Conference moved to Bristol; one concert included the Hindemith **Symphony in Bb** as well as the Schoenberg **Theme and Variations**, and the BASBWE Commission was David Bedford's **Sea and Sky and Golden Hill** (1985, Novello Music Sales)



Bedford, now sixty, was something of an *enfant terrible*. His scores show a fascination for unusual soloists, piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone; he was writing minimalist scores before it was fashionable, and his love of "the tingle-factor", often caused by sharply contrasted overlapping common chords piled into huge masses, makes his works very dramatic.

Experiences as associate visiting composer at Gordonstoun and as an arranger in the 1970's rock scene have tempered his early training with Luigi Nono and the electronic studios in Milan, and in **Ronde for Isolde** (1985, Novello) and the **Symphony No. 2** (1995, Novello) he has created two fine works for schools to stand alongside the best pieces by Connor, Sparke, Woolfenden and Wilby. **Praeludium** (1990, Novello) makes use of four antiphonal groups drawn from the main band which remains on stage, while the BASBWE Trust commission for the Leeds Festival is a piano concertante work, **Susato Variations** (1993, Novello) with orchestral wind accompaniment. The most successful work internationally is still **Sun Paints Rainbows on the Vast Waves** (1982, Novello) written for the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival.

Thus within five years, a small but significant original repertoire was created largely on the initiative of BASBWE, from composers who were to continue writing for the next decade. Alongside these continued the work of proven writers in the educational field such as Philip Sparke and Stuart Johnson, whose well-crafted works, published by R. Smith and Studio, more than fill a need in repertoire for schools and amateur groups, and some works, such as Sparke's **Orient Express** (1992, Studio) and **Dance Movements** (1995, Studio), are altogether more ambitious

MICHAEL BALL

For the WASBE Conference in Boston in 1987, two British works were commissioned, Richard Rodney Bennett's **Morning Music** (1987 Novello) and Michael Ball's **Omaggio** (1987 Novello), both given their UK première at BASBWE in that Autumn in Manchester in a concert also featuring John Harle as soloist in the Ingolf Dahl **Saxophone Concerto**.

Michael Ball has written three less difficult works aimed at the good school band, **Chaucer's Tunes** (1993, Novello), commissioned for Stockport Grammar School, and **Introduction, Chaconne and Chorale** (1995, Maecenas) commissioned by Hugh Craig and the Surrey County Youth Wind Orchestras, and the **Saxophone Concerto** (1994, Maecenas) commissioned for the Huddersfield BASBWE Conference in 1994. Another outstanding work, unfortunately rarely performed, is his **Pageant** for choir, double reeds and brass (1995, Novello)

Many of the earliest BASBWE-inspired works had been scored with large-scale forces in mind, the Symphonic Wind Band, with its doubling of players in flutes, clarinets and brass. However, in 1952, Frederick Fennell had founded his Eastman Wind Ensemble, in which the concept of one player to a part gave composers control at last over the sonorities for which they were writing, and in general the most significant repertoire of the past forty years has been written with solo players in mind. The Wind Ensemble concept of any ensemble up to about 45 solo players, one to a part, can be adopted for most wind works, and the clarity given even to opaque and dense textures is welcome

RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT

This rich palette of colours has been superbly tapped by Richard Rodney Bennett in the last eight years in his **Morning Music** (1987 Novello), **Four Seasons** (1991, Novello) and **Trumpet Concerto** (1993, Novello). It is in fact derived from an enlarged symphony orchestra wind section; the scoring is generally for Piccolo and two Flutes, two Oboes and Cor Anglais, Eb Clarinet, 3 Bb Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, two Bassoons and Contra Bassoon and a Saxophone quartet of two Altos, Tenor and Baritone with possible doublings on Percy Grainger's beloved Soprano; in the brass, four Horns, three or more Trumpets or Cornets, three Trombones, Euphonium, one or two Tubas, with Timpani, Percussion, Double Bass, Harp and Piano.

