

SPLIT NOTES

Number 17

News from The Harrogate Band

January 1999

Hartlepool Success

The Harrogate Band stormed to an unprecedented five-point win when they were declared winners of the recent Camerons Brass Band Championships in Hartlepool. Despite playing first (traditionally very unlucky!) of the nine bands entered in the Second Section of the Championships, the Band gave a polished and exciting performance of Philip Sparke's 'Land of the Long White Cloud - Atearoa' which adjudicator Ian Craddock described as 'one of the best performances I have heard at this level for many years'. Musical Director David Lancaster was particularly delighted with the result since the band had worked exceptionally hard to prepare for the event, and especially since the last two contest outings had been somewhat disappointing following the withdrawal of **all** the other competitors at Scarborough Contest in May and the 'tornado' which seriously upset the band's performance at the outdoor venue of the Harry Ramsden Competition in June!

In their first year as a newly promoted Second Section band, Harrogate have achieved two first prizes, one second place and one third place from their four contest appearances in 1998.

New Players

In the last few months the Harrogate Band has seen a welcome influx of new faces, all of whom played a crucial part of the Band's success in Hartlepool and are now making a valuable contribution to the band; they are Chris Horton (baritone) from Wetherby Band, Anthea Eggleton (cornet) who moved to work in Harrogate from the South West where she

played with Test Valley Brass, Geoff Taylor (BBb bass) from Ripon and Andrew Whitaker (percussion) who also plays with the Granby High School Band. Robert Illsley (principal cornet) makes a welcome return to the band, having played with the Harlequin Brass Ensemble in recent years.

Bands compete in Harrogate

Harrogate was the focus of the whole brass band movement in late September when the National Brass Band Finals were held in the town for the first - and hopefully not the last - time, attracting bands from all over the UK. This was one occasion when The Harrogate Band didn't play, having missed qualifying by just one point at the Regional Contest in Darlington last March. However the band members weren't idle and were involved both at the bandroom which was used as a rehearsal facility for guest bands, or as part of the team of stewards who contributed to the smooth running of the event at the Conference Centre, escorting bands to and from the stage area and organising the movement of percussion instruments on stage. The event was deemed by the organisers to have been the most successful in recent years, and the sterling effort of the Harrogate team was praised from the stage before the final announcement of prizes was made.

Gerwens Muziekkorps Band visit

Sixty or more members of the Gerwens Muziekkorps Band arrived in Harrogate for their short visit on what must have been the wettest day of the year. A mutual friend,

Betty de Brouwer had introduced the two bands to one another, and the Dutch band had sent a 'reconnaissance party' to England last year to meet The Harrogate Band.

Saturday 24 October: Meet in the coach park in Dragon Road. The rain is heavy at first then becomes torrential, then just worse and worse... Hosts are introduced to guests and all go home for lunch and to dry out! Within a couple of hours we reassemble at the United Reformed Church on West Park to prepare for the evening concert. First problem: the stage is too small to accommodate the battery of percussion instruments that GMK have brought. Second problem: the concert programme is so long that it looks like we might still be playing tomorrow morning. Third problem: who is going to eat the mountain of cakes and sandwiches which are now piled up high backstage? Fourth problem: how will the Dutch visitors react to the headline in the Harrogate Advertiser which describes them as...German!!!? In fact the concert runs smoothly with the Deputy Mayor in attendance amongst an appreciative audience. The Harrogate Band began the programme with a march, some big band music and 'Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral' and are followed by Gerwens' percussion ensemble, who play an interesting programme of contemporary percussion music. After the interval the whole of GMK Band with conductor Mari van Gils squeeze onto the stage and entertain us with a varied selection of light music, including solos for bassoon and vibraphone and a quartet for saxophones. The band sound nervous at times but as the concert progresses they grow in assurance and confidence. They evidently enjoy themselves in this music!

Sunday 25 October: One or two tales of all-night parties begin to emerge as GMK assemble for a day trip to York, to shop and see the sights. In the evening both bands converge on the Ripley Star Club for a Barn Dance and Fish and Chips. Harrogate's David Cole leaps into action when it becomes apparent that there are too many drinkers and

insufficient bar staff. Presentations are made to hosts and visitors, (who cope surprisingly well with the peculiarities of 'stripping the willow' and other complex barn dance manoeuvres), and pledges are made to meet again in Holland in the year 2000.

Monday 26 October: Sight seeing and souvenir hunting in Harrogate preceded a lunchtime concert at the University College of Ripon and York St John. College students and staff and many Harrogate players (who have taken the day off work to support the concert) are particularly impressed by the playing of the percussion ensemble; again the programme is light and cheerful and the GMK Band appear much more relaxed. The audience responds by requesting several 'encores'. There is little time for a few 'goodbyes' before the visitors set off towards Hull and the ferry home.

It has been an exhausting but highly rewarding weekend for all concerned with many memorable musical experiences and new friendships formed. The Harrogate Band send their thanks and best wishes to all the members of GMK and look forward to meeting again in two years time.

Come Follow The Harrogate Band

Copies of this recording are available (£10 CD, £5 cassette) from the Band.

The Brass Class

Since The Harrogate Band received its award for new instruments from the National Lottery earlier this year the older instruments have been put to good use in training new players, and the Band now has boasts flourishing learners group. In addition, the publicity for The Brass Class has attracted two accomplished young players who will hopefully be able to join The Harrogate Band in the not-too-distant future. However, we still seek interested young players and

potential players to boost the strength of the Brass Class and would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to take part. Instruments, tuition and music are all provided free of charge!

Concerts galore!

Since the beginning of September The Harrogate Band has enjoyed one of its busiest spells, a period which has included a number of prestigious concerts and taken the Band to venues which have included Harrogate International Conference Centre, the University College of Ripon and York St John and the National Railway Museum in York and brought the Band into contact with several other groups of musicians, including Granby High School Concert Band and of course the Gerwens Muziekkorps, our guests from Holland. The Band also had the opportunity to work with Malcolm Brownbill, well known in band circles as a conductor and adjudicator, when he directed the Band in a 'Last Night of the Proms' concert for St James' Church Boroughbridge. The Harrogate players very much enjoyed the experience and hope that they will be able to renew their relationship with Malcolm in the future.

College Concert

For the majority of their performances The Harrogate Band try to play 'something for everyone' in the audience by choosing carefully balanced programmes which include music from many different genres and styles. Usually this doesn't include the more serious side of the band repertoire - original compositions which are largely unfamiliar to the concert-going public but which nevertheless contains a significant quantity of wonderful music. Most of the great names of English music - Elgar, Holst, Vaughan Williams, Bliss, Howells and Ireland - along with many more contemporary figures have written for brass band but on the whole these pieces are reserved for contest performances

or neglected altogether. In November the opportunity arose for The Harrogate Band to share a concert at the University College of Ripon and York St John and in this academic environment it seemed appropriate that the audience should be treated to more weighty musical fare.

The College's Concert Band, sixty strong, opened the concert with Philip Sparke's 'Yorkshire Overture', a dazzling display piece which contrasted rhythmic and lyrical styles. Following a surprisingly stern 'Festive Piece' from the pen of American Clare Grundman we heard Malcolm Arnold's march 'Padstow Lifeboat' in which the composer includes the relentless blast of the Trevoise foghorn, accurately portrayed by the euphoniums and horns. This young band performed with commitment and a real sense of understanding for the music, and with every performance appear to grow in confidence and assurance.

The Harrogate Band chose a challenging programme which included short works by two local composers: Wilfred Heaton and Philip Wilby, the latter providing a distinctive march entitled 'Dacre Banks' which featured solo flourishes from the entire cornet section. Andrew Jackson was the immaculate soloist in the 'Rhapsody for Eb Soprano Cornet' by Robert Eaves. Two more substantial pieces completed the programme, the first of which was the premiere of 'Claro Toccata' by David Lancaster. In a more contemporary style than the works around it, this complex and highly charged music bristled with energy in the outer fast sections but also included some sparse and delicate moments in its central part which drew controlled, lyrical playing from David Gall (euphonium) and Jason Harper (flugel). Mention should also be made of the outstanding contribution of Robert Illsley (principal cornet) who stepped in at virtually the last minute to lead the Band through this demanding music. To complete the programme, Philip Sparke's early masterpiece 'The Land of the Long White Cloud' provided a thrilling conclusion to this enterprising concert.

Hopefully this was just the first of a series of annual College Concerts in which serious band repertoire and new music can be explored and enjoyed.

Fire Brigade Concert

Over £4,000 was raised by the Fire Services Benevolent Fund Charity Christmas Concert which took place in the Royal Hall in December to a packed audience. With the Harrogate Band were the City of York Pipe Band, St Aidans Chamber Choir and the Studio 3 Dance Workshop providing an excellent mix of musical and terpsichorean styles. Traditional carols from the choir, band and audience were interspersed with a number of other pieces from the Harrogate Band, traditional bagpipe music and a stirring selection of Irish dancing from *Lord of the Dance*. An arrangement for brass band and bagpipes of *Highland Cathedral* was particularly appreciated by the audience. This was the second year since the revival of this concert, and we look forward to its continued success next year.

Plans for 1999

There are already a good number of concerts and competitions in next year's diary. Perhaps the most unusual engagement has come from the International Association of Music Librarians who have requested that the Band presents a 'lecture recital' to illustrate the history and development of brass band music when they hold their annual convention in North Yorkshire next year. Conductor David Lancaster is currently planning a programme for the evening which condenses one hundred and fifty years of musical history into a programme lasting no more than ninety minutes, and hopes that other organisations might be interested in booking the band to repeat the performance, which will include

demonstrations and multi-media presentations in addition to live music.

Another project for the coming year is to attempt to raise sufficient money to buy new uniforms for the Band which will begin in earnest in January when uniform manufacturer Roger Handley will visit the bandroom to present a display of current designs to Band members.

Future Engagements

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| 21-Mar-99 | National Brass Band Championships Regional Contest – Darlington |
| 10-Apr-99 | Lecture Recital - Int. Assoc. Music Librarians, Ripon College |
| 18-Apr-99 | YHBBA contest – Scarborough |
| 31-Jul-99 | Mowbray House – Kirkby Malzeard |
| 11-Sep-99 | St James Church, Boroughbridge |

Web Site

Visitors now exceed 6,000, and the site continues to attract comment and enquiries from friends, players, and organisations. It is now also widely regarded as a prime source of brass band information on the Internet.

www.harrogate.co.uk/harrogate-band/

Keeping in touch

If you have any news or information you would like to see in future issues, please let the Editor know.

Also if you know of anyone who would like to be added to our mailing list, please give their details to any Band member.



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