

SPLIT NOTES

Number 20

News from The Harrogate Band

July 2000

Northern Champions

The Band has become the Second Section North of England Regional Champions by winning first place in the contest held at Darlington on 19th March. A convincing performance of the test piece, *Sword, Jewel and Mirror* by Philip Harper, persuaded the adjudicator, Gary Cutt, to award Harrogate the honour in the face of stiff competition. Many, in fact, thought it was the best rendition of any test piece over the whole weekend. This piece of music refers to the sacred treasures of Japan and depicts dreams of the three objects between the opening and closing sunset and sunrise movements. The influences of Japanese music are strongly represented in the piece, which includes vocal passages for the band to add to the colour of the music! This win qualifies the band to compete in the National Brass Band Championship Finals, which are being held in the Royal Albert Hall over the weekend of 20-22 October 2000. It will be the Band's sixth appearance at the National Finals since 1985. Rehearsals have now started on the Finals test piece – *Abstractions* by Torstein Aagaard-Nilsen. Anyone who would like to accompany the Band to the Albert Hall should let us know as soon as possible.

Other Contests

A trip to the Buxton Brass Band Festival in April resulted in a disappointing fifth placing. However the band played much more convincingly at the YHBBA Annual contest in Scarborough in May, competing for the first time in the Premier Section. We achieved one first place and two second places against keen competition. The adjudicator, Derek Broadbent, expressed his opinion that we

were very close to taking first place overall. Maybe next year!

Fundraising

We're proud to be performing at the Royal Albert Halls this year, but there's a considerable cost for making that trip. We are aiming to raise at least £4000. A number of further fundraising events are being held, not least of which is the Gala Concert on 30 September. A "grand prix" night and a "Seventies" evening were great successes, and the "interactive concert" idea has also gone down well - but we still have a lot more to do. Some band members are planning a sponsored bungee jump, and others are on a sponsored slim. We are hoping to hold a barn dance in the autumn with other social events later in the year. Any support for our fundraising or further ideas will be very welcome.

E-zine Feature

The Band features in the April 2000 edition of the online brass music magazine *Brass World International* (www.brass-world.com). The article, entitled "The Millennium Brass Band", reports our pictorial presence in the Millennium Dome and describes the success of the Band through interviews with David Lancaster and Gavin Holman.

The Composer Conducts

Composer Philip Wilby visited the Bandroom in April in order to try out a new composition with the Band and iron out any 'gremlins' prior to publication. Entitled *The Seasons*, the music depicts three episodes from the yearly cycle of the elements and it proved

highly popular with the Harrogate players. During the evening Philip also directed the Band through his *Paganini Variations*, a modern classic of the band repertoire. He has subsequently returned to play through the final proofs and to introduce the band to another of his works 'The Trolls Ladder', based on a Norwegian folk melody. The Band was subsequently delighted to learn that *The Seasons* has been chosen as the test piece for the Fourth Section of this year's National Championship Finals and we are pleased to have played a small part in the genesis of this music. More of Phil's music can be heard in the Royal Albert Hall in the near future as his suite *A New World Dancing* is to be featured in this year's Proms concerts on August 12.

Angela's Recital

Horn player Angela Robson who has been a member of the band for the past two years whilst a music student at the College of Ripon and York St John, employed the band to accompany her final recital in May. She chose to play three very demanding solos with band accompaniment: Eric Ball's '*September Fantasy*', Gareth Woods' '*Concertino*' and the more traditional '*Iona*'. The distinguished panel of assessors who visited the bandroom for the occasion included Dr. Franz Niermann, Professor of Music at the University of Vienna. Angela played with style, panache and technical control to impress the examiners who were full of praise for soloist and band alike.

Cathedral Concert

Following the Band's hugely successful concert in Ripon Cathedral last year we received many requests for a repeat performance, so, as a part of the effort to raise money to travel to the Royal Albert Hall in October we will present a second Gala Concert in the Cathedral on 30th September. This time the soloist will be trombone virtuoso Nick Hudson who has played for many of the top brass bands in the country

and now travels all around the world as soloist and teacher.

The concert will start at 7.30 p.m. and tickets will cost £5.00 and £3.00. Last year's concert was virtually a sell-out and so in order to make certain of your seat, book tickets in advance by phone: 01423 522643.

Players

A very warm welcome to Julie Bedford and Daniel Cliffe who have joined the Band recently. Congratulations to Catherine and Steve Morland on the birth of their son, Luke, who has already become a regular attendee at band concerts this summer! Further congratulations to Marion and Ian Bristow who were married earlier this month - the Band was pleased and proud to play at their wedding and reception. And furthermore - congratulations again, this time to Daniel Dickinson (trombone) and Georgina Grant who have announced their engagement. Georgina accompanied the Band on our Netherlands tour and lent a very welcome extra pair of hands to the percussion section. Welcome also to Precious Lowe, Heather Gagen and Claire Davenport who have all recently started playing with the Band.

Netherlands Tour

The Band have recently returned from their week-long "millennium" visit to Holland, as guests of the GMK Band who had visited Harrogate in 1998. During their stay the Band gave several concert performances to enthusiastic audiences, some of whom were hearing the sound of an English brass band for the first time, and the trip was judged to be a great success by band members and audiences alike.

The musical highlight was a concert in Nuenen (in a new, state-of-the-art concert venue built within the ruins of a monastery in the town) which was a joint effort between the Harrogate and GMK Bands, and on this occasion both bands 'pulled out all the stops' to present their most entertaining repertoire.

Principal cornet Robert Illsley gave a blistering performance of Harry James' *Trumpet Concerto* and the encore, Bach's *Toccata in D minor*, resulted in a noisy standing ovation for the band!

Other memorable moments included a visit to a Dutch brewery, an afternoon of ten-pin bowling and a surprisingly enjoyable tour of the local clog museum!

For the second part of the stay the band moved to the very relaxed setting of the Centre Parks complex at Het Meerdaal which served as the base for other concert visits, notably the bandstand in Valkenburg and the lovely town centre setting in Roermond, but also allowed band members to take time off from playing to enjoy the swimming and boating at the park or to take explore the locality on foot or bike, and to sample the local hospitality!

In years past the band has visited Norway, Germany and the Czech Republic as musical ambassadors for the Harrogate District but many well-travelled bandsmen felt that this had been the best tour yet, and the question on everyone's lips as the band journeyed home across the North Sea was "when can we do this again"!

100 Years of the National Championships

2000 is the first year for some time that all sections of the National Championship Finals will be held over the same weekend in the Royal Albert Hall. The return to the old format is in deference to the millennium and also to the fact that it is the 100th Anniversary of the first National Contest in 1900.

This competition was conceived and inaugurated at the Crystal Palace in London by John Henry Iles who was, among other things, proprietor and editor of the *British Bandsman*. Prior to this time the British Open Championships, held at Belle Vue in Manchester, had been the only regular major national competition – and of course was biased towards the northern bands. Sir Arthur Sullivan, then a director of the Crystal Palace,

was quickly convinced of the scope of this growing national pastime particularly after he had conducted several of the best prize-winning bands from the north in a fund-raising concert in the Royal Albert Hall.

Early winners of the first contests were rival bands from Lancashire and Yorkshire – Denton Original, Lee Mount, Black Dyke Mills, Besses o' th' Barn in 1900/1/2/3 respectively. They became the proud possessors, for a year at least, of the fabulous "Thousand Guinea Trophy" a potent symbol of their victory. The prize monies were very good by today's standards and winning bands were loyally feted in their local areas, further popularising the whole movement.

As time went on the National Championships became so popular that seven sections were established. No formal grading structure existed and some bands could decide for themselves which section to enter, and there was no qualifying process in advance. Up to two hundred bands competed on those occasions.

In 1913 a major step forward was taken with the commissioning of an original test piece for the contest. Percy Fletcher's *Labour and Love* became the first of a distinguished line of original music composed for competitions. Contest music prior to this time had been arrangements or transcriptions of other works. During the years between the two World Wars the contest went from strength to strength, only marred a little by the disastrous fire at the Crystal Palace in 1936 which razed it to the ground. The contest moved to the Alexandra Palace in North London, only to be suspended for the period of World War II.

In 1945, John Henry Iles was asked to re-establish the contest, which he did with the help of Vaughan Morris and the sponsorship of the *Daily Herald* newspaper. This time however the competitors were twenty invited Championship section bands only. The event was held in the Royal Albert Hall with a massed bands concert in the evening – setting the basic trend of the competition for the next fifty years. Further initiatives were the establishment of the eight Regions which held Area Qualifying Finals and the four graded

sections – Championship, Second, Third and Fourth. More recently the addition of a new “First Section” brought the Championships to their current format.

Come Follow The Harrogate Band

Copies of this recording are available (£10 CD, £5 cassette) from the Band at most engagements, or contact Gavin Holman – see below.

Bagpipes Galore

The Harrogate Band recently fulfilled one of its more unusual engagements when it took part in the York Millennium Tattoo, a celebration of all things Scottish held at the York racecourse. There, the brave musicians of Harrogate (and the Stape Silver Band from Pickering) shared the stage with nine pipe and drum bands from all around the region, more than one hundred and fifty in all. “From the moment we arrived for our rehearsal at one thirty in the afternoon right up until the moment we left at the end of the performance, the sound of the pipes never stopped” said conductor David Lancaster “and the pipers thought nothing of playing offstage right through our rehearsal and performance!”

But the large and appreciative audience were treated to an astonishing visual and aural spectacle, and all the members of the band are eagerly awaiting the next Millennium Tattoo in the year 3000!

Wilf Heaton

We were all saddened to learn of the death of the Harrogate-based composer Wilfred Heaton earlier this year at the age of 81. Heaton had written extensively for brass, primarily for the bands of the Salvation

Army, but also composed the superlative *Contest Music* which many regard to be amongst the finest pieces in the band repertoire. The Harrogate Band recorded his march *Praise* and presented Wilfred with a CD in 1998 and by way of a small tribute will include his meditation *Just As I Am* in their programme at Ripon Cathedral on 30th September.

Future Engagements

10-Sep-00	Centre Vale Park, Todmorden
15-Sep-00	St Johns Ambulance Conference
17-Sep-00	St Johns Ambulance Conference
30-Sep-00	Gala Concert – Ripon Cathedral
21-Oct-00	National Finals - London
16-Nov-00	Concert with Harrogate Grammar School Band
3-Dec-00	Hartlepool Borough Contest
9-Dec-00	Carol Service – Bilton Church
17-Dec-00	Fire Brigade Charity Concert - Royal Hall, Harrogate
24-Dec-00	Oakdale Golf Club, Harrogate

These are confirmed engagements. For further details of any of these, please contact the Band via the contacts below.

Keeping in touch

For further information see the Band’s award-winning and world-famous website:

www.harrogateband.org

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

For queries about our engagements or to book the band, please contact Sue Morland on 01423-887996, for any

other information contact Gavin Holman .



Editor:

Gavin Holman, 4 Lunedale Avenue, Knaresborough, HG5 0HJ.

Tel: 01423-866454

Email: gavin.holman@BL.UK