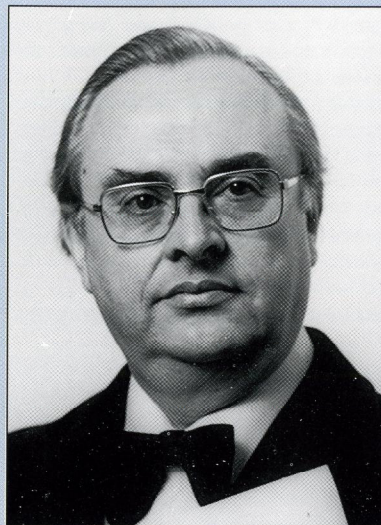
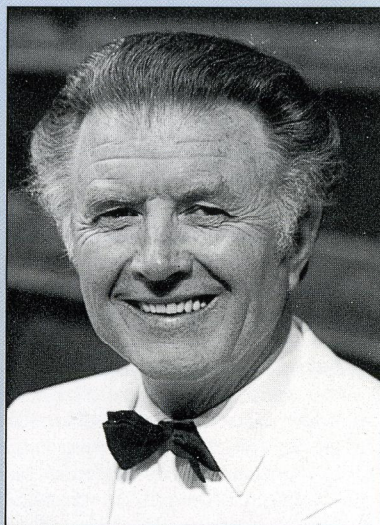


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Major Peter Parkes

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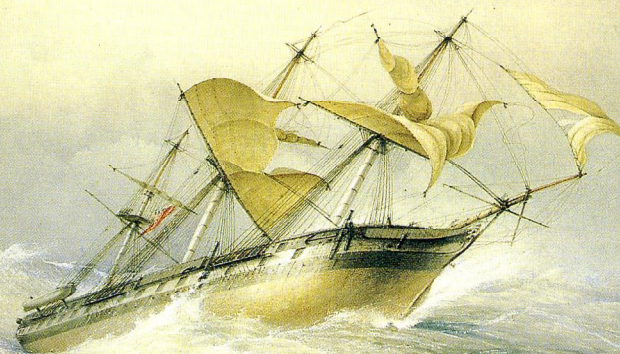
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BRASS

EPIC BRASS

British Music for Brass Band



FLETCHER: An Epic Symphony • ELGAR: Severn Suite
RUBBRA: Variations on 'The Shining River'
VINTER: James Cook – Circumnavigator
BALL: Sinfonietta 'The Wayfarer'

John Foster BLACK DYKE MILLS B&ND
ROY NEWSOME • MAJOR PETER PARKES

EPIC BRASS

British Music for Brass Band

JOHN FOSTER BLACK DYKE MILLS BAND • ROY NEWSOME • MAJOR PETER PARKES*

- 1 **PERCY FLETCHER** (1879-1932)
An Epic Symphony* (14:20)
Recitare · Elegy · Heroic March
- 2 **SIR EDWARD ELGAR** (1857-1934)
Severn Suite Op.87 (17:50)
Introduction · Toccata · Fugue · Minuet
- 3 **EDMUND RUBBRA** (1901-1986)
Variations on 'The Shining River' Op.101 (8:59)
Variation 1 – First Dance
Variation 2 – Cradle Song
Variation 3 – Pageant
Variation 4 – Ostinato
Variation 5 – Second Dance
Variation 6 – Lament: Coda
- 4 **GILBERT VINTER** (1909-1969)
James Cook – Circumnavigator (11:02)
- 5 **ERIC BALL** (1903-1989)
Sinfonietta for Brass Band 'The Wayfarer'* (11:58)
Adventure · Exile · Homeward Journey

ADD TT= 64:48

This disc features five major original brass band compositions played by the **John Foster Black Dyke Mills Band**, probably the most famous brass band in the world. All five pieces were written specifically for brass band contests and, as such, are often described as 'test pieces'. First and foremost, however, they are musical compositions for listening to and enjoying. (Their use for competition purposes should be of secondary importance.)

Percy Fletcher was prominent in the early part of the century as a composer, conductor and arranger. His importance in brass band terms is measured by the fact that he wrote the first original test piece for bands in 1913. *An Epic Symphony* was composed for the Crystal Palace National Championship of 1926. It is divided into three sections – Recitare, Elegy and Heroic March. In the first movement solo passages contrast with music for the full ensemble. The latter is often fiery and rugged in character. The Elegy is highly sensitive and emotionally intense. The final Heroic March opens with an elaborate fanfare which leads into a strong rhythmic martial section. A chorale follows which is developed into the majestic finale.

Sir Edward Elgar's single contribution to the brass band repertoire was *The Severn Suite*. It came at the beginning of a golden period for the brass band repertoire which had started in 1928 with Holst's *A Moorside Suite*. The Severn Suite was written in 1930, towards the end of the composer's life, for the Crystal Palace National Championship of that year. Elgar was helped with the scoring by Henry Geehl, although the extent of the latter's involvement is not clear. The work is in four sections, plus a coda, and in a later transcription for orchestra the composer added titles – 'Worcester Castle', 'Tournament', 'The Cathedral' and 'In the Commandery'. The music represents a celebration of Elgar's native Worcester and its river. The score is dedicated to George Bernard Shaw, who attended the Crystal Palace contest in 1930 and is reported to have stated he loved it more after each hearing. Shaw told Elgar in a letter "This should ensure my immortality long after my plays are dead, damned and forgotten." It has often been said that *The Severn Suite* is the finest piece of music ever written for brass band by arguably Britain's greatest composer.

Edmund Rubbra's *Variations on 'The Shining River'* (scored by Frank Wright) was the test piece for the National Brass Band Championship of 1958. The music owes its origin to a moment of leisure snatched by the composer in Scotland during the war. Walking along the banks of the River Ness one night, with the clear bright summer moon mirroring in the gentle moving stream, Rubbra found himself humming a melody. This melody refused to leave him and he later wrote it down as a piece for piano and gave it the title 'The Shining River'. Although not having the necessary knowledge of brass band scoring Rubbra accepted a commission from the organiser of the National Brass Band Championships when the late Frank Wright agreed to translate the composer's intentions into brass band terms. The composer used 'The Shining River' melody as the basis for the work. As the title suggests the music takes the shape of an original theme followed by a set of variations (six) and a coda.

In the 1960s **Gilbert Vinter** wrote a succession of original pieces for brass band. His music produced different sounds and made effective use of percussion. Vinter's final work, which he never heard performed, was *James Cook – Circumnavigator*. It was commissioned for the New Zealand Brass Band Association by the Port Nicholson Band Trust to commemorate the Cook Bicentenary in 1970. The music depicts the story of the Circumnavigator on his long journey to New Zealand and his feelings upon arrival at the 'promised land.'

Sinfonietta for Brass Band 'The Wayfarer' was the fifth and last **Eric Ball** composition commissioned for the National Brass Band Championship. Written in 1976 it is heard less frequently than the composer's earlier works but is equal in stature. The music is in three sections but these are linked. The first section 'Adventure' commences quietly, but the peaceful atmosphere is soon broken by a forceful allegro, depicting contrasting moods of arrogance, gaiety and uncertainty. The middle 'Exile' is sad, impassioned, but there are also reminders of the peaceful introduction. Finally, there is 'Homeward Journey' which leads to a final restatement of the introduction, but now played in triumphant fashion, and leading to a powerful climax.

The origins of the **John Foster Black Dyke Mills Band** date back to 1837 when the village band, in Queensbury, Yorkshire, began its association with Black Dyke Mills. The mill was owned by John Foster and named after a family farm – hence the name of the band. The band still rehearses above the Black Dyke Shop in the heart of Queensbury and the walls of its rehearsal room, which are decorated with certificates, pennants and trophies, reflect both the contest and other successes achieved in the past 150 plus years. Among its many major contest successes were victories at the National Championships in 1951 and 1976, and the British Open Championship in 1974 and 1976, with three of the pieces included here. The John Foster Black Dyke Mills Band is also renowned for its unique sound, which is clearly evident in their performances of the vintage brass band music on this disc.

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• **A Chandos Production**

- Executive Producer & Sound Engineer: Brian Couzens
- Digital Remastering: Peter Reynolds
- Recorded in Huddersfield Town Hall
- Front Cover: *HMS Galatea in a Storm* by Edward Augustus Inglefield
courtesy of the National Maritime Museum, London
- Sleeve Design: Gary Thorpe
- Art Direction: Ralph Couzens

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