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BRASS



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SHOWCASE FOR BRASS

FEATURING *THREE FIGURES* BY *HERBERT HOWELLS*



BESSE'S O' TH' BARN BAND

Conducted by Roy Newsome

Showcase for Brass

- 1 **THREE FIGURES** (12:46)
Herbert Howells
I Cope's Challenge —
II Iles's Interlude —
III Rimmer's Race
- 2 **IN MEMORIAM R.K.** (13:22)
Elgar Howarth
- 3 **SUMMER SCHERZO** (6:32)
Gordon Langford
- 4 **BELMONT VARIATIONS** (11:33)
Arthur Bliss
- 5 **NORTH WEST PASSAGE** (7:47)
Roy Newsome

DDD TT = 52:02

BESSES O' TH' BARN BAND

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ROY NEWSOME

THREE FIGURES

Herbert Howells

This work, a Tryptych for brass band, is a suite, each movement taking as its title the name of a great figure in the history of the brass band movement.

Cope's Challenge. Samuel Cope (1856-1947) came into the brass band movement at a time when the instrumentation of the band, almost as we know it to-day, was becoming the norm, when contesting was becoming immensely popular, but when few people took the brass band seriously. As founder of the newspaper now known as the *BRITISH BANDSMAN* (British Bandsman and Orchestral Times, 1887), he was one of the pioneers of the brass band movement and one who was largely responsible for the strides the movement was to take both musically and socially.

The opening section is based on two short, assertive motifs depicting the boldness of Cope. An expressive euphonium solo later shows the warmer side of his nature. Tenor horns herald a march-like section (though in 3/4 time!) and the movement closes with references to earlier ideas.

Iles's Interlude. John Henry Iles (1871-1951) was, for almost 50 years, the chief administrator of the brass band movement. A man of great vision, amongst his many innovations was the founding, in 1900, of the National Brass Band Championships — held at the Crystal Palace, then later at the Royal Albert Hall. He also, incidentally, took Besses o' th' Barn Band to France in 1905 and on the first of its famous World Tours between 1906 and 1907.

This very beautiful, nocturne-like movement depicts Iles the dreamer. It opens with an ethereal conversation between euphonium, cornet and soprano. Other instruments take up roles of varying importance. The last word is from a solitary trombone, which links the movement to the finale.

Rimmer's Race. William Rimmer (1862-1936), the third of these famous figures — cornettist, conductor, adjudicator, arranger and composer — was, during the 1890s, cornet soloist with Besses o' th' Barn Band. He later became a formidable character as conductor in the contest scene, conducting every winning performance at Belle Vue and the Crystal Palace between 1905 and 1909. After this phenomenal run he retired from conducting in order to concentrate on arranging and composing

— fields in which he also excelled. Thus, in every sphere of brass banding, Rimmer was an undisputed “figure”.

The final movement, depicting Rimmer, is predictably a tour de force. It tests every member of the band and, combined with the remainder of the work constitutes one of the greatest challenges — both musically and technical — in the brass band repertoire.

Three Figures was composed for the National Championships of 1960, but was revived as the test piece of the British Open Championships, at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester in September 1982, Besses o’ th’ Barn being declared winners for the seventh time in its history.

IN MEMORIAM R.K.

Elgar Howarth

Elgar Howarth, widely known as trumpet player and orchestral conductor, spent much time during his early years in the brass band movement. In the 1970s he emerged as a leading figure in the brass band “renaissance”. As Musical Director of the Grimethorpe Colliery Band he became the champion of new music for brass, being responsible for the commissioning of much new music from leading contemporary writers (a lead followed by Besses o’ th’ Barn Band and its then Professional Conductor, Ifor James). His own personal contribution to brass band literature falls into two categories. On the lighter side, his many pieces under the nom de plume “W. Hogarth Lear” (an anagram on Elgar Howarth) have found their way into countless band programmes.

In Memoriam R.K. was written as a tribute to the famous German orchestral conductor, Rudolf Kempe, who was much admired for his interpretations of late Romantic music especially that of Mahler and Richard Strauss. In this work, Howarth has written deliberately in pastiche style, not only as his tribute to this great conductor, but also in an attempt to fill a gap in the brass band repertoire, hitherto devoid of any music in this style.

Besses o’ th’ Barn Band had the honour of giving the first performance of this work (originally called “Auf Wiedersehen”) in 1977 under the baton of the composer, later giving the first broadcast performance with Ifor James conducting.

SUMMER SCHERZO

Gordon Langford

This, the most recent work on the record, was written in 1981, it was commissioned by the Solent Concert Band with funds made available by Southern Arts.

Though constructed and developed on classical lines, its ideas make for such easy listening that it makes an excellent contrast to the other, perhaps more serious works included on this recording.

BELMONT VARIATIONS

Arthur Bliss

Sir Arthur Bliss was a great friend and admirer of all that is good in the British Brass Band Movement. He appeared as Guest Conductor on several occasions and composed two pieces, both of which have found great favour with players and listeners alike. His *Belmont Variations* was the second of these and was written for the National Brass Band Championships of 1963.

The Theme is followed by six Variations and a Finale. “Belmont” is the name of the town in Massachusetts, U.S.A., where Lady Bliss was born.

NORTH WEST PASSAGE

Roy Newsome

For almost 500 years man tried to establish a commercial route north and west around America. Cabot, Cartier, Drake, Cook and many others failed to find such a route. Not until 1906 was the journey conquered — by Norwegian explorer Ronald Amundsen.

The Rhapsody *North West Passage* does not set out to portray graphically any of the many exciting and often disastrous attempts to establish this unfriendly route. It does attempt to portray just some of the moods of the sea and sea voyages. The work, composed in 1978, found its first contest outlet at the Swiss Brass Band Championships the following year. It was commissioned by the North West Area Brass Band Association with funds provided by North-West Arts, and received its first actual performance at a concert in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester.

© Roy Newsome

Besses o' th' Barn Band is 175 years old this year. There has been a Band in Whitefield (mid-way between Bury and Manchester) since 1818. The most likely origin of the Band's name derives from where the Band met in the early days, an inn taking its name from the village of Besses o' th' Barn, 'delightfully situated on the turnpike road' between Bury and Manchester. That delightful spot is now a busy road junction just off the M62.

The exploits of the Band during the first part of this century became legendary — and following two mammoth World Tours this reputation spread world-wide. The Band puts much emphasis into commissioning and performing new works for brass band, and has made several trips to the continent. In 1993 Besses o' th' Barn visits Norway for one week. Since 1992, the band has been associated with independent brewing company J. W. Lees & Co. of Middleton Junction, Manchester.

Roy Newsome is well known throughout the brass band world as conductor, adjudicator, teacher and composer, and as presenter of BBC Radio Two's popular weekly programme 'Listen to the Band'.

Mr Newsome is Principal Conductor of the Bristol-based Sun Life Band, following long associations with many of the country's leading bands, including Black Dyke, Fairey's and Besses o' th' Barn. He is also Music Director of the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain, looking after the musical interests of many of the brass band stars of tomorrow. Mr Newsome has about fifty published compositions and arrangements and his Concerto for Piano and Brass Band received its first performance at the Royal Albert Hall.

Director of many courses, Roy Newsome was, until recently, Head of Band Studies on the Graduate Diploma and Bachelor of Arts courses in Band Musicianship at Salford College of Technology and in 1989 was the recipient of the college's Honorary Graduate Diploma in Band Musicianship 'in recognition of his outstanding contribution to band music throughout the world'. In 1976 he was awarded the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians 'for services to brass bands'.



Arthur Hamer

Already released:

CONCERTOS FOR BRASS

GREGSON: Concerto for Tuba and Brass Band
 Concerto for French Horn and Brass Band
LANGFORD: Rhapsody for Cornet and Brass Band
Fletcher/James/Watson
Besses o' th' Barn Band/Newsome
 CHAN 4526 CD; BBTD 4526 Cassette

- **A Chandos Digital Recording**
- Recording Producer: Brian Couzens
- Sound Engineer & Editor: Ralph Couzens
- Recorded in Whitworth Hall, Manchester University on 30 January 1983
- Front Cover Photograph of The National Brass Band Open Championship Trophy by Arthur Hamer
- Sleeve Design: Penny Olymbios • Art Direction: Ralph Couzens

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