

SYMPHONY

THE MUSIC OF EDWARD GREGSON VOLUME V

- 1. **Of Distant Memories (Music in an Olden Style)** © Novello & Co. Ltd. 15.17
- 2 - 4. **Trombone Concerto*** © Novello & Co. Ltd.
Trombone Soloist Brett Baker
 - i. *Lento Tranquillo* 6.17
 - ii. *Andante Cantabile* 5.04
 - iii. *Allegro* 4.12
- 5. **Rococo Variations**** © Studio Music 16.45
- 6. **Edward Gregson in conversation with Paul Hindmarsh** 12.06
- 7 - 8. **Symphony in two movements** © Novello & Co. Ltd.
 - i. *Toccata* 5.29
 - ii. *Variations* 13.24

Total CD Playing Time: 78.58

Conductors Drs Nicholas and *Robert Childs

** Taken from Doyen CD *Within Blue Empires*

Executive Producer: Trevor Caffull
 Producers: Nicholas Childs and Richard Scott
 Engineer and Post Production: Richard Scott
 Assistant Engineer: Stephen Scott
 Production Manager: Nicki Tonge
 Project Coordinators: Neil Brownless and Alison Childs

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 Track 6 recorded 29 May 2013

DOY CD319

SYMPHONY

THE MUSIC OF EDWARD GREGSON VOLUME V

OF DISTANT MEMORIES
 TROMBONE CONCERTO - SOLOIST BRETT BAKER
 ROCOCO VARIATIONS
 SYMPHONY IN TWO MOVEMENTS

BLACK DYKE BAND
 CONDUCTORS DRs NICHOLAS AND ROBERT CHILDS



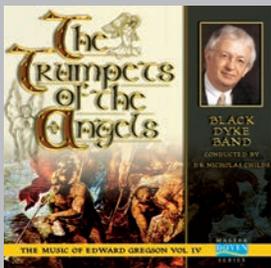
Edward Gregson



Edward Gregson and Dr Nicholas J. Childs

Band Personnel

Principal Cornet	Richard Marshall	Solo Baritone	Katrina Marzella
Assistant Principal Cornet	James McCabe	2nd Baritone	Ben Wright
Solo Cornets	Martin Irwin	Solo Trombone	Brett Baker
	Mark Bowater	Co-Principal Trombone	Paul Woodward
	George Bailey	2nd Trombone	Garry Reed
Soprano Cornet	Paul Duffy	Bass Trombone	Adrian Hirst
Repiano Cornet	Lee Rigg	Solo Eb Tuba	Joseph Cook
2nd Cornets	John O'Brien	Eb Tuba	Philip Goodwin
	David Smith	Solo Bb Tuba	Matthew Routley
3rd Cornets	Keith Britcliffe	Bb Tuba	Matt Wade
	Tom Sutcliffe	Percussion	Andrea Price
Flugel Horn	Zoe Hancock		Rory Farrell
Solo Horn	Sheona White		Kieran Johnson
1st Horn	Jonathan Bates		Matthew Whitfield
2nd Horn	Alison Childs		Adie Smith
Solo Euphonium	Gary Curtin		
2nd Euphonium	Ian Yates	Secretary	Mike Shenton



It is unusual for me to have written two major works for brass band so close to one another; but that is exactly what happened in 2011/12 when I wrote *Of Distant Memories* within six weeks of completing my *Symphony in two movements*. The circumstances surrounding their composition couldn't have been more different – one having been commissioned for two important anniversaries and a contest, the other having been written almost on a whim with a hope of a performance/commission somewhat in the distance. As the saying goes, the rest is history!

And so it was obvious that these two new works would provide the basis of this new CD, with the addition of my *Trombone Concerto*, composed back in 1979, and for such a long time waiting for a version for brass band. It is down to Brett Baker's persistence, and Nicholas Childs' generosity, that this has finally come about. The final work, *Rococo Variations*, is included here as it has not previously appeared on the individual composer series.

Once again, the person who has been involved with this music from the beginning is Nicholas Childs, the instigator of this series of CDs of my complete music for

brass band. As ever, I owe him a huge debt of gratitude. He conducted memorable premières of both new works on this CD, as Robert Childs similarly did with the *Trombone Concerto*. Together with the magnificent Black Dyke Band, they have provided this composer, and I am sure many other composers, with unforgettable, and not so distant, memories.

Finally, when I penned the preface for Volume 4, released in 2004, I referred to it as being the last volume, as at that stage I did not envisage writing any more major works for band – how wrong can one be! That CD also contained some of the finest brass playing that I have experienced - particularly the performance of *The Trumpets of the Angels*. Once again, I am in awe of the extraordinary quality of musicianship and brass playing displayed here. A composer can ask for no more!

Edward Gregson

Of Distant Memories (Music in an Olden Style)

Since completing *Connotations* in 1977, Edward Gregson has tended to space out his important brass band works. *Dances and Arias* came next in 1984 followed by *Of Men and Mountains* in 1990. *Trumpets of the Angels* was composed for the centenary of Foden's Band in 2000 and **Rococo Variations** for the 2008 British Open Championship. However, after completing his **Symphony in two movements**, Gregson immediately embarked on another brass band piece. He was inspired by the imminent centenary, in 2013, of the composition of the first original test-piece for a British band contest, Percy Fletcher's Tone Poem *Labour and Love* (1913). Gregson called his Tone Poem **Of Distant Memories** and it flowed from his pen in six untroubled weeks. The music is what might be described as a piece of 'retro-styling' - a throwback to those pioneering times, as his subtitle **Music in an Olden Style** and introduction make clear: 'The brass band tradition owes much to the composers of that period, for through their music they established a truly homogenous British brass band sound which has spread throughout many parts of the world. That tradition flourishes today and remains important for

today's composers, even if their musical language is far removed from that of their predecessors. **Of Distant Memories** is my own way of repaying that gratitude.'

Throughout his career, Gregson has enjoyed working in tributes or acts of homage into his music. These have taken many forms, from respectful quotations, as in **Rococo Variations**, to an applied stylistic veneer as in *Trumpets of the Angels* (Messaien) or the re-imagining of existing material as in the orchestral work *Dream Song* (which is a commentary on Mahler's *Symphony No. 6*). In **Of Distant Memories** Gregson hides a couple of tiny snippets, one from *Labour and Love* and one from a favourite orchestral work from the 1930s, included to illustrate the contrast between the English modality of works like the slow movement of Holst's *Moorside Suite* and the European mainstream. However, these are incidental to the prime intention, which is to 'summon up a kind of subconscious memory bank of the musical languages, styles and forms' used by these early brass band pioneers.

Of Distant Memories is cast in an expansive ternary form (fast-slow-fast), opening with a generous romantic melody, full of nostalgia for that lost age, but also



Dr Robert Childs

Dr Robert Childs is a leading figure in the world of brass music. For over 30 years he has performed at the highest level giving solo performances in many of

the world's most prestigious venues. He has given master-classes throughout Europe's finest conservatoires and is now recognised as a leading education specialist within his field.

He is Director of Brass Band Studies at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Musical Director of the National Youth Brass Band of Wales and Chairman of the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain for whom he has also performed as tutor, guest soloist and Guest Conductor.

Robert conducted and performed with Black Dyke Band for almost 10 years and before that he played with Grimethorpe Colliery Band. In May 2000, Robert was delighted to accept an invitation to become the Professional Musical Director of the

Cory Band from the Rhondda in South Wales, thus re-uniting him with Wales and associating him with the band he has held in such high esteem since he was a boy. In a short space of time Robert revitalised brass banding in Wales by steering his new band to win the British Open Championship, the National Championship and runner-up at the European Championship in a single season.

In December 2002, Robert was awarded a Doctorate in Musical Arts from the University of Salford. He is also an Associate of the Royal College of Music, a Fellow of the London College of Music, and in 2007 his remarkable achievements were recognised by the Worshipful Company of Musicians when he was awarded the prestigious Iles Medal.

In 2008 Robert was given 'Freedom of the City of London' and later received the prestigious John Edwards Memorial Award by the Welsh Music Guild for outstanding contribution to Welsh Music.

In 2013 Robert was very pleased to be invited to work with his brother Nicholas and Black Dyke Band.



Dr Nicholas Childs

Dr Nicholas Childs has achieved the highest international reputation as a performer, teacher/clinician, conductor, interpreter and advocate of new music, and producer of pacesetting recordings. Initial success came as a euphonium soloist and partner with his talented brother, Dr Robert Childs, who together have literally toured the world as The Childs Brothers, performing in many of the world's most famous concert halls with the most prestigious bands and orchestras.

Taking up the baton as a conductor, Nicholas has had phenomenal success with many bands, including highly acclaimed national championship successes. His current tenure as Principal Conductor and Director of Music of the famous Black Dyke Band has been marked not only with continued contest success, but with a series of innovative concerts and world premières of major works for brass band with a variety of soloists and musical combinations.

He serves as Senior Tutor in Brass Band Studies at the Royal Northern College of

Music, where he has taught for over 14 years. Further honours have come with his appointment as Associate Conductor of the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain, and as Trustee of the Brass Band Heritage Trust.

With his roots in the British brass band tradition, having first been trained in the Tredegar (Wales) Youth Band, Nicholas continues to give important emphasis to the development of the brass band movement. This comes through his commitment to the training of outstanding young musicians both at the collegiate level and within the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain. He has reached the pinnacle of success with four National Championships of Great Britain, with Black Dyke in 2001, 2004, 2008 and 2009.

In April 2005 as Music Director of Black Dyke he guided them to first place at the European Championship in Holland, and again in Holland in May 2012, and in September 2005 he was victorious with Black Dyke, winning the British Open Championship and again in 2006. He won his first English National Championship with Black Dyke in June 2009 and won again in June 2011, 2012 and 2013.

sounding rather like the youthful Gregson from his Salvation Army days. Much of the fast music does not sound like Gregson at all, youthful or more experienced. The rhetorical gestures, dramatic interruptions from trombones, the trills and sequences of diminished sevenths belong to the world of Fletcher, Henry Geehl and Cyril Jenkins. There are other moments that sound like Fletcher's *Epic Symphony* – but not quite.

In other respects, Gregson's approach is more of our time. At key points in the modal slow section and in the syncopated surge towards the resplendent close, Gregson dispenses with the stylistic mask. As befits a work designed as a test-piece for brass bands of the 21st century, the writing is highly virtuosic, particularly for the soloists. Securing a commission from Black Dyke Band and The Worshipful Company of Musicians facilitated its world première at the 2013 RNCM Festival of Brass in Manchester, after which it was selected as the test-piece for the National Championship Section Finals at the Royal Albert Hall in October 2013. *Of Distant Memories* is dedicated to Nicholas and Robert Childs.

Trombone Concerto

In 1979, Gregson announced his return to writing for orchestra after a ten year gap with this Concerto, which was commissioned by the Berkshire Education Service for Michael Hext, who had won the inaugural BBC Young Musician of the Year in 1978. Over the following decades, Gregson received a number of requests for a brass band version, but steadfastly refused until invited by Brett Baker in 2012. The problem lay with the opening of the Concerto – two widely spaced string chords, bi-tonally configured on E and E flat, spread over three and a half octaves and pointed by vibraphone colour. 'The brass band simply cannot cover that range,' the composer explained in interview, 'and when you have string band playing pianissimo, the trombone entry has a magical quality about it. When Brett asked me yet again for this CD, and he'd been asking me for three or four years, I considered once again and thought there may be a way round the problem through a re-organisation of the harmony just before the trombone enters with everyone muted. I think it works.'

Apart from the re-scoring, Gregson has resisted the temptation to tinker with the substance of the music, which is a compact three movements-in-one design. The core

material is based on fourths, both perfect and its disruptive augmented neighbour, the tritone. A fierce climax dissolves into a slow, intense central section, where the beautiful lyrical sound of the trombone is supported by layered chords over an extended pedal note (E). At the mid-point, the tonality falls dramatically to B flat, an augmented fourth away (and a clever piece of long-term musical thinking). Out of this emerges an extended cadenza, which develops into a commentary on earlier material. The final section is a jaunty scherzo that dances along before coming to an abrupt stop, where those problematic opening bars are recalled. A final flourish brings the Concerto to a resolute close on B flat, the home key to which soloist and band have been working towards.

Rococo Variations

After completing his *Saxophone Concerto* (2006), Gregson was left with a 'slab of material' which he knew would not fit into that work but which with a 'bit of tweaking had the makings of a brass band piece'. An opportunity arose the following year through a commission from the British Open Brass Band Championship and the Norwegian Band Federation. The result was ***Rococo Variations***, completed early in 2008. Gregson had composed variations for brass

band before, but the idea of using a quasi-baroque theme as the basis for a series of symphonic variations was something new: 'The theme I used for *Connotations* was quite angular, built out of fourths, and it conditioned the way the piece sounded. I have taken the rococo theme on a much wider stylistic journey, using it as a quarry for motifs and ideas. I tried to create contrasting musical worlds for each movement, while maintaining, in an organic way, some contact with the theme.'

The title refers to the stately style of the theme, which is in sarabande rhythm. While its six variation movements take on surface characteristics of a baroque dance suite, added to each is a tribute to a much admired composer closely associated with brass band music. Unlike the stylistic allusions embedded in the substance ***Of Distant Memories***, these are direct quotations included as gestures of respect and admiration rather than organic ingredients.

The first variation *Toccata*, with its clipped rhythms and scurrying canonic scales, was the appropriate place to work in the little four note musical motto which conductor and composer Elgar Howarth used in a number of his band works, beginning



“ACT JUSTLY AND FEAR NOTHING”

www.blackdykeband.co.uk

Black Dyke Band

In 1816 Peter Wharton founded a brass and reed band in the Yorkshire village of Queenshead – later to become Queensbury. It has been said on many occasions that Black Dyke was formed from it; however this is not strictly true, as Peter Wharton's band went out of existence through loss of members. In 1837 a new band was formed named 'Queenshead Band', which may well have contained players from the former band. It is reported that this Band reached its zenith from 1838 to 1843, at which time it consisted of 18 musicians.

On 15 September 2005 the band was proud to celebrate its 150th anniversary. Two of the many highlights were the publication of *150 Golden Years*, a book by Dr Roy Newsome, in words and photographs, describing the history and the progress of Black Dyke Band from 1855 to 2005. Also a unique 'triple CD' was released covering the recorded musical history of the band from the early days of 1903 to the present day.

In September 2006 at Symphony Hall Birmingham Black Dyke Band was declared British Open Champion for the second year running. Although not entering the contest

every year, this was the 29th time the band was declared British Open Champion. The band has also been National Champions of Great Britain on 22 occasions, most recently in October 2009. In 2009, and again in 2011, 2012 and June 2013, they became Champion Band at the English National Championships. In 2012 the band became European Champion Band for the 12th time.

Black Dyke Band is the most recorded band in the world with over 350 recordings to its name and the number growing every year. In August 2007 the Band was invited to take part in the BBC Promenade Concerts, at the Royal Albert Hall, London.

In 2006 as part of its initiative to sponsor the work of young people, Black Dyke Band, under the guidance of Dr Nicholas Childs assisted by qualified members, formed the Yorkshire Youth Brass Band. The purpose is to inspire and motivate young people aged 11 to 21 years to achieve their full potential as musicians, composers and citizens.

The band logo of the stag's head and Latin quotation are taken from the armorial bearings granted in 1857 to John Foster, founder of the band.

with *Mosaic* (1957). The elegant *Siciliana* (2) incorporates as a countersubject a melody from an early suite for brass band, *Lord of the Sea* (1957), by the distinguished composer for the Salvation Army, Ray Steadman-Allen. *Lord of the Sea* was his first really important work, and was also composed for a BBC competition. The *Waltz* (3) is a tongue-in-cheek gesture of homage to the favourite brass band composer of last century, Eric Ball, who used the air *varie form* to great effect in early works like *The Old Wells* or *Sound out the Proclamation* and in the second movement of *Tournament for Brass*. The mood darkens towards the middle, but the tension is soon dissipated by the return of the genial, flowing material: 'Ending with a little reference on the solo horn to the beginning of Eric's tone poem *Journey into Freedom* seemed the right thing to do.'

The *Moto Perpetuo* (4) is fast and furious. As it moves towards its final climax, Gregson weaves in the main theme from a much admired brass band work, *Cloudcatcher Fells* (1984) by his friend and fellow composer John McCabe. The *Lament* (5) is a Chaconne, beloved of composers like Bach and Purcell. It is the emotional heart of **Rococo Variations**, where the theme's intervals

become distorted in layers of intricate counterpoint above the repeating bass line. In the middle section a contrasting melody is passed round various soloists against a mysterious background of tremolo chord clusters, and out of that emerges the elusive end of the long cornet solo which lies at the heart of Wilfred Heaton's *Contest Music*.

The *Fugal Scherzo* (6) mirrors the idea of a contrapuntal gigue that ends so many of Bach's suites. As the gigue-fugato unfolds, Gregson introduces some sinister elements, like the 12 tone counter-subject in long notes, which gives the music an uneasy quality. He also ingeniously combines a fragment of his own theme with further references to McCabe, Howarth, Heaton and the sixth dedicatee, Philip Wilby (from *The New Jerusalem*), plus a hint of the fanfare from Monteverdi's opera *Orfeo*, all in the space of eight bars – a moment of technical brilliance. A further quotation, from the ancient Spanish dance tune *La Folia* (Madness!), leads to the final peroration. **Rococo Variations** is dedicated to the composer's brother, Bramwell Gregson.

Symphony in two movements

Three years after the successful launch of **Rococo Variations** at the British Open

Brass Band Championships in Birmingham, Gregson received a joint commission from the National Youth Brass Bands of Great Britain and Wales for a major work that would celebrate their respective 60th and 30th anniversaries. In both concept and execution, ***Symphony in two movements*** is by some margin Gregson's most complete abstract work for the medium. While the title might suggest connections with Stravinsky (whose *Symphony in Three Movements* is a Gregson favourite) or even Prokofiev (*Symphony No. 2*), the idea of pairing a concise sonata form first movement with an expansive theme and four variations (drawing together into a single span the contrasting elements of a traditionally laid out symphony) came from Beethoven's last *Piano Sonata in C minor* (Op. 111), although that is where the comparisons end. Gregson's thematic quarry is an eleven note row, which he exploits to the full in both movements. The row is announced as a bold opening gesture. It is built out of a number of sets of pitches, which he develops using some procedures typical of 12 tone procedures, such as mirror canons, inversions and retrogrades, while remaining firmly within a tonal frame. A rising arpeggio motif (sounding like a fragment left over from the Mahlerian *Dream Song*) provides initial contrast before the more expansive phrases of

the lyrical second are heard. None of Gregson's earlier brass band scores exhibit this level of audible thematic concentration.

The theme of the second movement shares a triple time pulse with the opening of both ***Rococo Variations*** and ***Of Distant Memories***, but their harmonic underpinning and style could not be more different. In the ***Symphony*** the bi-tonal harmonic layering of the theme is a typical Gregson fingerprint. *Variation 1* is a mercurial scherzo, with just a hint of *Connotations* in the rhythmic cross-questioning. *Variation 2* is assertive and menacing, with strident, angular themes and stabbing chords that bring *Dances and Arias* to mind. After a searing climax, *Variation 3* transforms the same material into an evocative slow movement, during which the band's soloists are seamlessly and beautifully dovetailed.

As the extended final *Variation 4* builds in momentum, the eleven note asserts itself once again, but set against the *Toccata* second subject in a way which recapitulates the whole work. ***Symphony in two movements*** is dedicated to Paul Hindmarsh.

Paul Hindmarsh



Edward Gregson

Edward Gregson (born 1945) is a composer of international standing, whose music has been performed, broadcast, and commercially recorded worldwide. He studied composition and piano at the Royal Academy of Music from 1963-1967, winning five prizes for composition. Since then he has worked solely to commission and has written orchestral, chamber, instrumental and choral music, as well as music for theatre, film and television. Of particular significance in his orchestral output is the series of ten concertos, commenced in 1970 and still ongoing. His most recent work for orchestra, *Dream Song*, was commissioned by BBC Radio 3 for the 2010 *Mahler in Manchester Festival* and premièred by the BBC Philharmonic under Gianandrea Noseda to great critical acclaim.

In 1988 he was nominated for an Ivor Novello Award for his title music to BBC television's *Young Musician of the Year*, and was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company to write the music for a major cycle of the Shakespeare history plays. In 2002 the Chandos label released the first of a

series of CDs devoted to his orchestral music (including the clarinet and violin concertos). Two further volumes have included the concertos for piano, saxophone, trumpet, trombone and cello, whilst a fourth, with the BBC Philharmonic under Bramwell Tovey, will be released in 2014.

Gregson is also internationally renowned for his contribution to the wind and brass repertoire. His most important works for brass include his early *Brass Quintet* (1967), *Connotations* (1977), *Equale Dances* for brass quintet (1983), *Dances and Arias* (1984), *Of Men and Mountains* (1991), and latterly, *Rococo Variations* (2008), *Symphony in two movements* (2012) and *Of Distant Memories* (2013), all recorded on the Doyen label.

Edward Gregson retired from an academic career in music in 2008, latterly as Principal of the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, a post he held for 12 years. He is an Emeritus Professor and a Companion of the RNCM, and has also been awarded many honorary Doctorates and Fellowships from English universities and conservatoires. He still serves on a number of important boards relating to music education and the music profession.