



REGIONALS
2020

A TALE AS YET UNTOLD PHILIP SPARKE



A Tale as yet Untold was specially commissioned by Cory Band for the European Brass Band Championships in Linz, Austria, 2010, and their winning performance gave them a hat-trick of victories at the competition.

The commission brought the composer full circle and completes a long relationship with this remarkable band from Wales, who commissioned one of the composer's first major works for band, *The Year of the Dragon*, to celebrate their centenary in 1984.

The theme of the work, which is set in three movements, is one that recurs again and again throughout the music of Philip Sparke – specifically a series of works for concert band: the *Trombone Concerto*, *Deserts*, *When the Spirit Soars* and *Spirit of the Sequoia* – which take as their subject the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity and how the beauty of music can help in this respect.

The “tale” of the title is an autobiographical one which the composer feels need not be divulged to explain the programme of the music, which deals with a much more general human condition. The first movement opens with a nervous repetitive figure in the cornets, under which an impassioned theme develops. This is cut short by a closely related faster section, which comprises two alternating moods; an aggressive “toccata” interspersed by a yearning 6/8 melody. The second movement is the heart of the work and symbolizes the ability of the human soul to overcome the “Sturm und Drang” of the first movement with an indomitable sense of optimism. The third movement tries to negate this feeling of peace but ends triumphantly in a salute to the power of the human spirit.

Philip Sparke

LEGACY FOR BRASS BAND TOM DAVOREN



The idea for *Legacy for Brass Band* was originally conceived in 2018 as a short work celebrating the life and achievements of Welsh politician Aneurin Bevan and the 70th Anniversary of the British National Health Service. The work was commissioned by Tredegar Town Band, supported by funding from Ty Cerdd, and premiered in the Speaker's Room of the Houses of Parliament featuring their soprano cornet soloist, Ian Roberts. This test piece version, created for the 2020 Regional Brass Band Championships of Great Britain, was born from my desire to tell a more complete version of Bevan's story.

In three continuous sections *Legacy for Brass Band* is not only symbolic of Bevan's aspirational politics and character, but also of the experience

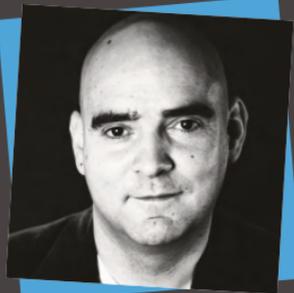
of anyone whose life has been impacted by our NHS; something of which I can speak personally. The primary goal of the piece is to present bands with music that offers them the opportunity to create a performance with feeling as its driver. Whilst a sound foundation in technique is obviously required to achieve this convincingly, creating a complete emotional picture should be the primary concern of bands and conductors.

The opening represents a need to be filled. Whilst the pace, rhythmic content, colour and dynamic layout of the music seeks to create an atmosphere of foreboding, the choice of interval, style and phrase length of the melody is designed to offer a constant sense of underlying assurance. The central section is very much the core of the piece, representing the balance of hope and adversity as experienced by anyone who has been touched directly by our NHS. Again, it is a pacing of tension through dynamic, orchestration and in intensity of execution that seeks to create this feeling. The final section is a march to progress, representing Bevan's relentless championing of social justice. Hopefully fittingly, the music here is generated entirely from material born in the earlier sections of the piece.

“No society can legitimately call itself civilised if a sick person is denied medical aid because of lack of means.” - Aneurin Bevan, 1952

Tom Davoren

THE GOLDEN SABRE KIT TURNBULL



Denis Davydov (1784-1839) was awarded a Golden Sabre (inscribed "For Courage") following the Battle of Friedland, which took place between French and Russian armies on 14 June 1807. The Imperial Order of The Golden Sabre (or Saber) was established in 1720 by Peter the Great and became one of Russia's highest military awards. Davydov was known throughout Russia, not only as a famous partisan during the Napoleonic wars, but as a poet whose works were admired by many writers of the day, including his younger friend, Alexander Pushkin, who wrote of Davydov: "Hussar-poet, you've sung of bivouacs, of the licence of devil-may-care carousals, of the fearful charm of battle and of the curls of your moustache."

By 1812, Davydov had achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and shortly before the Battle of Borodino, persuaded his commanding officer, General Kutuzov, to let him lead a small group of cavalry and Cossacks to raid the French supply and communication lines. His actions in this new form of warfare undoubtedly took their toll on the French army and led to the formation of further partisan units to harass the enemy (a tactic that would serve the Russians well in the wars to come).

1812 was a hugely important year in Russian history. The Patriotic War of 1812 (Napoleon's invasion of Russia and subsequent retreat) led to a resurgence of Russian national pride. The war served as inspiration for vast numbers of writers, poets, composers and musicians, and their works came to define Russian Romanticism. Hussar songs and poetry were hugely popular in Russia throughout the 19th century, depicting the lives and heroism of Hussar cavalry. They addressed themes such as true friendship, reckless valour on the battlefield, carousing and revels around the 'bivouac fires', and Davydov was among the most famous of the so-called Hussar-poets. When writing *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy based his character, Denisov (the dashing hussar who falls in love with Natasha Rostov) on the memoirs of Denis Davydov, ensuring his lasting fame beyond death.

Although written as a single, continuous work, **The Golden Sabre** is a series of musical portraits shaped around Denis Davydov's military actions during 1812, alongside the ideals and themes that defined Hussar poetry.

At dawn - Reveille – As the sun rises, Cavalry Trumpeters sound the call...

La Jeune Fille – This, the title of an old Ukrainian folksong, used here, that may well have been known to many of the Cossacks attached to Davydov's partisan brigade.

Mother Russia – Russia, with its vast landscapes and savage winters presented a formidable challenge to any invading army, and the Russian people were exhorted to defend the 'Motherland'.

The Winds of War - 1812 – It is June 1812. Napoleon's Grande Armée crosses the Neman River and begins the invasion of Russia...

The Smoking Bivouac Fires – The Russian camp is alive with activity as the soldiers and cavalymen prepare for the battle to come...

Revels and Dances – Aside from battlefield heroics, Hussar poetry depicts the cavalymen's love of life and comradeship, celebrated with wild evenings 'carousing' around the campfires.

The Gathering Storm – At the camp of Prince Pyotr Bagration's 2nd Army, Davydov and his unit await the arrival of the French...

A drink - To true friendship! – A 'Last Hurrah' before battle ensues...

Exodus - Retreat from Smolensk – Following defeat at Smolensk in August 1812, the Russian Army was forced to withdraw eastwards. Despite the romantic idea of the life of a cavalymen, much of the time their horses were used as transport for the army. On the retreat from Smolensk, the horses of the Cuirassiers and Dragoons (Heavy Cavalry) were used to pull the guns of the remaining Russian artillery regiments.

A Waiting Game – After the defeat at Smolensk the Russian Imperial Army withdrew to defensive positions and awaited the arrival of Napoleon's forces...

One Last Dance! – As the French draw near, Davydov and his band of partisans and Cossacks display the cavalymen's devil-may-care attitude to life as they dance, sing and drink...

To Borodino - Death or Glory! – On 7 September 1812, the French Army located the Russian positions just outside the town of Borodino. French, German and Polish cavalry charged the Russian positions, which was countered by the full force of Russian Cuirassiers, Dragoons, Hussars, Lancers and Cossacks. This is their charge into battle – their 'gallant attack'...

The battle that followed was one of the bloodiest of the Napoleonic campaigns, and ended in victory for Napoleon (Russian casualties were 43,000 out of an army of 120,000). Despite this, the losses inflicted on the Grande Armée were so great that they were unable to recover sufficiently, and despite capturing Moscow a week later, Napoleon was forced to start his retreat by mid-October. Davydov's career continued, as soldier, poet and writer. He died in 1839 and was buried at Novodevichy Convent, in Moscow.

"He sang Mars and Temira and he hung his martial lyre twixt his true sword and his saddle" – Alexander Pushkin

Kit Turnbull

ENDURANCE ANDREW BAKER



and they were encouraged to continue. On 26 October 1914 they left Grytviken in South Georgia for the Antarctic continent, hoping to find the pack ice shrinking in the Antarctic spring. Two days later, however, they encountered unseasonable ice, which slowed their progress considerably. On 15 January 1915, when *Endurance* was only 200 miles from her intended landfall at Vahsel Bay, the ship became beset by ice, which had been compressed against the land to the south by gale force winds. Trapped in the ice of the Weddell Sea, the ship spent the Antarctic winter driven by the weather further from her intended destination until, on 21 November 1915, *Endurance* broke up forcing the crew to abandon ship and set up camp on the ice at a site they named "Patience Camp".

The crew spent several weeks on the ice. As the southern spring started to reduce the extent of the ice shelf, they took to their three lifeboats, sailing across the open ocean to reach the desolate and uninhabited Elephant Island. There they used two of the boats to build a makeshift shelter while Shackleton and five others took the largest boat, an open lifeboat named 'James Caird' and sailed it for 800 terrifyingly dangerous miles across the vast and lonely Southern Atlantic to South Georgia – a journey now widely regarded as one of the greatest and most heroic small-boat journeys ever undertaken. After landing on the wrong side of the island and having to climb over a mountain range in the dark with no map, Shackleton and his companions finally stumbled back into the Grytviken whaling station on 19 May 1916.

After resting very briefly to recover his strength, Shackleton then began a relentless campaign to beg or borrow a ship to rescue the rest of his crew from Elephant Island. Whaling ships were not

strong enough to enter polar ice, but on 30 August 1916, over two years after their departure from Plymouth, Shackleton finally returned to Elephant Island aboard a steam tug borrowed from the Chilean government. Although some were in poor health, every member of *Endurance*'s crew was rescued and returned home alive.

In early 2019 an expedition to search for the wreckage of the *Endurance* was forced to abandon their quest after the same bad weather and pack ice that doomed Shackleton's ship caused the loss of the remote mini submarine being used to search the sea bed.

Andrew Baker

NEVERLAND CHRISTOPHER BOND



"On the magic shores of Neverland, children at play are forever beaching their coracles. We too have been there; we can still hear the sound of the surf,

though we shall land no more." "All children, except one, grow up" wrote J.M. Barrie about Peter Pan in 1911; the first line and an expression of beautiful melancholy and fantasy, coming to represent one of the best-loved children's stories of the 20th century. *Peter & Wendy*, as the book was first released, has subsequently been transformed into adaptations for film and stage, with subsequent books based on this iconic tale.

In writing this new work for brass band, the composer has taken three of the main themes from J. M. Barrie's book, and used these themes to create new musical material, forming a work in three contrasting sections.

I. Journey to Neverland

The opening of the work, mysterious in its style, reflects the opening chapters of the story – a leafy London street, still in the dead of night – with the music transforming quickly as it builds in texture and momentum – a journey to Neverland through the night sky; second star to the right and straight on 'til morning. "Then Peter knew that there was not a moment to lose. 'Come,' he cried imperiously, and soared out at once into the night, followed by John and Michael and Wendy. Mr & Mrs Darling and Nana rushed into the nursery too late. The birds were flown."

II. The Windows that Closed

The central section of the work takes its inspiration from the sense of longing throughout the book, mainly by Peter Pan, the Darling children and the lost boys. Distant memories of life before Neverland, memories of the lost boys' mothers, and regret at what the children have missed.

Men wanted for hazardous journey,
Small wages, bitter cold,
Long months of complete darkness,
Constant danger, safe return doubtful,
Honour and recognition in case of success.

Ernest Shackleton, 4 Burlington Street

Endurance was written for the third section of the Regional Championships of Great Britain in 2020 and takes its title from the ship used by Sir Ernest Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition in 1914-15. After many months of fundraising (and reputedly running the above advert in *The Times*) the *Endurance* set sail from Plymouth on 6 August 1914. Whilst at sea, news of the outbreak of war led Shackleton to put his ship and crew at the disposal of the Admiralty, but their services were not required

Peter says "Long ago, I thought like you that my mother would always keep the window open for me; so I stayed away for moons and moons and moons, and then flew back; but the window was barred, for mother had forgotten all about me, and there was another little boy sleeping in my bed."

III. Aboard the Pirate Ship

The final section of the work takes its inspiration from the pirate ship and Peter Pan's ultimate battle with its infamous Captain Hook. "In person, he was cadaverous and blackavized, and his hair was dressed in long curls, which at a distance looked like black candles, and gave a singularly threatening expression to his handsome countenance. His eyes were the blue of the forget-me-not, and of a profound melancholy, save when he was plunging his hook into you, at which time two red spots appeared in them and lit them up horribly."

Christopher Bond

Track 1 taken from
Highlights from the European Brass Band Championships 2010 (DOY CD281)

Track 2, 3 and 5 recorded on 18 July,
17 June and 10 July 2019 respectively
Producer: Adam Goldsmith
Post-Production: World of Sound

Track 4 recorded on 11 July 2019
Producer: Melissa Dee
Post-Production: World of Sound

Track 1 © 2010 SP&S
Track 2-5 © 2019 SP&S

REGIONALS 2020

Championship Section

1. **A TALE AS YET UNTOLD** PHILIP SPARKE
© *Anglo Music*
Cory Band conducted by Dr Robert Childs

First Section

2. **LEGACY FOR BRASS BAND** TOM DAVOREN
© *Tom Davoren Music*
Brighouse & Rastrick Band
conducted by David Thornton

Second Section

3. **THE GOLDEN SABRE** KIT TURNBULL
Tales of the Hussar-poet, Denis Davydov
© *Kit Turnbull Publishing*
The GUS Band conducted by Chris Jeans

Third Section

4. **ENDURANCE** ANDREW BAKER
Narrative Variations for Brass Band
© *Morthanveld Publishing Ltd.*
Foden's Band conducted by Michael Fowles

Fourth Section

5. **NEVERLAND** CHRISTOPHER BOND
© *Christopher Bond Music*
Cory Band conducted by Philip Harper

Executive Producer: Trevor Caffull
Compilation and Mastering: World of Sound
Production Manager: Nicki Tonge
Project Coordinator: Mari Malm Morkved
Programme Notes: Michael Fowles
Artwork and Design: Mango Design