




in partnership with leeds metropolitan university 

Brass Festival Heritage Symposium

Partnering the Past and Fostering the Future

Black Dyke Band
Festival Director Dr Nicholas J. Childs
Artistic Directors
Professors Philip Wilby and Peter Graham



'Supported by Heritage Lottery Fund'

Black Dyke Brass Festival Heritage Symposium

'Partnering the Past and Fostering the Future'



Legend in the arms of James Shepherd's Grandson, truly Partnering the Past and Fostering the Future!



Brass Band Archive



YYBB members testing out Vintage Instruments at the Exhibition in Leeds Town Hall.

I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in ensuring such a successful 2009 Festival. In particular the partnership and support from Leeds Metropolitan University, the Heritage Lottery, Walter Ainscough and the Brass Band Archive, Charley Brighton and his wonderful collection of Vintage Instruments, Professors Phillip Wilby and Peter Graham, David Thornton, Joseph Cook, Brett Baker, the wonderful musicians of the Black Dyke Band, and our Festival Administrator, Alison Childs.

*Professor Nicholas Childs
Festival Director*

The 2009 Black Dyke Brass Festival marked a special year in the band's long and distinguished history. The festival passed on some of its hard-won core values to future generations, to place new music alongside established repertoire, and to counterpoint some stars of the future with legends of the past and present. This year's festival marked the start of the band's five-year commissioning policy, which will culminate in 2014 with the premiere of a substantial new score by the leading international composer, James MacMillan.

The festival started with an on-line lecture-recital as the band and its director gave an illustrated overview of their 154-year history. Beginning with rare music taken from John Foster's 1855 octet books, it also included music from the Golden Period, featuring Elgar, Holst and Ireland. Professor Childs illustrated lecture will be available as a worldwide educational resource on the Black Dyke website during and after the weekend.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8L_T4mweHtQ

One of the over-riding ambitions at Queensbury is to involve and inspire young performers to aim at the highest level. Accordingly, there was a young composer's workshop led by Professor Wilby and Paul Hamlyn award winner, Emily Howard, and a combined performance featuring Black Dyke in concert with the 60 young musicians of the Yorkshire Youth Brass Band. The Gala Concert on Saturday evening can be viewed on **Gala Concert: Part One**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lNaYGaeRFQ>

Gala Concert: Part Two

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LECAbPrQe0o>

The British Trombone Society accepted an invitation to participate, we also held a Lower Brass Spotlight, when over 100 local players joined a sequence of daytime workshops, and we were pleased that new music, included scores by Professors Peter Graham, Phillip Wilby, and Phillip Harper featured prominently.

The Black Dyke Band stands at the centre of a worldwide culture, ranging from Australasia to Scandinavia and North America. Thanks to its wide legacy of recording and an increasing amount of internet performances, brass players around the globe regard its activities as a musical high-water mark, and we believe that by supporting its continuing activities, the social and musical values of the United Kingdom are equally well served.

We had a wonderful festival, and would like to acknowledge our partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University and this year we are also supported by Heritage Lottery Fund, where our accent is firmly on 'Partnering the Past and Fostering the Future'.

An interview with Professor Childs giving an overview of the Festival can be seen on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P80bqV0ixbA>

Alison Childs, Festival Administrator

Inaugural lecture “History of Brass Bands”

by Alan Jenkins

Just a glance at the scope of Black Dyke Band's three-day *Brass Festival - Heritage Symposium* was enough to take the breath away - concerts, workshops, a morning session with the Yorkshire Youth Brass Band culminating in a Sunday afternoon concert at the Leeds Town Hall. At the centre of everything was the manifestation of excellence; the world's most famous band led by Professor Nicholas Childs and to top it all off, the festival's artistic directors were two of the most distinguished musicians in the world of brass banding, professors Philip Wilby and Peter Graham.

With three professors at the helm, the title reflecting an academic of the highest rank, it was impossible not to take a quick look through the dictionary to see if this most illustrious brass band justified the title of 'professional'. Happily, the search revealed that being engaged in a specified occupation for money is not the sole criteria. One condition was 'Having or showing the skill of a professional person, competent; worthy of a professional person'. Now it's true the band members earn their living away from the band, but the technical brilliance and high standard of musicianship displayed in every performance - (don't say anything, but it doesn't seem to have occurred to them that professional musicians do have the occasional off day) - demands we acknowledge that Black Dyke Band upholds the highest standards of professionalism in the best sense of the word.

The Festival opened with an inaugural illustrated lecture, *The History of Brass Bands - The Golden Period*. The venue was The Gandhi Hall on the Headingley Campus of Leeds Metropolitan University, with whom the band shares a unique partnership. Nick was delivering the lecture, superbly supported by the band and a massive screen that was used to provide further information on some of the composers mentioned plus an interesting discussion by former members.

Although the period covered by the lecture is called *The Golden Period* and spanning the years from 1913 to 1936, the programme opened with a small brass and reed band, dressed appropriately, playing music from a

period before the Black Dyke musicians metamorphosed into an all-brass band in the 1850s. Playing music that included the familiar waltz, the sound of the Eb clarinet was most attractive in the otherwise brass sounds.

Professor Childs noted that the period in question was given its rather grandiose title since it reflected an end of the reliance on arias and operatic excerpts and a desire to attract mainstream composers to write music for the medium. He reminded us that in 1913 Percy Fletcher was commissioned to write a piece for the National Brass Band Championships and thus the catching *Labour and Love* became the first original piece of brass band music. The band then gave a lovely reading of this early work that still remains fresh and worthy of performance. It is believed that this piece opened the door for other composers, such as Holst, Elgar and Vaughan Williams, to write music for the brass band.

And whilst Nick mentioned other composers such as Cyril Jenkins and Hubert Bath, it was the premier league composers - Holst, Elgar and Ireland - that received the major focus from this point onwards. From a musical point of view it was sheer delight listening to this extraordinary ensemble play so wondrously the *Fugue* and *Minuet* from Elgar's *Severn Suite* and the *Chorale* from Ireland's *Comedy Overture*. This was music-making of an exceptionally high calibre that also



served to demonstrate the fact that the band's conductor continues to hone his considerable conducting skills in pursuit of ever higher standards of excellence. Because the lecture is to be made available on the band's website the length of the lecture was extremely important - one hour! No prizes for guessing how long it actually lasted. Yet throughout the 60 minutes there wasn't any feeling that time was even a factor because that wouldn't be the Black Dyke way at all.

The theme of this festival is 'Partnering the Past and Fostering the Future' and thus it was most appropriate for Nick to announce during his lecture that this year's festival marked the start of the Black Dyke Band's five-year commissioning policy, which will culminate in 2014 with the premiere of a substantial new score by the world renowned Scottish composer, James MacMillan.

Well, the recognised Golden period may have concluded in 1936, but there have been several mainstream composers who have written for brass bands since then and we can hopefully look forward to hearing about them in the next illustrated lecture.



Low Brass Spotlight *by Alexandra Kerwin*

I've got to admit that as soon as I heard the sound it made me want to sob uncontrollably. What was that sound? The strains of 'All in the April Evening' performed by massed euphonium, baritone and tuba players. Such sonorous, emotive playing that really tugs at your heart strings. All this feeling and it was still only 11am!

On the hottest day of the year so far when most people were outside enjoying a BBQ, over fifty low brass players were assembled in Leeds Metropolitan's Ghandi Hall for a day of music making. The wonderful turn out is due to the never ceasing hard work of David Thornton and Joe Cook. The players ages ranged from 7 to 70 indeed my son was the youngest player there and there was a span of ability as well, all were welcomed by David and in fact he catered for the youngest ones by organising the John Slinger Junior Group which was conducted by myself and Gareth Daniel. Gareth has a wonderful way with the players, such patience and an infectious sense of humour. Other groups were led by Joe Cook, the Godfather of the Bbb Bass Matthew Routley and a wonderfully skilful and dexterous ensemble including the talented Matthew White, and directed with purpose, knowledge and warmth by David Thornton.

At the end of the morning's rehearsals we were treated to a lunchtime recital by Chubazz, a tuba quartet from RNCM again featuring Matthew White. The group showed great skill and lyricism



in their contrasting pieces. Joe Cook has got a certain something about his performances, what that something is, is probably undefinable. He has the most luscious and large sound I have ever heard on a tuba, couple this with his mind blowing technique and you have a very special player. But he has that something extra, his facial expressions and acknowledgements to the audience during his recital brought joy to all those who listened. Nothing fazes Joe.

Not content with organising the event, driving participants to Leeds Met, getting music and having one of the

hottest seats in banding, Dave Thornton also gave a recital, firstly performing the fiendishly difficult, 'Rock' by Prof. Wilby and then utilising electronic sound effects in Peter Graham's 'A League of Extraordinary Gentlemen'. If you try to describe Dave's playing you run out of superlatives. He is that good.

Before the final performances by the varied ensembles, there was a very special event. A question and answer session with Black Dyke Legends, Geoff Whitham, John Clough and our very own current legend, John French. Three outstanding euphonium players, different in style and strength but all with a passion for music and a passion that unites us all, Black Dyke Band. The questions ranged from, 'How much do you practice?' to 'How many trophies have you won'? Their answers were illuminating, honest and gave a real insight of these legends, who were, are and always will be an inspiration to all. All the participants performed with their relative groups and were all brought together by David Thornton to perform Maurice Bale's arrangement of 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice'.

The smiles on everyone's faces summed up what was a fantastic day, and it was especially warming to see the youngsters encouraged and involved in the event. Thanks once again to Dave and Joe for a wonderful day.



Nick Childs in conversation with Legends Geoffrey Whitham, John Clough and our current playing living legend, John French

Gala Concert Black Dyke Band *by Iwan Fox*



The centrepiece to this year's Black Dyke Brass Festival came on Saturday evening, when the creative partnership between Leeds Metropolitan University and the reigning National Champions was celebrated with an invigorating concert programme at the magnificent Gandhi Hall.

An expectant audience from both spheres of the artistic and academic world were able to enjoy a pre concert talk by Philip Wilby, Peter Graham, Paul Lovatt-Cooper and Philip Harper, where they provided insight into the major compositions to be heard on the night.

Members of the band had been busy throughout the day, leading masterclasses and recitals for over 70 participants in the Lower Brass Spotlight Day – a day that was bathed in warm Yorkshire sunshine.

The University's ethos of seeking creative excellence had seen Black Dyke play a major promotional role in attracting students to the Headingley campus - one shown to stunning effect with two of the night's works providing the musical backdrop to professionally produced video features.

The link was celebrated from the start, with Peter Graham's piercing 'Academic Fanfare', based with appropriate reference to the Braham's

overture, but updated with zestful brio and flair. It set the musical tone for the night.

More Graham followed, and with the composer giving a thoughtful explanation of the inspiration behind 'Harrison's Dream', Black Dyke set about delivering an atmospheric portrait of one of the modern repertoire's most demanding works.

The driven metronomic technicality was balanced with lyrical persuasion in a performance that drew vibrant colour as well as measured pathos from the score.

The world premiere of Philip Harper's

'Willow Pattern' concluded the first half, with the composer taking to the rostrum to give an enjoyable synopsis (before conducting) of his intriguing work – one that draws inspiration from the famous blue and white pattern originally found on late 18th century Minton crockery.

The story of the doomed love tryst of star crossed lovers had been an artistic inspiration for centuries before the Staffordshire potter decided to copy original designs from China (as was a version of the story, set by another son of the Midlands, William Shakespeare), and this highly descriptive festival commission was just as enjoyable a





creation. Rich in colour and effect, the story was told with clever musical characterisation and descriptive purpose, and performed with a real sense of Asiatic authenticity by the band.

With a chance to take in the final rays of the sun on the well manicured lawns outside the Gandhi Hall during the interval, the audience returned to be hit between the eyes with a stunning mix of sight and sound.

Paul Lovatt-Cooper's 'Rubbing Shoulders with Champions' provided the musical backdrop to a slick presentational video of the University's drive towards excellence in its academic cultural and sporting activities.

The combination of trademark PLC flourishes and busy filigree work was echoed on screen as the synchronised images reached their climax in what was a highly effective combination of the visual and aural.

More high-class artistry followed with an authentic world class performer in David Thornton, delivering a scorching rendition of Philip Wilby's 'Euphonium Concerto'. Beautifully shaped in the lyrical sections, and balanced with razor sharp technique and subtle changes of pace and meter, it was a performance to savour.

That left the final offering, and drawing on the Festival's title of 'Partnering the Past and Fostering the Future', the second of the video collaborations drew

on the band's rich historical legacy as inspiration to its artistic future.

'Immortal' may be a rather ambitious title, but Paul Lovatt-Cooper's effective melodic ear provided a well balanced counterpoint to the images drawn from Dyke's 150 year history – right to the present day. Matthew Routley's stentorian presence as the historical oral guide placed the visual reflections in context in what was a fitting musical climax to a highly enjoyable and very professionally delivered concert – one that provided ample evidence of the growing effectiveness of the progressive partnership between Leeds Metropolitan University and the Black Dyke band.

Iwan Fox

Review Black Dyke Brass Festival - Heritage Symposium

Professor Childs illustrated lecture
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8L_T4mweHtQ

Saturday Gala Concert: Part One
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4INaYGaeRFQ>

Saturday Gala Concert: Part Two
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LECAbPrQe0o>

An interview with Professor Childs giving an overview of the Festival can be seen on
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P80bqV0ixbA>



Sunday Composers Collective *by Steve Gardner*

Sunday 31st May saw the "Composers Collective" at the Leeds Town Hall. The event, run by Professor Philip Wilby, saw the presentation and informal recording of new compositions for brass instruments.

Professor Wilby and Emily Howard (Black Dyke's Composer for 2010) were on hand to offer advice and encouragement as the composers presented their music. Each composition was recorded by Richard Scott of Doyen Recordings and CDs distributed to the composers as a memento of the occasion. Performers included Stephen Sykes (winner of the Radio 2 Brass Musician 2009) and the Black Dyke Trombone quartet with friends!

The event commenced with a prize winning entry from The British Trombone Society's composition competition held in the Spring. The Black Dyke Trombone Quartet performed the Finale from Philip Nell's "Three Variations".

This was followed by pieces composed by representatives from the Yorkshire Youth Brass Band:

First came Sam Gardner's aptly named "Town Hall Fanfare" Professor Wilby explained how he had helped Sam with his composition via email due to the large distance between Yorkshire and Bristol, where he now lives!

This was followed by a composition that was prepared as an exam piece for GCSE music. Rebecca Childs' "Air Varie for Baritone" was performed by Matthew White with piano accompaniment from Prof Wilby.



Stephen Sykes then gave a stellar rendition of the winning polish composition of the BTS unaccompanied section, appropriately titled "T-Boned"

Then came pieces from four representatives from the Junior Royal Northern College of Music. Emily Howard explained that each of these students attended the RNCM on Saturdays to study their instruments and, as part of their music training, composition under her guidance. All of the performances were "World Premieres" and the students were very keen to have their pieces played by world class musicians from Black Dyke.

First came "Even though it is an Uncertain World..." by Charlotte Dykes for a trio of tuba, euphonium and trombone.

The next composition for the same combination of instruments was "Black Rocks of Carrock", by composer Sarah Gait - a remarkable achievement because she has never composed a piece for brass before and is actually a cellist! One to watch, Sarah was recently awarded second prize in the first ever ABRSM International Young Composers' Competition, held to mark the organisation's 120th anniversary.

This was followed by "The Final Adventure" by Tony Boardman and "Mutual Reliance" by Jill Groom - two trombonists who obviously enjoyed their music being played by the Black Dyke Trombone Quartet.

The final composition was another BTS prize winner. Robin Benton's "Dance Suite" was the winner of the junior section for music intended for junior players. Brett Baker introduced the piece which he said was designed to encourage young trombone players to play in quartets.

Prof Wilby closed the event with thanks to all composers and performers and in turn Dr Childs thanked Prof Wilby and Emily Howard for their help and inspiration to all the composers involved.

Afterwards Emily said, "It is great for young composers to write for performance and to get the opportunity to hear their works played - and especially to such a high performance standard. They learn so much about what is practical. All the composers were absolutely delighted with the opportunity."



Partnering the Past and Fostering the Future

The sun was shining brightly, tempting everyone to stay outside. Certainly, it would have to be something very special to entice people inside on such a lovely afternoon. However, one glance at the programme about to take place at Leeds Town Hall was more than enough to persuade the brass band aficionado to seek more lasting inner warmth inside than that on offer by the smiling sun.

There are few greater experiences vouchsafed to mankind than witnessing young people revelling in the joys of making music, displaying skills beyond their years and loving every minute. This is what was on display as the Yorkshire Youth Band shared the platform with the illustrious Black Dyke Band.

In the two previous days there had been a myriad of enterprising musical activities taking place as part of Black Dyke's Brass Festival - Heritage Symposium and the Sunday afternoon concert was simply the climax. Always at the centre of the famous band's adventures is the musical director, Professor Nicholas Childs and he understands better than most that treading water is not an option; you progress or you decline. In this latest venture, assisted by the band's unique partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Nick had invited professors Philip Wilby and Peter Graham to be the festival's artistic directors. Two men of greater talent and vision working in the medium of brass bands cannot be imagined.

Thus it was appropriate that the concert opened with a piece by each of the two professors. Anyone even remotely familiar with the lifestyle of Nick Childs understands that he is the personification of *Perpetuum Mobile* and this was appropriately captured in Philip Wilby's *Breathless Alleluia*, written, according to the programme, 'as an affectionate tribute to Nicholas Childs, music director and leader of tireless energy'. This tireless energy was convincingly encapsulated in an imaginative piece of writing brilliantly brought to life by this special band.

Peter Graham composed *Montage* for the 1994 All England Masters Championship. But it is much more than simply a piece of contest music, brimming, as it is, with an appealing musical imagination guaranteed to capture the rapt attention of any concert-goer, especially when played so sublimely as was the case on Sunday afternoon. The band was on fire both collectively and individually with wonderful exhibitions of

musical excellence produced by all the soloists. Once again Nicholas Childs demonstrated his immense conducting talent in a reading that was entirely compelling.

Earlier in the day the British Trombone Society had held a workshop in the town hall and some of its work was shared with the audience as 23 trombonists, under the direction of Robert Hughes, former bass trombonist of the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO), played a couple of pieces, including *On Parade*, an arrangement by Dudley Bright, the principal trombonist of the LSO.

The first half concluded with a mighty, entirely thrilling, reading of an arrangement by Philip Wilby of the *Organ Symphony* by Saint-Saëns. The band was in stupendous form and so, too, was the organist, Professor Philip Wilby. It certainly made this writer wonder if perchance he happened to be free on Sunday mornings?

The second half opened with the Yorkshire Youth Band, resplendent in red summer shirts, occupying centre stage. They played two of Paul Lovatt-Cooper's compositions, *Horizons* and *Solar Eclipse*. They set about their work with a real joie de vivre exhibiting a lovely sound with no overblowing, pulsating rhythm and an astonishingly clean technique. The tight ensemble was intuitive, reflecting young musicians listening to each other intently. It was a wonderful treat from first to last.

In the audience was one of Black Dyke's legends, former principal cornet player Jim Shepherd. He was there to listen and enjoy his old band and also to witness the debut of his grandson on percussion with the Yorkshire Youth Band. The final item was a performance of Tchaikovsky's *1812*, where the two solo bands were augmented by musicians from the Newstead and Hebden Bridge bands. It was indeed loud, as you would expect from a piece that commemorates the Battle of Borodino and Napoleon's ultimate retreat from Moscow in 1812, but nonetheless enjoyable.

As an encore, the bands played Meredith Willson's *76 Trombones*, with each section standing to play its own stanza of the melody. Needless to say, they all sounded wonderful and left the audience with a smile on their faces ready to welcome the sun on their faces but with even greater warmth in the heart.

Alan Jenkins

British Trombone Society Workshop *By Brett Baker*

Sunday saw me leaving home at 7am to assist in the setting up of trade stands in Leeds at 8.30am for a third day of music making at the Black Dyke Brass Festival. We were fortunate to have two trade stands attending the BTS part of the day which would begin from 10.30am. 35 trombone players attended a British Trombone Society workshop and Gala Concert at Leeds Town Hall. We had an age range of 8-80 taking part in the day and I started off the session at 10.45am with a warm up on Immanuel's Tide arranged by Mark Freeh. I handed over to Bob Hughes President of the BTS who then worked for an hour on a quartet arrangement of Nimrod arranged by Derek Bishop and a skilful arrangement of the Salvation Army March "On Parade". Things were going so well that we also had time to rehearse an arrangement of Saving Private Ryan by Williams so effective was this 12 piece version that we decided to perform it later in the day. We talked about note production, moving the slides really quickly even

on the slow playing, making a good sound and concentrating on ensemble and tonguing exercises.

There was a break at midday for players to have a rest and get a coffee and this gave the trombone section of Black Dyke, Steve Sykes Junior (winner of the BBC Radio 2 Young Soloists Competition) and John French time to rehearse some of the pieces for the composers collective. After the composers collective which was attended by BTS members we were fortunate to quickly run through 76 trombones with the main bands and then rush back to the Albert room for a final rehearsal on the two pieces that were performed in the final festival concert along with the Yorkshire Youth Brass Band and Hebden Bridge and Newstead brass bands. The trombone ensemble offered two pieces that went down really well as a contrast to the other exciting pieces on offer in the concert. It was a hugely successful day and it looks very positive to make the event even bigger in 2010.