

LIR CLASSICS

LIR020 - PROGRAMME NOTES

Something Borrowed... Works borrowed from borrowed works

Something Borrowed is the third instalment in Mardi Brass's epic journey from the Renaissance to the present day in the four-CD series *Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue*. Much of the brass quintet repertoire is borrowed, in the sense that it is arranged or adapted from another source. Although all of the music on this disc - with the exception of *Something Borrowed* by James Hesford - is arranged, the premise is that the source material is also borrowed: the original composer has borrowed thematic material from one genre and reworked it using his own voice.

Lachrymae: Dowland/Van Eyck/Woolf

John Dowland first composed this piece as a lute solo in the 16th century, shortly after which he added words and thus was born the famous lute-song 'Flow My Tears'. Some time after this, commonly thought to have been at the start of the 17th-century, he re-used the tune as a basis of a set of seven pavans, published in London in 1604. These were written as consort pieces in five voices. This tune was obviously popular across 17th-century Europe and several renowned composers used it as a basis upon which to write variations. These included JP Sweelinck's keyboard variations and those by J Schop for solo violin. In 1649, Jacob Van Eyck published a set of variations on this tune for solo recorder in his recorder tutor *Der Fluyten Lust-Hof*.

The three versions on this recording begin with Dowland's original five part setting. This is followed by one of Van Eyck's variations which starts off shared between the two trumpets, the material of which gradually spreads through the whole group giving an outline of harmonic accompaniment which, over the course of the pavan, moves further away from the relatively clean early baroque style and towards that of the third setting. The third setting is a complete harmonic re-working, based on the falling chromatic motifs employed by many 17th century composers for this type of work, but stretching out more to enjoy 21st century harmonic allowances. In this version, the first trumpet part remains faithful to the tune as composed by Dowland, but for a few ornaments typical to the 16th and 17th centuries.

Adam Woolf

Battalia!: Pedro de Araujo, arr. Adam Woolf

Clement Janequin's *Le guerre*, was written to celebrate the French victory at Marignano, Italy in 1515. It imitates the sounds of cannon, the cries of the wounded and the trumpets signalling advance and retreat. This onomatopoeic piece is probably one of the first examples of 'programme music' in that the different sections depict the various stages of going to battle. It opens with a vocal style 'calm before the storm' before beginning the trumpet-like call to battle. This is followed by a frenzied *melée* which conjures up images of clashing swords in a furiously chaotic, adrenalin-fuelled battle and ends with victory.

This piece was used as a model for composers throughout the 16th and 17th centuries wishing to write *Battalias*, including Andrea Gabrieli, Guerrero and Susato. Inevitably, the form of the compositions that followed matched the form of Janequin's piece including many of the same motifs and effects.

The piece presented on this recording was composed by Portuguese organist and composer Pedro de Araujo, entitled *Batalha de 6 Tom* (referring to the mode, or tonality of the composition) and was originally intended for solo organ. It would have been intended for the colourful registrations of the early baroque Portuguese organs, which we know featured stops intended to imitate wind and brass instruments of the time including cornetto, trumpet and trombone. The many characteristics of "real" brass instruments lend themselves perfectly to this music.

Adam Woolf

Three movements from *Mother Goose Suite*: Maurice Ravel, arr. Jeff Miller

Maurice Ravel once stated that a composer who does not admit to influence by others should stop composing. He was heavily influenced by his love of literature and other artistic forms, to the extent that he once described Edgar Allan Poe as his third teacher, after Gabriel Fauré and André Gedalge, his teachers of composition and harmony at the Paris Conservatoire.

Ravel's unique style came from an appreciation and amalgamation of his many influences. He drew his ideas from literature, and his rhythm and textures came from cross-cultural musical references, such as the Javanese gamelan. Ravel's ability to meld these ideas into his own came from his rigorous study of traditional harmonic techniques.

Ravel first began his settings of French fairy tales in 1908, when he wrote a set of short duos as a gift for the young children of family friends, the Godebskis. Following the success of these pieces, he was persuaded to expand the work for larger ensemble. The resulting orchestration, utilising such characterful instruments as the harp, piccolo and contrabassoon, showcased Ravel's exceptional ability to create rich fantasy environments.

The pieces are highly evocative. Ravel borrowed the stories from 17th Century French fairy tales by such authors as Charles Perrault, Mme d'Aulnoy, and Mme de Beaumont. This recording features three of Ravel's settings; *Laideronnette*, the Empress of the Pagoda; *The Conversation between Beauty and the Beast*; and *The Fairy Garden*. The first movement finds *Laideronnette* settling into a bath; tiny Oriental figures appear and begin serenading her on instruments made of walnut shells. In the *Conversation between Beauty and the Beast* we hear the lilting

waltz of the maiden followed by the growling voice of the Beast, and then the sound of both themes melding together. Finally, we see the warm glow of the approaching sunrise. The day dawns, mist rises slowly from the ground and the Sun finally appears, triumphant, bathing the Fairy Garden in exultant light.

Jeffrey Miller

Three movements from Suite on English Folk Tunes: Benjamin Britten, arr.
Jonathan Hassan

Benjamin Britten's Suite on English Folk Tunes Op.90, subtitled A time there was... was completed in the autumn of 1974 and is comprised of five movements, the first three of which have been arranged for Something Borrowed. The Suite is based on music Britten borrowed from Playford's The Dancing Master, and some folk songs collected orally from the beginning of the 20th century.

The first movement, Cakes and Ale, is based on the two English Country Dances We'll Wed and Stepney Cakes and Ale. In Pepys' day Stepney was renowned for the quality of both its beer and cakes.

The second movement, The Bitter Withy is a reference to the apochryphal tale of Christ's childhood that is called The Bitter Withy, or The Holy Well. The withy in the title is the willow and the tale explains why this tree dies from the heart outwards, unlike others which rot from the outside in. The child Christ asks his mother for permission to play ball and while out playing meets three 'jolly Dons' ('Don' here is used in its archaic sense to mean a person of high importance). When they tell him that they are lords' and ladies' sons, born in bower and in hall Christ retaliates by building a bridge from the beams of the sun to prove his superiority. When the Dons attempt to follow him they are drowned. Their mothers, on discovering their fate, call out to 'Mary mild' to punish her son and Mary takes a handful of switches from the willow tree and gives Christ three lashes, one for each Don. These are represented by the trombone glissandi towards the end of the movement. At the end of the tale a smarting Christ tells the willow that it shall 'perish all at the heart'.

Hankin Booby was based on the two dances Mage on a Cree and Half Hannikin and was commissioned for the opening of the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the 1st March 1967. 'Hankin' or 'Hannikin' was a common name for a clown and 'Hankin Booby' was used as a term of contempt. Mage on a Cree was an Elizabethan Country Square Dance.

Jonathan Hassan

Capriol Suite: Peter Warlock, arr. Jonathan Boswell

"Peter Warlock" was the pseudonym of Philip Heseltine - composer, editor and one of the first modern English scholars of early music. Capriol Suite (1926) remains his most popular instrumental work, and is based upon ancient dances included in Arbeau's Orchesographie. Written in 1588, the book was a treatise on dancing which took the form of a dialogue between Arbeau (the teacher) and Capriol (the student). Capriol is a young dandy interested in the art of womanising via the art of dance; Arbeau is the voice of worldly wisdom who shares his experiences of both.

The suite consists of six short dances, each of which Arbeau presents as typical tunes of the dances under discussion. Although the themes and dance rhythms are thoroughly 16th century, the underlying harmony and texture are evidence of Warlock's spirited contribution.

Warlock's quirky nature was not restricted to his music, as is beautifully presented in the following anecdote by his companion and biographer, Cecil Gray:

"No account of Peter Warlock would be complete without reference to his harlequinesque propensity for suddenly indulging in extravagant displays of acrobatic dancing and pas seuls in all places and on all occasions, whenever he happened to be in a state of elation... the most vivid... recollection... that I retain was that of his departure one afternoon from Charing Cross Station.... On emerging from the booking-hall, instead of going straight to his train, he suddenly began to execute the most astonishing dance I have ever seen... worthy of Nijinsky himself.... Gradually the normal activities of the station came to a standstill... on the faces of the onlookers amusement quickly gave way to sheer astonishment, and astonishment to a kind of awestruck, spellbound admiration, as this strange, bearded, faun-like creature danced there all by himself.... Then, suddenly, the spell was broken. A whistle sounded, and Peter's train began slowly to move out of the station. With one final prodigious bound into the air he dashed to the barrier, brushed aside the protesting ticket-collector, clambered on to the footboard of the last carriage... and waved a courtly and dignified farewell to the assembled crowd...."

Jeffrey Miller

Something Borrowed: James Hesford

Although Mardi Brass's original commission brief was for a piece based on the simple idea of "something borrowed", the work is not a pastiche but an original composition based on found objects and found harmonic material eg. a dead bird found on a carpet led the composer to transcribe the birdsong he heard outside his studio window, an open music theory book with an explanation of a tone row used in the early stages of serial composition techniques provides other harmonic material, a passing car blasting out 80s disco music gives rise to rhythmic ideas, and a picture of a Tibetan Buddhist temple, perfectly symmetrical in design, defines the structure of the piece.

Something Borrowed is based on (or borrowed from) all of the above objects/sounds. The relationship between chance, happy accidents and synchronicity, leading to order in the form of structure and symmetry, has been the inspiration for James' work for the past two years.

Something Borrowed is a one movement piece; it begins with a single pulsating tone inspired by the haunting sound of the Tibetan horn used in Buddhist rituals. It develops into a central fanfare-like theme, derived from a found

tone row which is harmonised using parallel thirds (a hanging offence in the domain of the serialists). The thrice repeated theme represents the pillars of a strong, dignified symmetrical architectural structure. The single note motif, played in turn by all the instruments and serving as a uniting force (the cement), ends the composition, thereby closing the circle of this musical Mandala.

James Hesford

Variations on 'Norma': Jean-Baptiste Arban arr. Adam Woolf

In 1864, Jean-Baptiste Arban published his *Grande méthode complète pour cornet à pistons et de saxhorn*. Arban was regarded as the first real master of the cornet and the exercises and solos printed in his book can still be heard in band-rooms, concert halls, music conservatoires and just about anywhere else with enough room to play a brass instrument across the world today! This book containing technical exercises and musical challenges was designed to exploit what was at the time, thanks to engineering developments, a musical instrument honed from state-of-the-art technology, the cornet à piston. Today, with modern engineering techniques offering smoother, faster valves built from lighter materials and tubing designed to be more responsive, to say nothing of the development of mouthpiece designs, these instruments have apparently become easier to play. However, Arban's method still exists as a respected teaching method and as a challenge to any self-respecting player of valved brass instruments. Most of the tunes featured were popular tunes from the time, including arias from recent operas, or well known ballads. Bellini's *Norma* was not well received on its first performance, but since then has become more popular and its famous 'Casta Diva', which starts Arban's solo was a hit for the great Maria Callas. In this arrangement, not only are the themes borrowed by Arban from Bellini, but also, some of the solo line, including Arban's variations, originally intended by Arban for the cornet, are borrowed by the horn, flugel horn and trombone.

Adam Woolf

Spiky Airs: Edward Maxwell

Spiky Airs started life as a set of three jazz pieces for trumpet and piano by Mardi Brass member Edward Maxwell, in which thematic material has been borrowed from classical trumpet repertoire and completely reworked in a jazz style. He subsequently arranged this for Mardi Brass. The first piece, *Sharp Pointy Air*, is based on Charpentier's *Prelude to his Te Deum*. In the second, *Haydn Sleek* (commissioned by James Stretton), the solo flugel horn plays the melody from the second movement of Haydn's trumpet concerto, which is reharmonised as a jazz waltz. The final piece, *Tchaik Spiked*, is loosely based on *Chanson Neapolitaine* from Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*. *Spiky Airs* is published by Spartan Press in several different versions: for brass quintet, as recorded here, along with versions for different solo brass instruments and piano.

Edward Maxwell