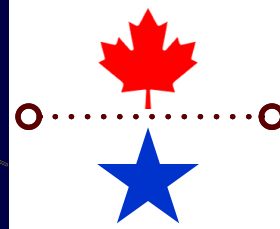


THE BRASS BAND BRIDGE



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MAY, 2009

UNDER THE BRIDGE



Photo by Tim Hedman.

Betsy Jones Editor

Since January, when I accepted this position as the eighth editor of the *Brass Band Bridge*, I've met dozens of NABBA members and brass players from across the continent. Dozens more have introduced themselves through e-mail and Facebook. I only have a few thousand people left to meet, so here goes:

Six years ago, an old friend from school called to say he was moving back to Michigan from Atlanta, and asked if I'd like to take his baritone seat in the Georgia Brass Band. Prior to this invitation, I'd never played in a brass band, and had only heard a brass band once or twice in my life. I'd even been told by a worldly college friend that I would never do well in a British brass band; I wouldn't like the musical style or the competition. I decided to try it, anyway.

It was a long drive to rehearsals, but I loved the challenge and instantly felt welcome in the brass band environment. And the baritone—well, let's just say I took to the baritone. I've had opportunities to play euphonium with the GBB, but I always find myself back in the baritone seat.

In six years' time, I've gone from knowing next to nothing about this music to editing the newsletter on it. My Facebook friends list teems with people I met through banding. I perform on baritone more than euphonium. My college friend was wrong. I was *born* to play in a brass band.

And I know I'm not the only one. There are thousands of people in North America who

consider their band to be their second (or first) family. We have European championships CDs in the glove compartment. We plan our weekends around festivals and intensive rehearsal retreats. British slang words slip into our speech. Sometimes, we call trumpets "cornets" by accident.

Note my repeated use of the word "we" in the above paragraph. Brass band is a "we" experience. The *Brass Band Bridge*, therefore, is a "we" newsletter. I don't write these articles, reviews, and programs; I don't take the pictures. I just collect them and publish them every couple of months. I rely on submissions from bands and players around the US and Canada to fill these pages.

Our outgoing editor, Doug Yeo, assures me that the *Bridge* is now mine to design (or destroy) as I see fit. It would be hard to improve upon the format and style of this newsletter as it already stands—Doug has done a fabulous job of redesigning and promoting the *Bridge* during his tenure. You may see small changes, but for now my focus is on increasing the content of the *Bridge*, rather than tweaking the layout. I'm grateful to Doug for easing this transition, answering every one of my questions and reminding me of questions that I forget to ask.

NABBA.org has a new way for you to get involved: we now have a guestbook on the site. You'll find the link at the top right corner of the nabba.org page. We welcome your comments or questions about the site, the Championships, or NABBA itself. Send your questions and comments about the *Bridge* to me at nabbabridge@gmail.com. Or just send me a letter; tell me who you are. I like mail.

It's nice to meet you! This is going to be fun.

Betsy

nabbabridge@gmail.com

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ATOP THE BRIDGE



Russell Morris

NABBA President

Another terrific weekend of brass banding has come and gone and the time for reflecting and looking to the future is upon us. Let me start with the venue and the host hotel. The Brown Hotel is to be commended for their assistance and willingness to do anything necessary to make our stay an enjoyable one. Kathleen Dorman, Pam Hoepfner, Rob Morrison, Brad Walker and a host of others, I congratulate you on a job well done. Your attention to detail allowed us to have a successful, worry-free event.

The Brown Theatre was a wonderful venue in which to play and listen to our fine NABBA bands. Many of our bands played for the first time in the Brown Theatre. It was certainly a reward for the many hours of hard work that went into preparations for the Championships. Jim Grate worked with Will Richards for the better part of a year to make sure everything ran smoothly. Like the Brown Hotel, the Brown Theatre met and exceeded our needs. Verne Boddy kept everything running smoothly backstage and in the house. Thanks go out to all of the ushers and staff who helped with our event and made us feel welcome.

Our wonderful vendors . . . Wow! Your willingness to support our organization is humbling. Your displays were great and the variety of "goodies" was impressive. One of the big hits of the weekend was the prize drawing on Saturday night. Some very generous prizes were given away, topped off by a brand new York cornet! I would be remiss if I did not make special mention of our main event sponsor, Buffet-Crampon USA, and their Vice-President, Mr. Bruce Silva. As distributors of Besson and Courtois instruments, this was their third consecutive year of sponsoring the NABBA Championships. It was a pleasure to hear Bruce address the audience Saturday night, and pledge his company's on-going sup-

port of the NABBA Championships. Special thanks go out to Jon Handley and TOR Banners for the Championship Award Banners presented to the winning bands on Saturday night. The banners are truly beautiful works of art that hold special meaning to each band fortunate enough to carry one home. We are grateful to have a beautiful set of NABBA Championship banners from TOR to display during our Championships. I encourage all NABBA members and bands to remember those companies that support us when it comes time for music or equipment purchases.

I commend the adjudicators for the work they performed, including the solo/ensemble

I want to extend my personal gratitude to the NABBA Board of Directors. Yours is a tiring job, but you continue to do the work because you believe in the movement. You do not hear the words "thank you" nearly enough. NABBA is strong because of you. Keep up the great work!

Congratulations to ALL of the bands. Because you took on the challenge of preparing wonderful music, because you sacrificed to make it to Louisville, because you will grow from your experience at the Championships, you are all winners. From the opening downbeat on Friday night to the stinger of "Rolling Thunder" on Saturday, it was a weekend of exciting

performances and promise for the future of brass banding. Our special guest from the UK, Steve Walker, was quite impressed with the level of camaraderie among the bands. This was his first trip to the NABBA Championships and he left with favorable impressions. The latest issue of the "British Bandsman" included Steve's article on his NABBA visit.

I'd also like to recognize Frank North, Jeff and Paula Clymer, Bob and Barb Pugh, the University of Cincinnati Bearcat Bands, the Natural State Brass Band, all of the volunteers (thank you, thank you, thank you), and all the spouses and families who allow us to take part in such a worthwhile endeavor.

Our goal is to make the Championship weekend a great experience for all involved. If you feel there is an issue that needs to be addressed,

please contact me or a Board member. Planning for Raleigh 2010 and Championships XXVIII began on Sunday morning after this year's contest. New city, new venues; it is going to be exciting. Begin making your plans now to attend. Until then, happy banding!

president@nabba.org



NABBA President Russell Morris with Joseph Parisi, conductor of the Fountain City Brass Band.

and band judging. Yours is not an easy task. Through your professionalism and attention to detail, you help push our NABBA bands to greater heights. Along these same lines, Controller Dr. Jim Buckner and Associate Controller Sara North cannot be thanked enough. The majority of their work happens before the contest and behind the scenes. If you went through the weekend not knowing who either of them were, or what they were doing, then their jobs were 100% successful. We are fortunate to have good people like Jim and Sara around with NABBA's best interests at heart.

2009 NABBA XXVII CHAMPIONSHIPS REVIEW

APRIL 3 - 4, 2009: THE BROWN THEATRE

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

WITH PHOTOS BY FRANK WASHBURN

2009 marked the first year that the Championship Section bands performed their test piece on Friday night, and their chosen pieces on Saturday night. Like last year, this format allowed the audience to hear five consecutive performances of the test piece, Derek Bourgeois's "Devil and the Deep Blue Sea." Moving part of the competition to Friday night also meant that all competing bands were able to perform in one venue, the beautiful Brown Theatre Auditorium. As the Championship competition was split into two separate performances, one person reviewed the test pieces while a second reviewer covered the bands' choice piece performances.



Dr. Stephen Allen conducts the Princeton Brass Band. Photo by B. Jones.

BAND REVIEWS

CHAMPIONSHIP SECTION: TEST PIECE

Reviewer: Douglas Yeo

For the first time, Friday evening saw performances of the Championship Section test piece. The Brown Theater's large and enthusiastic crowd witnessed as all five bands bravely tackled Derek Bourgeois's fiendishly difficult "The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," Opus 131.

Composed for the 1993 National Brass Band Championship of Great Britain (won by the Williams Fairey Band under Peter Parkes), the piece takes its title both from the tricky fugue (which reminded Bourgeois of a comment Sir Edward Elgar made concerning one of his own fugues, which he described as "a devil of a fugue") and the composition of the finale while the composer overlooked the sea on the Dorset coast of England. The piece has not gotten any easier in the 16 years since its composition and I think it can be safely said that none of the NABBA Championship Section bands truly delivered all that was necessary to pull it

off. After the Saturday evening Championship Section Choice Piece competition, adjudicator Bram Gregson asked me, rhetorically, "Where were these bands on Friday? It was like there were five new groups playing tonight!" On the other hand, each band brought particular strengths to their performance and contributed to what was a dramatic and exciting evening of music making.

It would be easy to pigeon-hole "The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" as a piece that is primarily about technique. After the opening Adagio molto, the following Prestissimo is marked at quarter note = 152. The "devil of a fugue" comes next at the same tempo, and certainly any successful performance needs to have the technical demands well in hand. Yet there is great depth to the piece, with textures emerging quietly from nearly overwhelming fortissimo, and echoes of Mahler's Ninth Symphony that require tremendous control and finesse. Bourgeois also chose to end "The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" quietly—a rarity among test pieces—and the transitions of style and dynamics made for an extremely satisfying listening experience.

From my seat in the second row of the Brown Theater, it was clear that none of NABBA's Championship Section bands took the stage with a look of unbridled confidence in their eyes. Alert concertgoers are well-attuned to the look of a band as it walks to their seats. If I could have created a performance that would compete with the now legendary recording of "Devil" (stanShawe STA005CD) by Roy Newsome and the Sun Life Band (recorded in December 1993 after their third place finish at the Nationals), it would have had elements from each of the five performances I heard on the Brown Theater Stage.

First up was Illinois Brass Band, led by their new conductor, Stephen Squires, who conducted without using the score. The band employed an unconventional seating arrangement, with flugel and horns to the right of the conductor and baritones and euphoniums in front of him. The opening baritone solo was beautifully played, but at the Prestissimo the tempo seemed just a bit too fast for the band to handle comfortably. While the playing had great energy, there was enough of a scramble throughout the band to rob the playing of the necessary clarity during the fugue. The

BAND REVIEWS, CONT.

tricky xylophone solo gave out near its end—I should note that this solo was problematic for each of the bands—and the band never really reached the convincing *fff* that was called for from time to time. There was some beautiful solo horn playing, but the lack of energy in the fanfares and difficulty shifting to soft sections after the extended loud passages kept the band from making the impression it surely hoped to make.

Atlantic Brass Band (Salvatore Scarpa) turned in a committed performance that found just the right tempo for the band to pull off the technical work at the Prestissimo and fugue. Some concentration lapses marred the opening chorale but I must say that the band's bass trombonist gets my nod as one of the most impressive players of the evening. His sound was a model of what a brass band bass trombone should sound like and his fine technique was a pleasure to enjoy. The fanfares were present and committed, and the solo cornets had a nice flow in the long 5/4 theme. The

baritones and euphonia had extremely dark, warm sounds but there were times when I would have liked them to be a bit more present. A fine horn solo was another highlight of Atlantic's performance. While a little tame in overall concept, these ears felt the performance was well executed, on the whole.

The Chicago Brass Band (Colin Holman) has been hovering near first place at recent NABBA Championships and there was great anticipation in the audience as Chicago took the stage. I doubt anybody was prepared for the impressively ferocious opening chord—the audience was visibly taken aback by the visceral assault that Bourgeois called for. Chicago was the only band that even approached the dramatic character of the opening, which set the bar high for the rest of the band's performance. The opening chorale featured a nice baritone solo ("Devil" is rare among test pieces in that it has no cornet or euphonium solo), but I sensed the band was trying to play too softly. This led to some pitch slips in the Mahlerian chords. The tempo of the Prestissimo was even faster than Bourgeois marked and while it nearly got out of hand at a few

spots, it had great energy. The fugue slowed down nearly 10 metronome points to a more manageable tempo. After a very nice flugel solo, the band delivered an ending as impressive as its beginning. The trombone section exhibited great control to the very end and the final bass "pizzicato" was spot on in character and execution.

Winners of the last two NABBA Championships, Fountain City Brass Band (Joseph Parisi) has become the band all other bands have their sights on. This is a band with real depth throughout. Principal baritone Helen Tyler, winner of the NABBA XXVI low brass slow melody contest, gave a clinic on controlled playing during her opening solo. The back row cornets were notable on the first fugue subject (as they were throughout the performance), but as the fugue went on, the band seemed to run out of steam. The fanfares, though, were truly excellent - the burnished horn and trombone sound was electrifying. The unison solo cornets at the 5/4 section were truly beautiful and the ending, led by the well-timed trombone glissando in the dénouement, brought a fine performance to its end.

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by Steven Mead

Steven Mead is considered one of the finest euphonium players in the world. He teaches at the Royal Northern College of Music.

GRUPE
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The impressive achievements of the James Madison University Brass Band (Kevin Stees)—coming to NABBA as an Open Section Band in 2003, winning Honors in 2004 and 2005, taking second in Championship in 2006 and 2007—have made this band a perennial favorite. America's leading collegiate brass band played an excellent opening of "Devil" with spot-on pitch and a nice musical shape. As the performance went on, the tempo of the fugue seemed a bit more than the band could handle cleanly and the trading of parts at various times just didn't line up as tightly as it might have. The band's soprano player was the best of the evening on my scorecard, negotiating the fearsome passage at rehearsal 43 with aplomb and demonstrating a confident, beautiful sound throughout the performance. While there were some ensemble problems throughout that no doubt led the judges to knock the performance down a notch, the ending had a beautiful balance and the final pizzicato from the basses drew the evening's performances to a very fine close; we finally had morning and evening on the first day of the NABBA Championships. And it was good.

After hearing five consecutive performances of "The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea", I

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came away impressed with Bourgeois's craft in what I would say is, arguably, his finest work. While no band found a way to negotiate all of its intricate demands, "Devil" served its mission well: it put the bands through their paces and also provided a fine entertainment for the audience. As it turned out, the judges' opinion of the test piece performances exactly mirrored the final score after Saturday night's choice piece scores were figured in; there was no movement in the places from Friday to Saturday night. Along with all those in attendance on Friday evening, I salute NABBA's five Championship section bands for a fine evening of music making that whet all of our appetites for what was to come on Saturday.

CHAMPIONSHIP SECTION: OWN-CHOICE PIECE

Reviewer: Theresa MacDonald

Following up on last year's well-received format of presenting NABBA's Championship Section bands in 'prime time' on Saturday evening, this year's competing bands 'Own Choice' performances were featured as the main event of the weekend. There was a certain buzz in the Brown Theatre as the audience took their seats in anticipation of a program of music chosen by each of the five competing bands.

First on stage was the Chicago Brass Band (Colin Holman), whose musical choice was "Eden" by Dr. John Pickard. The work, partially inspired by Milton's *Paradise Lost*, asks much of the performers and conductor. It was clear from the opening that Chicago Brass Band was more than up to the demands of Pickard's powerfully evocative score. The soprano's pristine pianissimo entry on high D evoked the idyllic setting of the Garden of Eden and the introduction of the musical characters of Adam, Eve and the serpent. Chicago's solo euphonium handled the difficult recitative solo as Adam with an elegant performance, singing through awkward intervals with ease, lifting above the band with a beautiful and confident performance. The ensemble was in excellent form as the mood in the musical accompaniment darkened. Conductor Colin Holman's precise handling of the freely-notated ascending and descending figures depicting Eve's approaches to the 'forbidden fruit' highlighted the band's accurate ensemble work. With the crack of a whip (literally), the music turns sinister with



The James Madison University Cornet Ensemble, winners of the Adult Brass Ensemble Competition. Photo courtesy of Kevin Stees.



2009 NABBA Championships judges: Bram Gregson, Richard Marshall, Timothy Holtan, Brian Bowen, Matthew Tropman, Ronald Holz.

the appearance of the serpent, in the guise of solo trombone, who put in an absolutely stellar performance of this difficult muted solo passage. Chicago's interpretation of the descent into a mechanical hell on earth was passionate and precise. The ensemble showed itself to be a well balanced band with a strong middle voice, and played the technically-demanding middle section with rhythmic precision. They played with restraint when necessary, but were up to the task of snarling out Pickard's manic rhythmic figures, relentlessly building to a shattering climax and featuring yet another outstanding performance by solo trombone. The final lament section featured strong solo performances throughout the band, including an exceptional turn by the soprano. Although the band showed signs of fatigue, and the trombone section may have been a bit over the top in their interpretation of the score marking "very prominent," the band effectively created a powerful build to the finish, closing out a fine performance of this outstanding work. Stand out performers: Soprano and solo trombone.

Philip Wilby's inspired fantasy on Mozart's Piano Sonata in A, K. 331, "Viena Nights," was the choice for the James Madison University Brass Band (Kevin Stees), the next contender in the section. While most bands have to contend with turnover of players from time to time, JMU's makeup of university students guarantees large personnel changes from year to year. After the graduation of last year's standout soloists on euphonium and soprano, the audience was eager to hear this year's incarnation strut their stuff. The unusual band seating, outlined in the score by the composer, clearly puzzled a few people not familiar with the work, but many in the audience were excited to hear this inspired composition performed live. JMU showed from the opening of the work why they have a solid reputation as an ensemble with great technique, passionate intensity and a beautiful sound. From the opening grumble of euphoniums/basses, the band was in good form, handling some of the difficult technical sections with ease. A good start to a difficult piece, although not without some minor ensemble issues, in spite of Kevin Stees's precise and crystal-clear conducting. A few shaky handoffs of the melody between sections even-

tually smoothed themselves out. While not pristine in execution, JMU played with a lot of heart and it was clear that the ensemble had embraced this challenging work. Highlights included well-played turns in the spotlight by various soloists, including euphonium, solo cornet, tenor horn and Eb bass, and good performances by bass section (note to someone in the bass section: please get clanky valves fixed!) The percussion were the rock-solid section of the band, turning in an outstanding



performance and anchoring the band throughout. Overall, an excellent performance, full of intensity and vigour but slightly marred by balance issues. Some inner voices were lost, particularly in the fugue. This was a different band from last year but potentially a force to be reckoned with next year as they grow and gel as an ensemble. Stand out performances: Percussion section, Eb bass.

Fountain City Brass Band (Dr. Joseph Parisi) chose to perform the seldom-heard "Dreams" by Swiss composer Bertrand Moren. A dominant band for the last several years, Fountain City was clearly not content to rest on their

laurels for this year's contest. They continue to raise the bar for themselves and their fellow competitors. With a reordered cornet section and new soprano player via Brass Band of Central Florida, FCBB was in fine form to tackle Moren's fiery and technically demanding work. Set in three sections: "Nightmare," "Daydream" and "Visions," from the opening it was clear that "Dreams" was an inspired choice for this particular ensemble, showcasing all of FCBB's strengths

(at this point, one wonders if they have any weaknesses) and technical abilities. A tour de force of power and technique, with ripping runs and spot-on unison octaves through trombones and basses, the opening movement provided pyrotechnics galore. Particular highlights were percussion and trombones, over top of which rode some stellar soprano playing—without question, the best of the night. "Daydreams" featured a revolving palette of soloists with a stand-out turn by TJ Mendes on tenor horn. TJ's effortlessly soaring horn line provided one of the musical highlights of the contest. As a composer, Bertrand Moren mines the subconscious mind for inspiration. As a trombonist, he clearly must have a love/hate relationship with the instrument, writing some of the toughest and most inspired trombone parts in any test piece to date. The fiendishly difficult solo trombone cadenza in the middle move-

ment was simply outstanding, an absolutely riveting virtuoso performance. The intensity never let up through the final swirling "Visions" section of Moren's work; at times aggressive, euphoric, romantic and relentlessly building and accelerating to the last triumphant chord, bringing the audience to its feet in a prolonged and much-deserved standing ovation. Stand out performers: Solo trombone (as well as the entire trombone section and soprano).

Thank goodness there were award presentations before Illinois Brass Band (Stephen Squires) took the stage, allowing the musical smoke to clear from FCBB's explosive

performance. Considerably lighter fare, Illinois Brass Band's choice of "The Wand of Youth" by Edward Elgar (trans. Gordon Langford) seemed as light as cotton candy compared to the works performed to this point. Written in six movements, the ensemble handled the work well, showcasing their strengths of light, lyrical playing and a lovely, warm, cohesive sound. The beautiful sweet sound of solo cornet in "The Little Bells" was a musical high point. From the start, however, Illinois was plagued by the tuning issues which dogged them in Friday night's test piece performance. Intonation problems were noticeable throughout the ensemble, but particularly in the tenor horn section, causing more than a few wincing moments. "Moths and Flies" proved a perfect showcase for one of the band's outstanding solo performers, the flugelhorn, who also stood out in the previous evening's performance of "The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea." The third movement, "Fountain Dance," featured some delicate playing by soprano and an outstanding turn by the trombone section, making this movement the strongest of Illinois's performance. Following this, "The Tame Bear" was beautifully directed by conductor Stephen Squires, who led the band through the playful and delicate writing with panache. The final movement, "The Wild Bears," saw an unwelcome return of previous intonation issues, and some ensemble issues rhythmically, in brass and percussion. Overall, a very good band, perhaps not at their best on this night. Standout performers: Flugelhorn and soprano.

Last on stage in the Championship section was the Atlantic Brass Band (Salvatore Scarpia) per-

forming "New Jerusalem" by Philip Wilby. A performance of Wilby's impressive score, so deeply associated in Brass Band history with Grimethorpe Colliery's movie-inspiring performance at Albert Hall in 1992, was eagerly anticipated at the Brown Theatre. The band got off to a good start with off-stage solo cornet as the Voice of God, performed with a lovely resonance and exquisite use of vibrato by Atlantic's principal cornet. As the work unfolded, it showcased the homogenous, warm sound of the ABB cornets, one of the best cornet section sounds, with excellent tuning and fine ensemble playing. Other sections did not fare so well, with some tuning issues cropping up in the tenor and bass section, and muddy articulations in lower voices in more technical sections of the work. There is no question that Wilby's scoring is unforgiving, but there was a general lack of presence in tenor horns and



euphonium/baritone sections. More sound and strength from these sections is required to improve Atlantic's overall level of performance. The second off-stage solo call, another flawless turn by solo cornet, led into the euphonium solo, which was well-played, if somewhat underplayed. A bigger, more confident sound would have been welcome and intonation issues cropped up in the higher range of the solo line. Other performers had better nights with some excellent playing by the percussion section and one of the best bass trombone sounds of the night. Standout performers: Principal cornet, bass trombone; honourable mention: Percussion section.

Overall, it was a night of inspiring performances by all of the competing bands. If Friday



night's test piece performances seemed careful and played from the head, it was clear on Saturday evening that each band had embraced their own choice selection (even if it was worth less in overall points) and played from their hearts, lifting the music from the page and displaying each band's impressive talents and careful preparations. Well done all!

HONORS SECTION

Reviewer: Rico Belotti

Saturday afternoon at NABBA 2009 began with a procession of six Honors Section bands performing for adjudicators Brian Bowen, Timothy Holtan and Matt Tropman. As a first year announcer and reviewer, I had a unique view of the contesting ensembles: I experienced each group from the time they entered the stage until the last member had exited. All six of the bands and their conductors had distinct personalities; from a bent tuba valve stem to a percussionist who seemed oblivious to time and his conductor's raised baton, there were several memorable moments outside of the performances of each band. Those performances held up the tradition of high standards in the Honors Section by earning a spread of less than seven points between the six ensembles. The section test piece performed by all bands was *Trittico for Brass Band*, by James Curnow, and each band arrived onstage with exciting and well-played choices in literature to fill their allotted performance time. I must make the



disclaimer that as I was serving as both announcer and reviewer, my comments will be a bit suspect as I was limited to a very far stage right and "down front orchestra" seat in the auditorium, and had no scores to follow.

First on the stage was the Massanutten Brass Band in their first venture into the Honors Section, having been crowned the Challenge Champion in 2007. After an absence from the 2008 Championships, Kevin Stees brought the Shenandoah Valley-based MBB back with a strong opening of the section test piece. The band moved through the piece with fine interplay between brass and percussion, but with some suspect points of balance between melody and supporting lines. Solo work was well done and the emotional qualities of the performance were excellent. As a follow-up to the Curnow, the MBB brought out the well-known Paganini Variations by Philip Wilby (not "Wiliby," as in the printed program). The solo work again was fine, but the euphoniums seemed to be tiring as the piece progressed. A wonderful muted cornet section was only slightly marred by an extraneous sound of something falling to the wooden stage floor. As the variations progressed, an ebb and flow of focus seemed to creep into the performance. After some fine flugelhorn and soprano work, coupled with sensitive dynamics, the band regained its opening spirit for a rousing and aggressive close. The panel in the box scored a 271.4 for a third place finish and a trophy for the MBB in their first Honors performance.

The "B" spot in the section featured the Georgia Brass Band with their conductor, Joe Johnson. Since taking the Challenge Section by storm in 2006, the Atlanta-area band has proven to be one of the strongest competing NABBA bands. A powerful opening of *Trittico* led into some very delicate contrasts and a fine statement of the theme. Confident playing and great solo work were in abundance, especially in the solo trombone. As the piece progressed, wonderful soft highs in the solo cornet and a soaring tuba solo were followed by tasty percussion work. A few small spots and an untidy solo entrance could not detract from the audience's enjoyment. The triple meter section (which to the casual listener might seem like a bit of "free" time) was electric. Fine tuba runs and great euphonium work led to a strong closing and an equal audience reaction. Philip Sparke's *Tallis Variations* was the band's choice to finish their performance, and they

The advertisement features two CD covers. The left cover is for 'PROCLAMATION' by Douglas Yeo, Bass Trombone, featuring a blue background with a trombone. The right cover is for 'two of a mind' by Nick Hudson and Douglas Yeo, featuring a photo of the two musicians. Between the covers are several quotes from reviewers. Below the covers is a text block about the website and the URL 'WWW.YEODOUG.COM'.

PROCLAMATION
Douglas Yeo
Bass Trombone
Back Oyle Mills Band
James Watson, conductor

TWO OF A MIND
"Surface virtuosity is eschewed in favour of lyricism and refined musicianship...played with exquisite sensitivity."
(Rodney Newton, The British Bandsman)
"Yeo and Hudson excel...uncompromising high quality."
(Vernon Briggs, Brass Band World)

Visit the award-winning website of Douglas Yeo, Bass Trombonist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, for articles, resources, free PDF and mp3 files and much more, including these best-selling compact discs.

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confidently introduced the piece with strong playing in the trombone and euphonium, followed by the statement of the "Third Tune" by Thomas Tallis. (With *Holy Week* starting on the morrow, it was "spot on" for many of us in the audience). The GBB produced intense highs and "butterfly" lows, with nice work by the tenor horn and great emotion throughout. A fine flugel solo brought in a triple meter section featuring nicely-played muted cornet runs. The balance was fine on the lower voices' chorale, and the audience was treated to something special when multitudes of mutes went in and out of bells across the band without a hint of extraneous sounds, a model for any band to copy. The piece flowed on to an incense-like soft ending. At the finish, it was apparent that the bar had been set. To win, a band would need to best the GBB.

Next onto the stage stepped the New England Brass Band, and a new era of their history was begun. The band underwent several personnel changes after their last NABBA appearance, and the two most noticeable were in the front of the band. Stephen Bulla made his NEBB competition debut and Kelly Watkins took the principal cornet chair. The band opened the

test selection with a brilliant sound, followed by less-than-tidy running lines and some suspect intonation. While playing somewhat cautiously, the band exhibited good highs and lows, but the intonation bug lingered. As the piece progressed, good solo work was heard in the soprano and later in the tenor horn. There was some scruffiness in the trading of lines between voices at various times, and the playing seemed to continue in a somewhat cautious, "vanilla" mode. However, the sudden appearance on the front of the band by a "strolling" tambourine player seemed to inspire the band into more spirited playing. James Cook, *Circumnavigator*, by Gilbert Vinter, followed the test piece. The NEBB drew into a very narrow dynamic range during this selection. In spite of some good work in spots, the band seemed to be tiring as the performance went on; intonation and precision problems increased. The ensemble played well in the march section of the piece and finished strongly. To finish the performance, Bulla chose a brand new march from his own pen that proved to be a delightful addition to the day's musical fare. *Charlotte Celebrations* is a short march (about two minutes), well-played by the band and well-received by the audience. There were

some musical effects that the band just did not seem to be able to pull off in this performance. Be it the changes in personnel or other factors, this was not the New England Brass Band at its best and they squeaked out a fifth place finish as a result. Look out in the future, though. The NEBB has the tools to be right back in the thick of it by next year's championships.

The "D" slot for 2009 saw the return of the Motor City Brass Band, their first NABBA Championships appearance since 2004. With Craig Strain, the band's conductor and musical director since its 1996 inception, on the podium, the band opened its quest for the 2009 Honors Section Banner with the test piece. Trittico proved to be a tough go for the Detroit-area musicians, as balance problems and less-than-confident solo playing marred the performance. After a brilliant opening, the band lacked the electricity needed for a great performance of the Curnow music. Although there were many good spots, the band never melded into a strong ensemble sound and produced a very "safe" effort at best. The low voices seemed to be the stronger components of the band. Following the test selection with Jacob de Haan's Diogenes, the band seemed more at ease and the soloists picked up quite a bit. Better balance, more varied dynam-

ics, and more attention to detail marked this performance. The biggest problems from my sideline seat were balance and transitions. The MCBB closed its day with Bruce Broughton's Harlequin. Though the band played this more confidently than their first two selections and with a nice, lively style, there were still the issues of balance and detail. The performance was the most lackluster of the Honors Section and the adjudicators must have concurred, as they placed the band in sixth place.

At this point, it seemed that the performance of the Georgia Band might hold up, but the "E" slot Central Ohio Brass Band had other ideas. The COBB did give us one of those "special" moments: as conductor Jessica Sneeringer raised her baton for a bit of stage warm-up, it became apparent that one of the band's three percussionists was missing. As time ticked away, he strolled onto the stage and proceeded to arrange his area of performance to his satisfaction, making eye contact with his conductor only when he was ready. Jessica gets my nod for the "coolest cat" of the Championships. Showing no frayed nerves, she warmed up the COBB and they went on to present what would be the winning performance of the Honors Section. Beginning with the test piece and concluding with a great

performance of Philip Wilby's Lowry Sketchbook, the band took the audience on a musical joyride that managed to out-score the GBB by three points and take the Honors banner. The COBB played Trittico with good balance and clarity. Full, wonderful sounds and strong impact points interacted with stylistic soloists and delicate low dynamics. The bass section was especially strong and tenor playing was admirable. I would have liked a little less on the soft passages to really put the cherry on top of the sundae, but most of the effects were nice enough. After a good finish to the Curnow, the band moved into the Wilby with a beautiful effect on the opening. A nice cornet/euphonium duet and well done "pops" and "punches" brought the first movement along. Some tasty soprano work was evident, as well. The vibraphone-muted cornet-marimba effect was much appreciated and the fade-away at the conclusion of the movement was great! The transition to the second movement was a little murky, but the band recovered well, sliding into soft sounds that accurately conveyed the mood of the music. Minor intonation problems were not enough to hurt the movement. The third movement offered some good "bells to the audience" and excellent trombone work. Some out-of-control playing was not enough to overturn the fine performance. Good solo cornet and soprano work

and a strong finish brought a great reaction from the audience. Everyone knew it was a two-horse race for the prize, with one band left to play. Most of us, at that point, were ready to put our money on the COBB.

In the final spot of the day came 2008 third place winner, the Princeton Brass Band. Conductor and founder Dr. Stephen Arthur Allen brought the band onto the Brown Auditorium stage with all of his usual energy and style. He wins the "Most Energetic Conduct-



ing” award with no close competitor at the NABBA Championships, and his band mirrors his excitement. The opening of the test piece was grand, but the percussion was just a little too eager in volume. With good solo and soprano cornet work, the band explored great dynamic contrasts. The tenor horns had their problems with precision. As the piece progressed, there were problems with weak or unmatched euphonium sounds. On many occasions, the band just did not seem to match the conductor in style or effect. The band played much more safely than their conductor asked. Many of the effects written into the music were just not happening. The recap of the opening statement saw the melody overtaken by the background parts, and the final tempo adjustments stretched too far for the band to retain their power, but the audience liked the conclusion of the Curnow. Dr. Allen chose Philip Sparke’s Year of the Dragon to finish their musical program, and it gave many PBB players a chance to stand out. The band as a whole, however, seemed to be forcing the sound to give the conductor what he wanted. The percussion in the opening section was well-played. Good soprano work prevailed and at times the band brought forth a really nice sound. But then it would just get too loud for the needed clarity. The second movement gave the solo trombonist a great forum; the bass work under the solo was noteworthy, as well. There were good soloists throughout the band, but intonation problems started to develop, especially in softer spots. The band lost its focus near the end of the second movement and the conclusion suffered. As the third movement developed, the band sounded tired; volume seemed to overtake clarity and detail. The band finished powerfully and the audience gave them a long ovation, but the judges placed the PBB in fourth place.

In conclusion, I must say that I enjoyed the honors section very much and appreciated the chance to review it. As a trained adjudicator and 35-year conducting veteran, my suggestion to the bands is to pay attention to dynamic range and detail. As a casual listener, I say thanks to all the bands for bringing such great

music and performances to our NABBA audience. It is only through quality performance of good literature that we grow as musicians and as bands. Good luck, and I hope to see you all at Raleigh in 2010.

P.S.: I’m not the official reviewer of the Youth Band Section, but what a Saturday evening finale we were given by the Triangle Youth Brass Band! BRAVO!



Buffet-Crampon Vice President Bruce Silva addresses the audience during the Awards Presentation on Saturday night. Buffet-Crampon was the primary sponsor of the 2009 NABBA Championships.

CHALLENGE SECTION

Reviewer: Douglas Yeo

This decade has seen several interesting trends in NABBA’s Challenge Section. Two bands, Spires and Sunshine, have combined for five first place titles. Three other bands have won the section once (New England, Georgia and Massanutten) and have moved up to the Honors section. With Spires sitting out the 2009

Championships, Sunshine looking to regain the top form they had in 2000 and 2002, Natural State having placed second for three of the last four years, and Bend in the River moving up this year from the Explorer Section, this year’s Challenge Section held the promise that at least one band would be making a big move. We were not disappointed.

This year’s test piece was Kenneth Downie’s “Purcell Variations.” Based on the hymn tune, “Purcell,” named after the great English composer, Henry Purcell, it provided bands with a theme and several variations of great stylistic diversity. Downie’s “St. Magnus” was the Championship Section test piece in 2008 so it was interesting to see Challenge bands step up to play music by this gifted and important composer.

Bend in the River Brass Band (Timothy Zifer), competing at the NABBA Championships for the third time, decided to move up from the Explorer Section, in which they had come in second place in 2007 and 2008. While many bands don’t move up from a section until they have won it, Bend in the River clearly saw advantages to working on the more difficult Challenge Section music. Their program began with the second movement of Sir John Dean Goffin’s “Rhapsody in Brass”; the complete work had been the Challenge Section test piece in 2001. This movement has a very exposed opening and early jitters kept the horn sound from settling in right away. The band recovered, though, and exhibited some nice blend from the trombones and fine soprano cornet playing.

The band then turned to the test piece and immediately seemed to settle down a bit. Timothy Zifer preferred a more relaxed tempo for the opening theme while the waltz moved along at a brisk pace. The percussion section unfortunately misread Downie’s indication for “orchestral bells” as glockenspiel instead of chimes, which took away from some of the piece’s most poetic moments, but the band played with commitment and more than a little passion, even if the piece, both techni-



cally and musically, was a bit over its head. This was an example of a band that was working hard to make things happen but which often fell into the trap of reacting to events rather than laying things down with confidence.

Bend in the River concluded its program with G. H. Wilcox's march, "The Champions." The band seemed most comfortable in this stylish march that used a strain from Handel's "Judas Maccabeus" in its middle section. The band exhibited some good dynamic and stylistic contrasts and brought their program to a conclusion with panache.

NABBA President Rusty Morris brought the Natural State Brass Band on stage with an exceptionally well-coordinated set up time and a very clear sense of purpose. Even before the band played a note, one had the feeling they were on a mission. The band seemed very relaxed and loose while having a look of intensity in their eyes. From the opening of "Purcell Variations," the band ex-

hibited a beautiful blend from top to bottom. Soprano cornetist Stephen Cross provided some real highlights (his delicate top "g" at the end of the presentation of the theme was electrifying), and the band's four percussion players coped confidently with their many demands. Throughout were many fine solos from solo cornet (democracy in action with this band: solos in both of their pieces were passed around to different players in the front row), horn (including a sensitive duet in the waltz) and E flat bass. The finale had the whole package: power, sound and sensitivity. There was no doubt that Natural State had delivered the test piece.

The band's choice piece, Paul Lovett-Cooper's "Vitae Aeternum," was a change of pace from standard NABBA Championships fare. Based on three songs by Salvationist composers, the piece modifies the source material into a medley that is both dramatic and poetic. The opening had great clarity and drive and Rusty Morris looked like he was in complete control of his charges. In the slow movement, the band's cornet section exhibited what was – by far – the softest and most sensitive section playing my ears heard during the whole weekend. This was followed by a beautiful flugelhorn solo by Larry Crenshaw. As "Vitae Aeternum" unfolded, you got the feeling you were witnessing a moment in time for the Natural State Brass Band. The conclusion and coda were stirring, and after the last chord had rung out, the audience leapt to its feet to congratulate the band on what was a superb presentation.

Sunshine Brass Band (Jim Cheyne) chose to open their program with Gordon Langford's "Sinfonietta." This fine work has some similarities, in form and construction, to Goffin's Rhapsody in Brass." The band opened nicely, and the first movement featured a fine flugel solo. The second movement found the pitch looking to settle down and the finale took time to settle rhythmically. It is not a flashy piece by any means, but the band gave a solid performance overall.

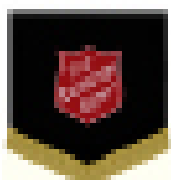
The test piece opened nicely with a lovely presentation of the theme and good rhythmic drive, but as things moved along, various percussion parts were missing that took away a bit from the overall effect. The jazzy middle section had an excellent tempo and the slow movement had a very nice cornet solo with some nice playing throughout. As I was listening I got the feeling that the band was just a little too restrained, as if they were being care-



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ful not to make a mistake rather than taking chances to do something truly special.

At the end of the day, the judge's scores affirmed what seemed evident during the performances: Bend in the River, while relatively new to contesting, is making progress as a result of reaching high at the NABBA Championships, Sunshine continues to be a contender that is in need of a few more things to reach the top once more, and Natural State has finally put its days as a bridesmaid behind and won its first Challenge Section banner.

EXPLORER SECTION

Reviewer: Joe Johnson

The venerable Brass Band of the Tri-State has been a NABBA staple for a number of years. Appearing uncontested this year, they presented an interesting and enjoyable program that showcased several different styles.

To open, the band gave a solid account of James Curnow's concert march, *Espirit*. This performance had good energy and featured some excellent contributions from the soprano player. This was followed by Rimmer's arrangement of Verdi's *Nabucodonosor*. The band exhibited good control at the opening of this challenging work, with good ensemble blend from top to bottom. The middle section wavered a bit pitchwise, but there was good solo playing and the band finished strong.

The test piece was Philip Sparke's *Four Noble Truths*. The band's performance of this piece was generally good, though in some spots it sounded like a number of the players were (justifiably) tired. Perhaps the energetic and engaging performances of the first two items sapped the group a bit. Still, many of the musical effects, including some Heaton-esque references came through just fine and showed Brass Band of the Tri-State to be in good form.

OPEN SECTION

Reviewer: Joe Johnson

The Brass Band of Huntsville was founded in 2001, but this year marked its first appearance at the NABBA contest. BBH gave solid performances and is truly a band on the rise. I

had the opportunity to hear this band in Birmingham several years ago and can attest to the fact that they are making very steady progress. I couldn't believe I was hearing the same band (and they were no slouch when I first heard them).

Their program opened with the test piece, Kenneth Downie's *Purcell Variations*. It was evident from the start that this band plays with a mature, controlled sound. The balance and blend were quite good throughout. The band uses French horns to good effect, and they did very well in the tricky duet in the first slow section. Other notables included the soprano, who possessed a very delicate touch, and the tubas. There were only two tubas, but they provided a very solid foundation. The percussion section was also quite dependable. All in all, this was a thoroughly satisfying performance of a difficult work. Tempos were steady and there was a fullness to the group sound that avoided bombast. The necessary details had no trouble coming out of the texture.

For their free choice item, the BBH chose Stephen Bulla's *Images for Brass*. The band established an atmospheric opening with good percussion. Tempos were steady, though they may have been just a tad staid. A bit more forward movement may have helped here. Still, the band played with good control and attention to detail. A few personal fouls in the last two movements did little to take away from a fine performance. The overall presentation of this piece was safe and generally clean. If

anything, the piece could have benefited from livelier tempos in some sections, as well as a bit more sense of abandon in the finale. But these are small, subjective points and are in no way intended to take away from a highly successful NABBA debut.

Brass banding is obviously alive and well in Huntsville. Hopefully, this year marked the first of what will be many NABBA appearances for this talented group. Should they ever switch from French horns to tenor horns, this





The graduating seniors of the Triangle Youth Brass Band, winners of the 2009 Youth Section. Conductor: Tony Granados.

band would be a solid competitor in one of the 'standard' sections.

YOUTH SECTION

Reviewer: Theresa MacDonald

As the icing on a wonderful Brass Band-weekend cake, the sole competing band in the Youth Section took to the stage Saturday evening after the final performance of the Championship Section. There was an incredibly supportive vibe in the audience and it was wonderful to see the very bright future of brass banding in North America in the form of the Triangle Youth Brass Band. It was also great to see these young performers featured on stage in front of a big crowd, a memorable experience for the performers as well.

Music director Tony Granados led the ensemble through a confident and mature performance of "An English Suite" by Michael Ball. The cornet section displayed a nice sound and while some soloists seemed a bit tentative, the band soon hit their stride and relaxed into a lively and vibrant performance. Highlights of this talented group's performance were good ensemble work by the bass section, nice treatment of the lyrical lines, excellent solo performances by solo cornet and soprano, and

a wonderful tenor horn section. Next on the program was Derek Ashmore's transcription of the Finale from Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, played with gusto. Although rhythms were a bit scrabbly at times, overall the ensemble handled the technical challenges of the running figures well. Euphonium and repiano stood out in this piece, with nice work in the bass section on pedals. Although fatigue set in towards the end, with intonation starting to slip and less dynamic contrast, the band ended with a flourish. Kudos to the cymbal player with the tough offbeat part, a real workout!

With the crowd on its feet in a standing ovation, the band took off in an unscripted encore, a blistering version of Fillmore's "Rolling Thunder" that had the crowd cheering and clapping along. A perfect closing to a most amazing weekend of brass banding.

YOUTH OPEN SECTION

Reviewer: Joe Johnson

The Triangle Youth Brass Ensemble gave a commendable performance in this section and presented two challenging items. Looking at the group's photo in the NABBA program book, I was expecting a very large ensemble, with row

upon row of trumpets and trombones, to take the stage. However, the group on this day only had four trumpets to match a full complement of low brass (including eight tubas). I wasn't sure what to expect.

I was treated to a group of fine young musicians who tackled some difficult music with great gusto. The Horowitz Sinfonietta presents challenges to any band at any level. TYBE gave it a solid reading. Having eight tubas presents balance issues in any band, but this section is to be commended for their warm sound and ability to play softly. The whole group, in fact, found much of the delicacy in this fine work, especially in the final section. Occasional tuning issues did not diminish the impact of the music and the group did a fine job.

Next up was Eric Ball's *Petite Suite de Ballet*. The opening movement was solid and had a nice jaunty feel to it. The trumpets came to the fore in this movement and set the tone for the rest of the group. There was good euphonium work throughout this piece, particularly in the second and fourth movement solos. I applaud director Jon Caldwell for choosing this piece. The Ball is a great piece to use with

a group looking to hone its brass band skills and it was good to see a youth band tackle one of the classics. Working on repertoire such as this provides the fundamentals of ensemble playing that will yield great benefits to young musicians.

Performing uncontested in a section may give some groups a sense of complacency. After all, you know going in that you will take home one of those attractive banners, regardless of how you play. The Triangle Youth Brass Ensemble obviously does not think that way. Jon Caldwell has done excellent work with this committed group. I look forward to seeing TYBE's continued growth at future NABBA events.

SOLO/ENSEMBLE REVIEWS

ADULT HIGH BRASS TECHNICAL SOLO

Reviewer: Helen Tyler

The 2009 NABBA High Brass Technical com-

petition was a small event this year with a rather reduced field of competitors. Although the numbers were down, the standard remained the same and Richard Marshall, principal cornet with Black Dyke Band, had a difficult job as adjudicator to place the prizewinners. Each of the top three performances could have merited the title but it was Stan Smith's flawless performance of "Song and Dance" by Philip Sparke that won first place. Congratulations to all the competitors and I hope to hear you all again next year.

1. Stan Smith (cornet, Fountain City Brass Band)
2. Alvin Bernard (cornet, Brass Band of Central Florida)
3. Cyndi Salata (cornet, Illinois Brass Band)

ADULT HIGH BRASS SLOW MELODY

Reviewer: Lee Harrelson

The 2009 NABBA High Brass Slow Melody competition took place Friday afternoon, April 3, in the Brown Theater-Recital Room, and was adjudicated by Brian Bowen. Although the number of participants in this caption was relatively small, there were more beautiful perfor-

mances than number of awards to give out. To name just one example, Andrew Malovance, principal cornetist of the Chicago Brass Band, who presented a dramatic rendition of Arlen's "Over the Rainbow."

In the end it was New England Brass Band's Kelly Watkins (cornet), also a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Band, whose stunning performance of Richard Lane's "Song" took first place. The work, with its impressionistic influence, was a refreshing addition to the standard slow melody repertoire. Ms. Watkins's performance was only enhanced by her pianist, Steve Bulla.

Rounding out the awards were accomplished performances by Jack Deal (flugel horn, Atlantic Brass Band) and Chris Walton (cornet, James Madison University Brass Band). In second place, Mr. Deal performed "Softly & Tenderly" by Thompson and young Mr. Walton performed the second movement of Flor Peeters's trumpet sonata.

Congratulations to all who participated.

ADULT LOW BRASS TECHNICAL SOLO

Reviewer: Don Kneeburg

The 2009 Low Brass Technical Solo section of the Championships was a delight for this



SOLO REVIEWS, CONT.

reviewer. All contestants were well-prepared, selected good choices of music, and performed with confidence. The second place winner was tubist Scott Watson, of the Fountain City Brass Band. Scott displayed an excellent grasp of the technique required for his choice piece, Handel's *Aria con Variazioni*. He demonstrated a strong range and good musical interpretation. The winner of this division was euphoniumist Nate Gay, also of the Fountain City Brass Band. Nate is an all-around superb musician. His performance of his chosen piece, *Giocoso* by Vladimer Cosma, showed his excellent tone quality, range and technique. Fountain City should feel fortunate to have two such fine musicians on their roster.

ADULT LOW BRASS SLOW MELODY

Reviewer: Thomas G. Stein

One of the marks of an excellent competition is that it is very easy on the audience and very difficult on the adjudicators. The judge for the Low Brass Slow Melody Competition, Bram Gregson, worked very, very hard Friday morning. As one who has competed in and listened to this competition for years, this crew of performers was very strong. Many players showed excellent control, musicianship, and delicate playing. Still, someone had to win.

Euphonium player Lee Harrelson of the Fountain City Brass Band and accompanist Alex Thio performed *Cantabile* by Paganini/Richards to win First Place. Lee is really building a name for himself as a world-class performer. As audiences have come to expect from Lee, his performance was absolutely stunning. His immense dynamic range, emotionally-charged expression and impeccable control set a benchmark that the rest of us mortals strive to achieve.

For second place, trombonist Michael Miragliotta of the James Madison University Brass Band performed "Movement II" from *Sonatina* for Trombone et Piano by Jacques Casterede. Michael's approach was wonderful for this French work. This lovely piece requires a gentle touch and light, singing character. Michael had these in spades. His lyric articulations

were like butter. He had a very tasteful sense of the musical line, and uncommon vibrato for a young player. If Mike continues down the path he has begun, he will surely have a bright and wonderful future.

Karen Zawacki, trombonist from the Fountain City Brass Band, performed John Golland's *Peace* to win third place. Karen played with an incredibly sweet sound that floated effortlessly throughout this work. As with all the winners, she had an easy touch that allowed the listener to relax and be carried away by her sound and musicality. While simplicity can sometimes be boring and dull, this lovely and touching work shimmered in Karen's hands.

The general quality of the performances was pleasing and made for a very nice morning. There were, however, a few others of special note (no pun intended). In particular, Sean Malcomer, euphonium player with the James Madison University Brass Band, is a young performer to keep an eye on. I can see a lot of Lee Harrelson in his playing. Only a freshman at JMU, Sean played very maturely and has a notably beautiful sound. Check him out next year; you will not be disappointed.

Without question, the crowd favorites were two

women from Colorado, Sandra Johnson and Riley Grasso, who performed Peter Graham's *Celtic Dreams*. Before taking the stage, Sandra admitted to me that she was so nervous she could hardly see straight. This was not evident in her performance. She played very musically and confidently. One of the joys of her performance was that she was accompanied by her "rock," Riley Grasso, her 11-year-old daughter, who played beautifully. In short order, these two had the crowd laughing, solidly wrapped



around their little fingers, and loving every moment of their performance. No one received a bigger ovation.

ADULT PERCUSSION SOLO

Reviewer: Douglas Yeo

It is difficult for us to imagine – in our time when composers write engaging, difficult and important parts for up to five percussion players in a band – that the first major brass band contest to allow percussion on the stage was Belle Vue in 1969. The test piece for that year was Gilbert Vinter's "Spectrum" (NABBA's Honors Section test piece in 2006), and the host of novel percussion instruments (including bongos, claves, woodblock and tambourine) caused quite a stir. "After all," some said, "this is a BRASS band contest."

NABBA first included percussion in its solo and ensemble contest in 1999, and in the years since then, percussion has provided some of the most interesting performances of the day.

The James Madison University Percussion Quartet was the only entry in the Percussion Ensemble section. Jamieson Carr, Suzie Berndt, Lauren Hetland and Adam Ashforth performed on an array of instruments including two marimbas (one was a teutonic five-octave instrument) and a vast collection of cymbals, one of which looked like it had a close encounter with a can opener. Precision, a wide palate of colors and an uncanny sense of "oneness" characterized their engaging performance of Dave Hall's "Escape Velocity."

All five of the percussion solo entrants chose a different instrument on which to play. While they did not place among the winners, Jamieson Carr (JMU) and Stephen Lee (New England) gave solid performances on marimba and snare drum, respectively. Dorathea Kastanas

(New England) placed third with her multiple percussion solo, "Time to Remember," by Guy Gauthreaux. The spectacle of this diminutive young woman making her way around bass drum, tom toms, bongos, cymbals, bull roar, tambourine, temple blocks and claves (all on a specially constructed platform so she had only to roll everything out on stage already in place) was captivating. Joseph Hull (Fountain City) finished second on Dennis Rogers' drum set solo, "Funkey." His concentration was intense, especially when masterfully working on the high hat, the playing of which was both insistent and dramatic. Suzie Berndt (JMU) captivated the audience with her first place

some very talented young players, both from youth and adult bands, competing in a variety of sections over the weekend.

First up was Ryan Stees, euphonium, from the Massanutten Brass Band. It is difficult enough to be in the first performer slot, let alone having to start unaccompanied, as was the challenge with Ryan's selection of James Curnow's "Rhapsody for Euphonium." After a slightly tentative start, Ryan hit his stride, displaying a lovely, warm sound and good sense of lyrical line in the opening section of the work, with a good rapport with accompanying piano. Moving into the faster middle section, Stees

showed excellent clarity of articulation in the technical passages and a steady sense of time. There were some intonation issues, particularly in the upper range, and more attention to dynamic contrasts would only enhance this young musician's presentation of this solo work. Stees is a talented player and one to keep an eye on in future years.

The next soloist was Dylan Castora, solo cornet from Triangle Youth Brass Band, who chose to perform of Venice with a selection of variations. Performing this old chestnut without accompaniment certainly makes it a different experience for the audience, and one has to mentally fill in the accompaniment. Regardless, Castora performed with confidence, displaying great technique and a lovely, round sound. Dylan handled the difficult demands of the showpiece solo with panache. In particular, many hours of practice were evident in the great flexibility and accuracy in arpeggios, and excellent articulation made this a stand-out performance.

Danny Blye, Eb soprano with the Triangle Youth Brass Band, performed a selection from the Sachse Concertino in Eb. Once again, it would have been wonderful to hear this performance with an accompanist; regardless, Blye showed a natural flare for the soprano cornet,



rendition of "Morrison's Jig" on steel drum. This ethereal instrument never fails to make a strong impression on listeners, sounding as if it is coming from a far off place. Suzie's flowing technique had a hypnotic, even calming effect on the audience, which burst into prolonged and enthusiastic applause as the final sounds died away.

YOUTH BRASS SOLO

Reviewer: Theresa MacDonald

With six soloists scheduled for the Youth Brass Solo competition and an audience of supportive fans pulling for all the young performers, this year's NABBA Youth Brass Solo section was an impressive and encouraging showcase of



Part of the 1st place-winning JMU Cornet Ensemble. Photo courtesy of Kevin Stees.

with a seemingly effortless high range, picking off the high notes with ease. Also notable was a lovely sound and good intonation. Starkly presented as it was, it was difficult to get a good sense of the musicality of the piece; however, Blye is well suited to the instrument and has a bright future performing on the soprano cornet.

David's Concertino in Eb for Trombone was the selection for the next soloist, Dalton Harris, also a member of the Triangle Youth Brass Band. Keeping with the trend of his fellow Triangle Brass Band mates, the performance was once again without accompaniment. Harris had a good strong opening, displayed a nice tone and good legato technique, and moved smoothly without losing definition. More confidence in the technical passages of the solo would have only enhanced the performance as it was clear that as a player, it was more than within Harris' capabilities. In the future, Harris would do well to develop a 'go for it' attitude for these sections rather than approaching them somewhat tentatively. With work on more dynamic contrast, this will be an excellent solo to for Harris's recital repertoire.

Last, and certainly not least, onstage in this section was Adam Dixon, trombone, from the Brass Band of the Tri-State. Performing the third movement of the Larson Concertino for Trombone, Dixon showed a maturity of performance that belied his high school age, and turned in a remarkably mature performance of this difficult work. With a warm and full

sound, good articulation and great tone throughout the dynamic range, Dixon was impressive and quite engaging as a performer. It was great to see a soloist who was dressed for the occasion (one can never overlook the importance of the total package as a soloist) and took the stage with confident and presence. The solo was well prepared and Dixon was unfazed by occasional errors in the piano. He was able to deliver a performance that showed careful attention to detail, great dynamic range and very musical playing.

ADULT BRASS ENSEMBLE

Reviewer: Joe Johnson

There was plenty of fine playing in this section and numerous types of ensembles performed: two trios, three quintets, a sextet, a cornet choir, and a 10-piece brass choir. Listeners were treated to a number of fine performances in this hotly contested section and all entrants deserve congratulations: Chicago Brass Band Players, Midtown Brass Quintet, JET quintet (augmented to compete as a sextet on this occasion), BRBQ Quintet, N.E.W. Trio, James Madison University Cornet Ensemble, Atlantic Blue, and the Atlantic-Rowan Cornet Trio. And now, on to the winners.

Chicago Brass Band Players, a ten-piece ensemble, started off the day with the Guyot arrangement of Gershwin's *An American in Paris*. Perhaps owing to being the first group



out, they initially had some response issues, particularly in the cornets. The group settled into a groove, however, and gave a rousing performance. The ensemble blend was quite fine, anchored by solid tuba playing. The group sounded most at ease in the louder sections and achieved a good sense of swagger. They made short work of this challenging arrangement and earned a solid third place finish.

The N.E.W. Trio, representing the New England Brass Band, presented a subtle, lyrical performance of *Trio-Album für junge Blechbläser*. This is a set of brief Baroque and Renaissance works by various composers. Each one was delivered with flair and élan by the principal cornet, horn, and trombone from NEBB. The trio blend was excellent, with the cornet taking the lead most of the time and receiving excellent support from the other parts. This was some of the finest cornet playing heard during the weekend, highlighted by a gorgeous tone, effortless and unobtrusive articulations, and a deft touch over the entire range of the instrument. This fine characteristic performance resulted in a well-earned second place finish for the N.E.W. Trio.

The winning performance of the day was that of the JMU Cornet Ensemble. This fine group of young players presented two contrasting works: *The Last Spring* (Edvard Grieg) and *The Storm's Path* (Brian Balmages). The sonorities produced by this group were remarkable. The judicious use of Bb cornets, Eb cornets, and flugelhorn made for good blend and excellent timbral consistency. The Grieg got off to a bit of a rocky start, but once things settled down there was a real sheen to the group's sound. The lower cornet parts were particularly solid and provided a good foundation for the melody lines. And, while this reviewer felt the piece could have "breathed" a bit more by taking more time at the ends of phrases, the group played together and produced a consistent bur-nished sound. The Balmages piece, as its title may imply, was a more aggressive work. The

ensemble switched gears effectively and gave a convincing account of this exciting piece, with solid balance and blend throughout.





Gail Robertson presents Red Bernthold with a new York cornet, donated by Sonare Winds. Red's daughter, Kim DeKay, plays Eb cornet with the Central Ohio Brass Band.



ACROSS THE BRIDGE

JUNE 11 - 14, 2009

Great American Brass Band Festival, Danville, Kentucky. More information at gabbf.org

JUNE 18 - 28, 2009

Gettysburg Festival, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. More information at gettysburgfestival.org

JUNE 20, 2009

Grand Celebration of Brass Bands, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. For more information, e-mail rvamanas@amanas.net

JANUARY 30, 2010

8th Annual Northwest Brass Band Festival, Bellevue, Washington. More information at www.brassbandnw.org/festival.htm

APRIL 2 - 3, 2010

Ohio Brass Arts Festival, Columbus, Ohio. More information at ohiobrassbands.org

APRIL 16 - 17, 2010

2010 NABBA XXVIII Championships, Raleigh, North Carolina. More information will be forthcoming soon at nabba.org

BUILDING BRIDGES: NEWS FROM NABBA BANDS

MOTOR CITY BRASS BAND

Having just returned from the NABBA XXVII competition in Louisville, Motor City Brass Band gears up for a summer filled with performances and activities! Both MCBB and its educational counterpart, the Motor City Youth Brass Band (MCYBB), have a lot to look forward to in the upcoming months.

On Tuesday, April 28, the Motor City Youth Brass Band presented another high-energy performance at Page Middle School in Madison Heights, MI. Sponsored by MCBB, MCYBB is the only youth ensemble of its kind in the state of Michigan. Made up of devoted student musicians from various metro Detroit school districts, the MCYBB has made leaps and bounds in progress this year, its second full season. The students' continued improvement

is a result of their impressive commitment, as well as that of their dedicated band directors, Erin Hufford and Mike Garvey. Both accomplished music educators in Madison Heights' Lamphere District, Hufford and Garvey each play cornet with MCBB.

Next up for the adult band is a concert at the Farmington Hills Festival of the Arts in Farmington Hills, MI. Doing what they do best, the Band will play a wide variety of music, from Ravel's Bolero to a number of jazz tunes, including rollicking versions of "The Debuted" and "All That Jazz."

In a performance entitled "The Color of Music," MCBB will wrap up its 2008-09 Concert Series on May 17. As its theme suggests, this concert will feature selections which make reference to the colors of the rainbow, from the popular Beatles tune, "Yellow Submarine," to Arthur Pryor's signature trombone solo, The Bluebells of Scotland. The program will also include a heartfelt performance of Robert Longfield's The Purple Twilight, a work that celebrates the lives of the seven astronauts lost in NASA's 1986 Challenger shuttle mission. Longfield himself was an applicant for the "Teacher in Space" position on the ill-fated NASA mission, making the piece especially



Erin Hufford leads the Motor City Youth Brass Band.



The 8th Regiment Band of Rome, Georgia will perform authentic Civil War music at the Gettysburg Festival in June.

poignant. The composer is a native of Grand Rapids, MI.

Continuing its mission to educate and encourage the next generation of brass band members, MCBB will sponsor several clinics in the upcoming weeks. Presented in Madison Heights' Lamphere District (home of the Motor City Youth Brass Band), the clinics will feature trombonist Kenneth Thompkins of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Thompkins will engage students in brass workshops throughout the day, joining MCBB in the evening to present a concert to the community. Accompanied by MCBB, Mr. Thompkins will perform Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's Concerto for Trombone.

Summertime doesn't mean vacation for the busy MCBB! Once again, the Band will embark upon an ambitious series of summer concerts, beginning on June 17 at the historic Burgh Park in Southfield, MI.

GETTYSBURG FESTIVAL

The 2nd Annual Gettysburg Festival will offer performances by more than 400 brass musicians, ranging from talented quintets to prestigious military bands, and music ranging from traditional brass to ragtime and contemporary pieces. "This is one of the finest lineups of brass performers in America," explains Ben Jones, Gettysburg Festival Artistic Director for Brass. "It is my hope that brass audiences are inspired and joyful as a result of being immersed in the incredible sounds of brass music in Gettysburg."

The Gettysburg Festival, June 18-28, offers about 100 cultural events in all genres of the arts including brass, jazz, orchestra, culinary events, theater, cabaret, visual arts and children's events. The Festival's brass lineup kicks off on Thursday, June 18, with the dynamic 28-member River City Brass, making their Gettysburg debut. "River City's outstanding repertoire, from classical to pop, plus traditional marches, has all the ingredients needed for an unforgettable beginning to the Festival," said Jones.

Throughout the weekend, 18 brass bands will play 23 performances in eight venues. Highlights include The Coburn Brass Band, the

2nd Annual Gettysburg Festival

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All Gettysburg Festival brass concerts are free and open to the public with donations appreciated and welcomed. Attendees are welcome to bring chairs, picnic blankets and picnic lunches or dinners. VIP seating to most brass concerts is available for a \$10 donation. Additional performance information is available on the Festival website, www.gettysburgfestival.org or by calling 717-334-0853.

NABBA BAND CONCERT PROGRAMS

ATLANTA TEMPLE BAND, ROBERT SNELSON, CONDUCTOR.

April 7, 2009. Salvation Army Atlanta Temple Corps, Atlanta, GA. Goldcrest (James Anderson), Reflections in Nature (Robert Redhead), Someone Cares (Ray Steadman-Allen – Richard Marshall, cornet solo), Light of the World (Dean Goffin), El Es El Señor (Dean Jones).

ATLANTIC BRASS BAND, SALVATORE SCARPA, CONDUCTOR; PRINCETON BRASS BAND, DR. STEPHEN ALLEN, CONDUCTOR.

March 26, 2009. Pfleeger Auditorium, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ. Le Tricot Rouge (Wilfred Heaton, arr. Paul Hindmarsh), Trittico (James Curnow), The Year of the Dragon (Philip Sparke), Devil and the Deep Blue Sea (Derek Bourgeois), New Jerusalem (Philip Wilby), The Corsair (Hector Berlioz, arr. Geoffrey Brand), Pines of the Appian Way (Ottorino Respighi, arr. Howard Snell).

GEORGIA BRASS BAND, JOE JOHNSON, CONDUCTOR

April 7, 2009. Salvation Army Atlanta Temple Corps, Atlanta, GA. Glemdene (John Carr), Concertpiece for Cornet (James Curnow – Richard Marshall, cornet solo), Rusalka's Song to the Moon (Antonín Dvořák, arr. Gordon Langford – Richard Marshall, cornet solo), Tal-lis Variations (Philip Sparke), The Irish Blessing (Joyce Bacak, arr. Steve Bradnum), Clear Skies (Eric Ball – Richard Marshall, cornet solo), Trittico for Brass Band (James Curnow).

SUNSHINE BRASS BAND, JAMES CHEYNE, CONDUCTOR

February 8, 2009. First United Methodist Church, Lakeland, FL. Fanfare and National Anthem (Erik Leidzen), I Vow to Thee My Country (Gustav Holst, arr. R. S. Allen), Sinfonietta (Gordon Langford), Purcell Variations (Kenneth Downie), The Easy Winners (Scott Joplin, arr. James Cheyne), Ave Verum Corpus (Mozart, arr. James Cheyne), O Magnum Mysterium (Morten Lauridsen, arr. George

DeGuzman), Scarborough Fair (arr. James Cheyne), Hymn to the Fallen (John Williams), March of the Cobblers (Bob Barratt & Edrich Siebert).

March 15, 2009. Trinity United Methodist Church, Wesley Chapel, FL. Fanfare and National Anthem (Erik Leidzen), I Vow to Thee My Country (Gustav Holst, arr. R. S. Allen), Sinfonietta (Gordon Langford), Purcell Variations (Kenneth Downie), The Easy Winners (Scott Joplin, arr. James Cheyne), Ave Verum Corpus (Mozart, arr. James Cheyne), O Magnum Mysterium (Morten Lauridsen, arr. George DeGuzman), Prelude for an Occasion (Edward Gregson), March of the Cobblers (Bob Barratt & Edrich Siebert).



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2009 OHIO BRASS ARTS FESTIVAL

MARCH 12 - 13, 2009: WEIGEL AUDITORIUM

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, COLUMBUS, OHIO

By Diana Herak

Quickly becoming one of the nation's premiere brass events, the 3rd annual Ohio Brass Arts Festival (OBAF) took place on March 12-13, in Weigel Auditorium on the campus of The Ohio State University, hosted by the Central Ohio Brass Band (COBB). According to OBAF Executive Director Patrick Herak, one of the primary goals of the event is to bring together British-style youth brass bands, university groups, competitive brass bands, non-competing brass bands, and Salvation Army bands.

The state of Ohio is arguably the "Yorkshire Area" of America, certainly a hotspot of brass banding, and the perfect location for such an event. The area traces its banding roots back to the Columbus Citadel Band of the Salvation Army, which was established in Ohio's capital city back in 1885. In 1934, Eugene Weigel changed the instrumentation of The Ohio State University Marching Band (OSUMB) to all-brass, a tradition that continues to this day.

Most of the true British-style brass bands in Columbus grew from the Brass Band of Columbus (BBC), founded in 1984 by Dr. Paul Droste upon his retirement as director of the OSUMB. Next to appear were the All-Star Brass Bands founded in 1986 by BBC solo euphoniumist, Dr. Eric Aho. In 1990, several college professors from the central Ohio area joined together to form the Ohio Collegiate Brass, which was the basis for the current Central Ohio Brass Band.

This year's OBAF got off to a wonderful start on Friday afternoon with a Recital/Master Class by Mark Bousie, principal euphonium of the Faireys Band in Manchester, England. All attendees were astounded by Mr. Bousie's musicianship, and intrigued by his style of euphonium playing.

The first full band performance was that of the newly-formed Ohio Brass Band, under the direction of Dr. Paul Droste. The OBB is



The Brass Band of the Western Reserve performs at the 2009 Ohio Brass Arts Festival, under the baton of Dr. Keith Wilkinson.

comprised of players from bands around Ohio, including COBB, BBC, Scioto Valley Brass & Percussion Co., and the OSUMB Alumni Band. In November, the Ohio Brass Band was named "Most Entertaining Band of the Day" at the U.S. Open for their tribute to the old-time band leader, Spike Jones. In addition, OBB principal cornetist Tony Phillip won the "Top Corner Soloist of the Day" and the percussion section took home the "Best Percussion of the Day" prize (no doubt for their ability to play tuned cowbells, among other things). With their interesting costumes and non-stop action, the band certainly proved to be "most entertaining," and a great way to start OBAF 2009.

Next on the agenda were two groups from Capital University (Bexley, Ohio). Tony Zilincik, led the Capital University Brass Choir in several orchestral selections. Zilincik also conducted the tuba/euphonium ensemble Capital Thunder, which performed such selections as "Pastime with Good Company" and "You Made Me Love You." This was the premiere

performance for both of these groups at OBAF, and certainly won't be the last! The audience greatly appreciated each group's offerings.

Up next were Taylor Walters on marimba and David VanLaningham on snare drum. Taylor and David are percussion students of Jon Merritt at Hilliard Darby High School. There followed a performance of the Groveport Madison Percussion Ensemble, directed by Patrick O'Donnell. Dr. Keith Wilkinson then took the stage with his Chapel at Worthington Woods Salvation Army Band, performing several sacred selections including "Amazing Race" by Mackerith, "Be Thou My Vision" arr. by Woodland, and "Festival March" by Downie.

Friday evening concluded with the OBAF Repertoire Band, a favorite of OBAF followers! All interested brass players and percussionists took the stage with their instruments, where we read through various pieces, including the top 3 selections for the 2009 OBAF Composition Contest. This winning piece of this year's contest is "American Landscape" by British

composer Benjamin Tubb. The other finalists included Martin Tousignant ("Talk about Sufferin' Here Below") and James E. Patrick ("She Moved Through the Fair"). A special thanks to Jagrins for once again sponsoring the composition contest, and to MMI Music for supplying the majority of this year's music.

The second day of the Festival began bright and early with performances by two youth

bands: the All-Star Brass and Percussion, conducted by Dr. Eric Aho, and the Junior Varsity All-Star Brass Band, conducted by Chad McGee. Both groups proved that the youth banding scene in Ohio is all and well!

The Otterbein Trumpet Ensemble (Wester-ville, Ohio), made up of students of Otterbein College instructors Ben Huntoon and Daniel King, performed two selections under the guest

baton of Alan Couch. Mr. Couch recently retired after thirty years as a trumpet player in the Cleveland Orchestra. In addition to working with the Otterbein students, he also presented an informative Master Class to all interested OBAF attendees.

Next to take the stage was Dr. Keith Wilkin-son's Chapel Brass, formerly known as the Central Ohio Youth Band. The band formed in 2001, and is a "ministry of The Salvation Army, The Chapel at Worthington Woods, and provides an opportunity for its members to perform quality music at a high standard in a Christian environment." The band featured trombone soloist Andrew Wolf on "Ye Banks and Braes," an arrangement by Dr. Wilkinson. The band also gave a fine performance of "Pur-cell Variations," arr. by Downie.

The TBDBITL Alumni Band (Director Dr. Paul Droste, Assistant Director Jon Waters), then played a variety of tunes, featuring such composers/arrangers as Richard Heine, Edward Montgomery, and James Swearingen. Dr. Keith Wilkinson's Brass Band of the West-ern Reserve (BBWR), his third band on the OBAF agenda, performed selections including "Concertante for Cornets" by Stephen Bulla and "Rhapsodic Variations: Laude" by James Curnow. The BBWR has been the Ensemble-in Residence at the University of Akron since 2000.

The BBWR's performance was flanked by two groups from Cedarville University: the Cedarville Brass Quintet and Cedarville Brass Choir, both under the direction of Charles M. Pagnard. Both groups proved to be fine additions to this year's Festival.

The Scioto Valley Brass & Percussion Co. had a definite nautical theme this year, as the members took the stage in pirate costumes and props. The band entertained with "Sea Songs" by Vaughan Williams, "Variations on the Sailor's Hornpipe" by Christopher Hoch (also the band's director), "Russian Sailor's Dance" by Gliere (arr. Gourlay), "Margaritaville" by Jimmy Buffet, "Under the Sea" by Menken (arr. Pfaffman), and "Pirates of the Caribbean" by Badelt (arr. Wasson; trans. Schnap).

The Brass Band of the Tri-State, directed by Gary E. Clarke, returned to OBAF for its third appearance, featuring selections they will per-form in the upcoming North American Brass



Percussionist Jon Merritt performs with the Ohio Brass Band, led by Dr. Paul Droste.



Principal cornetist Tony Philipp performs "Minka" with the Ohio Brass Band.

Band Association (NABBA) Championships: "Espirit" by James Curnow, "Nabucodonosor" by Verdi/arr. Rimmer, and "The Four Noble Truths" by Phillip Sparke. The band's performance was flanked by the Chapel Brass Tuba Quartet, and the Erie Heights Brass Ensemble, which featured a "Train" show, including "I've Been Workin' on the Railroad," "Take the 'A' Train," and "Choo Choo Boogie."

The next band to perform was the Central Ohio Brass Band, under the direction of Jessica Sneeringer. In preparation for their upcoming NABBA Contest, the band performed perhaps the most serious repertoire of the day: Honors Section test piece, "Tritico" by James Curnow, and the COBB's own-choice work, "Lowry Sketchbook" by Philip Wilby.

The weekend festivities concluded with the 24th Annual God and Country Concert, a yearly joint venture between the Brass Band of Columbus, and The Salvation Army London Citadel Band from Ontario, Canada, conducted by Bandmaster John Lam. The two bands sat next to each other on the Weigel Auditorium stage and took turns performing for the large, enthusiastic audience. Soloists for the evening included the London Citadel's Craig Woodland on cornet performing "Virtuosity" by Kenney Baker (arr. Jack Peberdy), London Citadel's Steven Burditt on euphonium performing "Travelling Along" by Chris Mallet, and the BBC's Daniel King on cornet playing "What a Friend" by C. C. Converse (arr. Mark Freeh). This year's annual God and Country Music Award was given to Mr. Arnett Howard, and the Brigadier Arthur B. Hill Memorial Scholarships were presented to Jacob Heller, Grant Jameson, and Will Roesch.

The concert concluded with the combined London Citadel and BBC Bands performing "A Little Prayer" by Evelyn Glennie (arr. Robert Childs), "Stars and Leafs Forever," by William Himes, and "God Be With You" by Noel Brooks, which brought the program to a beautifully moving close.

Congratulations to all the participants and volunteers throughout the weekend, specifically to the God and Country Committee, the Central Ohio Brass Band and OBAF Festival Coordinator Patrick Herak, as well as Compere George Zonders, for another highly successful and enjoyable Ohio Brass Arts Festival. Next year's festival will take place again at Weigel

Auditorium on the campus of The Ohio State University on April 2-3, 2010. Hope to see you there! For more information, visit: www.ohiobrassbands.com.



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2009 NORTHWEST INTERNATIONAL BRASS BAND FESTIVAL

JANUARY 31, 2009: BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON

By Douglas Yeo

On January 31, four brass bands from the Pacific Northwest came together in Bellevue, Washington, for the seventh annual Northwest International Brass Band Festival. I was pleased to be the Festival's guest conductor and clinician, following in the footsteps of other distinguished conductors who had filled the same role in past years including Frank Renton, James Curnow, and Philip Sparke. Sponsored by NABBA member band Brass Band Northwest, and organized by the band's Director Emeritus, Steve Keene, the Festival provided a nice opportunity for each of the participating bands to interact with both myself and guest soloist, tubist Deanna Swoboda, while enjoying the camaraderie of a non-competitive, gala concert in the evening.

First Presbyterian Church in Bellevue (a suburb of Seattle, Washington), with its large, visually striking and contemporary styled sanctuary, once again proved to be an excellent venue for the Festival. This year's participating bands were Brass Band Northwest (from Bellevue, Washington, Steve Keene, Artistic Director Emeritus and Guest Conductor of BBNW for this concert), PugetBrass (from Seattle, Washington, John Falskow, Conductor), Seattle Temple Band of the Salvation Army (from Seattle, Washington, Stefan

Wennstig, Bandmaster) and Cariboo Hill Temple Band of the Salvation Army (from Burnaby, British Columbia, Dave Michel, Bandmaster). The format of the Festival had each band rehearse during the day, while Deanna Swoboda gave two clinics. Greg Wilson presented a valve maintenance session while Gunnar Folsom, percussionist with the Northwest Ballet Orchestra, gave a percussion clinic. Several

their bands over to me for a period of time so I could work with their players. The evening's gala concert featured each band playing a 25-minute program during which I conducted one piece with each group, except for Brass Band Northwest, where I conducted two tuba solos played by Deanna Swoboda. The mix of Salvation Army and secular bands made for a wide diversity of music presented, although

each band brought sacred music to the platform. I was pleased to conduct Dean Goffin's *Arise My Soul*, *Arise* (with Cariboo Temple Band), Clement Scholefield's tune, *St. Clement* (with PugetBrass) and Robert Redhead's *Reflections in Nature* (with Seattle Temple Corps).

The choice of Deanna Swoboda as guest soloist was a master-stroke on the part of the Festival planner,



Douglas Yeo conducts Brass Band Northwest with Deanna Swoboda, tuba soloist.

vendors, including musical instrument companies and local music dealers, had trade stands open all day. Continuing its support of regional brass band festivals, NABBA offered financial support to the event.

As the guest conductor of the Festival, I was pleased that each of the four bands brought particular strengths to the day. Each band was both accomplished and motivated, and I could not have asked for four more gracious conductors to turn

Steve Keene. Professor of tuba at Western Michigan University, Deanna is a tremendously gifted musician who not only brought her fine playing to the Festival, but also her infectious positive attitude and outlook. I was very happy to conduct Brass Band Northwest in two solos with Deanna: Rodney Newton's *Capriccio* and a blistering arrangement of the violin *tour de force*, *Czardas*. In this, Brass Band Northwest proved to be an engaged and sympathetic accompanist, and band members and audience alike were thrilled with Deanna's consummate artistry.

NW FESTIVAL, CONT.

The grand finale of the evening's concert was a performance of William Gordon's arrangement of Ralph Vaughan Williams' setting of God Be With You for massed bands. Having played this piece to end most of the concerts I conducted with the New England Brass Band while serving as its Music Director from 1998-2008, it was a delight to lead this piece with the bandsmen and women arrayed around the church sanctuary, where the wash of sound enveloped the audience. It was also a pleasure to meet Bill Gordon, who plays bass trombone with the Cariboo Temple Band; his fine arrangements are well known to brass band members around the world.

This first major North American brass band festival of the year has become an annual event on the last Saturday of January; the 2010 Northwest Brass Band Festival will be held on January 30, 2010. Kudos to Brass Band Northwest and Festival organizer Steve Keene for putting together an excellent event, and to the conductors and members of the partici-

pating bands for their hard work and excellent performances throughout the day. It was a pleasure being in the Seattle area and enjoying a collegial day of clinics, rehearsals and performance at this well-organized Festival. For more information about the Northwest International Brass Band Festival, including photographs from each year's event, visit: www.brassbandnw.org/festival.htm.



Conductors and guest soloists at the Northwest International Brass Band Festival (left to right): John Falskow (PugetBrass), Stefan Wennstig (Seattle Temple Band), guest tuba soloist Deanna Swoboda, guest conductor Douglas Yeo, Steve Keene (Brass Band Northwest) and Dave Michel (Cariboo Temple Corps).

find it at
NABBA.ORG

- MEETING MINUTES OF THE NABBA BOARD OF DIRECTORS.
- INFORMATION ABOUT NABBA XXVIII, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA APRIL 16-17, 2010.
- CONTACT INFORMATION FOR NABBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS.
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- LINKS TO ALL NABBA MEMBER BANDS.

2009 HANNAFORD STREET SILVER BAND FESTIVAL OF BRASS

APRIL 3-5, 2009: TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA

By Diana Herak

The Hannaford Street Silver Band Festival of Brass took place this past April 3-5, at the Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, located in downtown Toronto, Canada.

The Friday night program, entitled "Rising Stars," featured the Hannaford Community Band and the Hannaford Junior Band (both conducted by Anita McAlister), the Hannaford Youth Band (Darryl Eaton), and the Ontario Central East Divisional Youth Band of The Salvation Army (Mark Hall). During the course of the evening, five young soloists competed in a solo competition, each performing a selection accompanied by the Hannaford Youth Band. The winner of the Senior Division was euphoniumist Kohei Kamikawa, who performed "Carnival of Venice" by H.L. Clarke. The adjudicators were Joseph Alessi and Alain Trudel.

The "Community Showcase" began on Saturday morning with a performance by the Buffalo Silver Band (Dr. Rick Fleming). Next was the Plumbing Factory Brass Band (Dr. Henry Meredith), the Metropolitan Silver Band (Fran Harvey), Whitby Brass Band (Roland Hill), Orillia Silver Band (Jim Ferris, conductor; Paul Rayment, guest conductor), Kincardine Brass Band (Nancy Ross), Maple Leaf Brass Band (David Druce), Weston Silver Band (Larry Shields), Community Showcase Festival Band (Alain Trudel), and the Brass Band of Columbus (Tim Jameson).

Throughout the day, bands that chose to perform the Malcolm Arnold march, "The Padstow Lifeboat," took part in a friendly competition for the "Hannaford Street Silver Band Cup," the prize for performing the best rendition of each year's chosen march. This year, the Hannaford Cup made its first trip across the border, as the Brass Band of Columbus was selected to receive this honor by

adjudicator Darryl Eaton.

The Festival concluded on Sunday afternoon with the host Hannaford Street Silver Band's performance guest conducted by Alain Trudel, with trombone soloist Joseph Alessi. The band should be very proud of not only its outstanding performance, but its role in the entire Festival of Brass, which is a highlight of not only the Canadian British-style brass banding calendar, but for all of North America. Hope to see you there next year!



BBC members Larry Shaffer (Eb Tuba), Todd Cunningham (Bass Trombone), and conductor Tim Jameson take the Hannaford Cup on its first trip south of the Canadian border.

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Betsy Jones, Editor

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The Brass Band Bridge welcomes news, materials for review, communications, photographs, advertising, and scholarly articles on all aspects relating to and for the benefit of North American brass bands and their members. *The Brass Band Bridge* will print small ads, gratis, from NABBA member bands on a space available basis. Only one gratis ad per band per year will be printed.

Materials for inclusion in *The Brass Band Bridge* must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents and photos must be submitted as JPEG files (300 ppi [pixels per inch] resolution). Materials may be edited for content. A style sheet for *Bridge* submissions may be found at nabba.org. Address all materials for publication (including queries about advertising rates and sizes) to: Betsy Jones (email: nabbabridge@gmail.com), 134 Wingate Circle, Warner Robins, Georgia, 31088 USA.

Recordings and books for review should be sent to: Ronald Holz, Music Department, Asbury College, 1 Macklem Drive, Wilmore, KY 40390.

New music for review should be sent to: Colin Holman, 31 Joseph Lane, Glendale Heights, IL 60139.

The Brass Band Bridge is published four times a year, with major issues appearing in February/March (Championship preview), May (Championship review) and October (announcement of Championship test pieces). Issue 115 will be published on October 1, 2009. The deadline for submission of materials for inclusion in Issue 115 of *The Brass Band Bridge* is September 1, 2009.

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IN FOCUS

SIDNEY LANIER BRIDGE BRUNSWICK, GEORGIA

Issue 114 of *The Brass Band Bridge* features the Sidney Lanier Bridge, which spans the South Brunswick River in the port city of Brunswick, Georgia.

The cable-stayed Lanier Bridge is Georgia's longest spanning bridge at 7,779 feet, with towers 486 feet tall. Carrying US Hwy 17 and GA Route 25 over the wetlands of coastal Glynn County, it was built in 2003 to replace the first Sidney Lanier Bridge, a 1956 drawbridge that was featured in the original version of *The Longest Yard*, starring Burt Reynolds. The drawbridge was closed after catastrophic ship collisions in 1972 and 1987.

The bridge is named for Macon, GA-born poet and musician Sidney Lanier. Lanier composed his poem, "The Marshes of Glynn," while visiting the city of Brunswick.

