MUSIC FOR WIND ORCHESTRA

For:
The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
Wind Orchestra

On the Shoulders of Giants

Peter Graham

Full Score

Instrumentation

Wind Orchestra

Percussion (3-4 players):

Timpani (Cymbal)
Percussion 1 (Tam-tam, Clash cymbals, Snare drum, Sus. cymbal, Bongos);
Percussion 2 (Bass drum, Suspended cymbal; Tambourine, Cymbal);
Tuned Percussion (Xylophone, Vibraphone, Tubular Bells, Clash Cymbals, Tom-tom/Bass drum 2)

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Programme Note

"If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants"
Letter from Isaac Newton to Robert Hooke, 5 February 1676

The art of brass playing embraces a range of diverse approaches and styles. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the musical melting pot of the USA. On the Shoulders of Giants pays tribute to this diversity and to the great American brass virtuosi whose legacy has provided the foundation for countless brass giants of today.

The opening movement, Fanfares, reflects on the legendary Chicago Symphony Orchestra brass section. It has been suggested that the much-admired and distinctive style of the CSO Brass was initially driven by the Germanic repertoire favoured by the early music directors. Here the opening bars from the finale of Bruckner’s 8th symphony provide the departure point for the musical journey.

The work continues (attacca), through style modulation, with an Elegy. America’s role as the birthplace of jazz and two of her leading brass lights are remembered here – Miles Davis (through the sound world created for him by Gil Evans) – and the father of lyrical trombone playing Tommy Dorsey. In acknowledgement that jazz owes its origins to Negro spirituals, the gospel song Steal Away underpins the movement.

The finale, a Fantasie Brillante, pays homage to the turn of the century brass virtuosi of Sousa Band fame. The centrepiece of the movement finds Herbert L. Clarke, Arthur Pryor and Simone Mantia stepping from the mists of time to deliver snippets from their greatest solos (together with passing references to Sousa’s highest paid soloist, drummer August Helmecke). Moments of individual virtuosity lead to a series of ensemble power chords - giant footsteps in musical imagery - which bring the work to a dramatic conclusion.

On the Shoulders of Giants was first performed by The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Wind Orchestra, conductor Nigel Boddice, in the Stevenson Hall Glasgow, October 21 2011.

About the Composer

Born in Scotland, Peter Graham read music at Edinburgh and London Universities (Goldsmiths’ College) and following spells in publishing in New York and London he is currently Professor of Composition at the University of Salford in Greater Manchester, England.

His music for brass and wind is performed across the globe, from China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Singapore in the Far East, across North and South America and in every major European country. Awards include the American Bandmasters Association/Ostwald Award for Original Composition for Symphonic Winds and the Iles Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians

On the Shoulders of Giants duration c. 15:00

Full recording available on:
On the Shoulders of Giants (Nimbus Alliance NI6175) performed by
The RCS Wind Orchestra, conductor Nigel Boddice MBE

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On the Shoulders of Giants
Concerto for Brass, Wind and Percussion
I - Fanfares
PETER GRAHAM