

Reviews

Songster Leader Kevin Ashman, Maidstone, reviews Enfield Band's latest recording, 'American Anthology'

Enfield presents impact music

THE release of *American Anthology* is a welcome event as it's the band's first recording under Bandmaster Andrew Blyth. I'm delighted to be able to review this CD as my own connections with Enfield go back to my late teens and early twenties when, as a young bandsman at Edmonton, I was fortunate enough to have the privilege of 'helping out' my neighbours at Enfield on a number of occasions. Their friendship and encouragement meant a great deal to me.

This CD features the music of a group of American composers who have had a huge impact on Salvation Army repertoire – William Himes, Bruce Broughton, Stephen Bulla and James Curnow. Their combined approach to composition and arranging delivered a fresh and invigorating crop of new music throughout the Seventies and Eighties.

Andrew Blyth has selected a programme that presents a great cross-section of music.

From the very first notes of Stephen Bulla's 'Praise Him', one senses that the band is in good shape. Bruce Broughton's masterly chorale prelude 'The New-born Babe' contrasts well, as the beautiful melodic lines are interwoven with control, blend and balance.

'Faith Is The Victory' is one of those pieces that took the Army world by storm when it first appeared, and it still retains a freshness and excitement that the band captures and seems to revel in.

Originally written and performed on euphonium by the composer himself, 'Journey Into Peace' by William Himes is presented here as a trombone solo, expertly and sensitively delivered by Deputy Bandmaster Andrew Justice. Andrew's trombone sound is well suited to the reflective soliloquy and melodic figures of the solo.

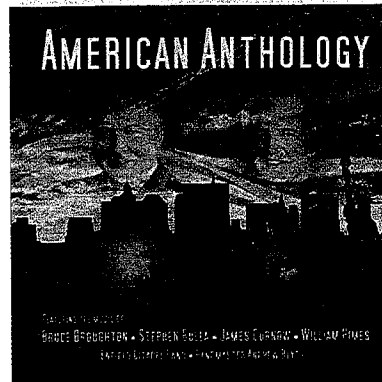
Stephen Bulla's 'Images For Brass' is the only item not composed specifically for Salvation Army use, but written for Stephen's employers – the US Marine Band – as a work for brass choir. This version, which forms the centrepiece of the recording, was prepared for the Star Lake Music Camp in 1995. The four 'images' represent in turn the anticipation of conflict, the journey to the battle scene, moments of introspection prior to battle and, finally, the hostile confrontation. One can easily draw parallels between the secular and spiritual in a work like this.

James Curnow's exquisite 'Guardian Of Our Way' follows.

This is quite simply a most beautiful selection and the music is sensitively handled and well shaped. Another contrast follows with Stephen Bulla's march 'New York 90'. Written for the New York Staff Band's 90th anniversary, while Stephen was a member of the band, it's a great little march and is really well played here with plenty of swagger and character.

Enfield Band's horn section opens the next item, William Himes' 'Cause For Celebration', which combines original melodies with the familiar tune 'Old Hundredth'. The band presents the music with flair and panache, while also capturing the spirit of the composer's stately central theme. Soprano cornet player Tim Buckle plays a solo that I know well from my years on this instrument with the International Staff Band. He presents Stephen Bulla's 'Higher Plane' with some great high-register playing and good control in the slow middle section. Bruce Broughton's 'Covenant' can be described as film music, with strong rhythms, slightly dissonant harmonies and wistful tunes, eventually driving through to an exciting conclusion.

Maurice Patterson is the cornet soloist in William Himes' arrangement of George Beverly Shea's 'I'd Rather Have Jesus'. From the lonely, unaccompanied start, one is blissfully aware of Maurice's lovely warm sound, and the band's accompaniment is sensitive and well crafted. More of Bruce Broughton's 'film



music' follows. This time it's his festival arrangement 'In The Firing Line'. The driving rhythms and strong dynamic contrasts are effectively conveyed in this and the next item, James Curnow's 'A Psalm Of Praise'. His musical commentary on Psalm 100 is

centred on the hymn 'Praise, My Soul, The King Of Heaven' and the band revels in the thrilling and energetic sections while delivering effective contrast in the more reflective parts of the work.

William Himes' festival march 'Motivation' makes a fitting conclusion to the CD. In musical terms it's quite simply a great march, but in terms of its message it clearly defines the reasons why these musicians do what they do.

The booklet accompanying the CD is full of informative notes on the music, the composers and the band. It's

good to read the band's personnel list and see so many matching surnames – an indication of the strong family spirit that this famous band continues to enjoy. Let's hope that this bodes well for the future of a hard-working corps band with an illustrious past – and, I believe, a very bright future!