

## PENLEE

The tragic story of the Penlee lifeboat, the *Solomon Browne*, needs no introduction, and the pain felt by family and friends in the area is still very much a reality. I was brought up in full knowledge of the story having been born just a few weeks before the fateful night itself. I felt that, given the opportunity, I would like to pay a musical homage to the bravery of the souls involved in a true story of heroism and sadness, a story that has passed almost into Cornish Legend. **Penlee**, for brass band and percussion, is the result of my feelings regarding the events, and is dedicated to all the souls who lost their lives in Cornwall's treacherous waters, those on the lifeboat, and the crew and passengers of the *Union Star*, on the night of 19th December 1981.

In order to represent the story faithfully, I have adhered to a timeline of events describing what happened from around 6.00pm until around 10.00pm on that night. The music starts in a positive mood as the *Union Star*, a brand new cargo vessel, makes her way in calm waters through the straights of Dover bound for port in Ireland. As the *Union Star* continues on her voyage past the Cornish coast, she receives a weather warning but presses on regardless. The level of dissonance in the music increases as the weather worsens and drowns out the hint of Christmas cheer (sleigh bells, Fig. B). Alarm is felt (Fig. D), as the *Union Star* radios for assistance. With its engines stopped, the *Union Star's* captain realises that the vessel is in trouble (Fig. E); assistance will be needed to get everyone off, including his own family who are on board unbeknown to the authorities. Tension rises with the swelling seas (Fig. F). Realising the situation is only going to get worse, the Coast Guard sends word to the crew of the *Solomon Browne* lifeboat (Fig. G).

A Sea-King helicopter is launched (Fig. J) into terrible weather to try and help the stricken vessel. Its attempts and failures to help in the situation are represented in the music (Figs. K—M) and at Figure M, the tension in the lifeboat house reaches its peak. At 7.40pm, with more than a little apprehension and an enormous amount of bravery, the crew of the *Solomon Browne*, led by Trevelyan Richards, launches into a near Force-10 storm (Fig. P). The lifeboat can be heard battling against extreme weather and soon starts its rescue attempt. According to the Sea-King pilot, the Penlee lifeboat, braving an horrendous battering, rescued all but two from the *Union Star* (Fig. O). This can be heard in the welling up and eventual dissipation of an heroic theme, which eventually gives way at Fig. R. The horrors of the subsequent events can only be guessed at, as at 9.21pm radio contact was lost and both boats perished. The *Solomon Browne* is lost (Fig. U), after which a lament is heard (Fig. W). An uneasy lull is felt after the storm (Figs. X—Y). The music ends with a quote from the Tone Poem *Resurgam* by Eric Ball, proclaiming, "the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God".

**Simon Dobson 2008**

During the recording of *Penlee* by the Leyland Band (Faber Music Catalogue No. 0-571-52216-5), a number of alterations were made to the score by the composer. That recording, and therefore this printed version, should be regarded as definitive.

**Simon Dobson** (b. 1981) comes from Cornwall. He has always played an active part in the county's strong banding scene and began to compose for brass band in his teenage years. In 2000, Simon won a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music in London and while there composed the music for two Royal visits and his own graduation. He also conducted a student-based band, Zone One Brass, at Buckingham Palace. Simon won the European Brass Band Association's Composers' Competition in 2002 with his work *Four Sketches: Homage to Benjamin Britten*. The following year he received a commission from the Brass Band Heritage Trust to write a competition piece, the result was *Lydian Pictures*. Following his appointment as Leyland Band's Composer-in-Residence, a number of subsequent works have received acclaimed performances and broadcasts at the prestigious RNCM Festival of Brass, including *Lyonesse* (2007), *The Drop: Remixed* (2008), *Penlee* (2009) and *Torsion* (2010). His works *The Dreaded Groove and Hook* (2008) and *Lock Horns/Rage On* (2009) have both been premièred by the Leyland Band at the Brass in Concert Championships.

Simon has also written for wind band, choir and orchestra. He is now based in the West Country as composer, teacher and conductor.

#### PERCUSSION REQUIREMENTS FOR PENLEE:

**Player 1:** Timpani

**Player 2 (Percussion 1):** Bass Drum, Snare Drum, Sleigh Bells, Suspended Cymbal, Temple Blocks, Triangle

**Player 3 (Percussion 2):** Tenor Drum, Suspended Cymbal, Anvil

**Player 4 (Percussion 3):** Bass Drum, Suspended Cymbal, Temple Blocks, Tam-Tam, Tubular Bells (Ship's Bell), High Snare Drum, Vibraphone

62 open

Sop. Cnt. *mf* — *f* — *mf*

Solo Cnt. *mf* — *f* — *mf*

Rep. Cnt. *mf* — *f* — *mf*

2nd Cnt. *mf* — *f* — *mf*

3rd Cnt. *mf* — *f* — *mf*

Flug. *f* — *f*

Solo Hn. *f*

1st Hn. *f*

2nd Hn. *f*

1st Bar. *mp < mf* — *f*

2nd Bar. *mp < mf* — *f*

1st Tbn. *sfz sfz* — *mf* — *f*

2nd Tbn. *sfz sfz* — *mf* — *f*

B. Tbn. *sfz sfz* — *mf* — *f*

Euph. *f*

E♭ Bass *sfz sfz* — *f*

B♭ Bass *sfz sfz* — *f*

Timp. *sfz sfz*

Perc. 1 *mp* — *mf* — *mp* — *mp* — *mf*

Perc. 2 *sfz sfz* — *sfz sfz sfz*

Perc. 3 Tubular Bells *f* — *f*

*fanfare!*

*f* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz*

*mf* *f* *mf* *mf* *f* *mf*

*mp < mf* *mp < mf* *mp < mf* *f*

*sfz sfz* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

*sfz sfz* *sfz sfz sfz*

*f* *f*