



Set test pieces for European Brass Band Championships 2017

The European Brass Band Association (EBBA) is pleased to announce the set test pieces for the 40th European Brass Band Championships (EBBC), to be held in Oostende, Belgium, 28-30 April 2017.

Championship Section:

Where Angels Fly by Kevin Houben

Challenge Section:

Insomnia by Bart Picqueur

Youth Band Contest (Premier)

Dimensions by Peter Graham (Boosey & Hawkes)

Youth Band Contest (Development):

Little Suite No. 2 by Malcolm Arnold (Novello/Studio)

According to EBBA rules, the Championship and Challenge section pieces will be made available to the bands at least eight weeks prior to the date of the Championships.

Championship section: Commissioned for the 2017 European Brass Band Championships by Vlamo, the Flemish Association for Music, Bands and Musicians, *Where Angels Fly* is inscribed 'In loving memory of Jesse Lefebvre (02/06/2007 - 24/02/2015)'. The composer describes his virtuoso work as 'very technical and powerful, with a rather fragile and soft introduction'. The main theme of the work is derived from 'La Prière' (*Le Retour aux Pays*) by the 'Father of Belgian wind music' Paul Gilson (1865 - 1942). The 'La Prière' chorale is heard just once at the close of *Where Angels Fly*, orchestrated as a grand *tutti*. As a respectful nod to his teacher Jan Van der Roost, Kevin Houben (b. 1977) has used elements of *La Prière* as accompaniment textures, mirroring a feature of Jan Van der Roost's *From Ancient Times*, which was the set test in 2009, when the EBBC was last held in Oostende.

Since completing his studies at the Lemmens Institute in Leuven, Kevin Houben's music for wind and brass bands has become established in the repertoire of ensembles throughout Europe. His brass band test-piece *Arcana* (2004) won first prize in the EBBA European Composers Competition in 2006. His work *Lake of the Moon* (2009) has been used as a test-piece throughout the brass band world. He also works extensively as a conductor and has taken two of his wind bands to prize-winning places at the World Music Contest in Kerkrade in recent years. In July 2016 he won the Certamen Internacional de Bandas de Música "Ciudad de Valencia", Sección segunda, with the Windband 'Koninklijke Harmonie van Peer'. Since the 2016 edition of Belgium's *Tomorrowland* Festival, Kevin Houben has worked with the Belgium National Symphonic Orchestra as an arranger and orchestrator of dance tracks, orchestrating the special composed *Hymne* by Hans Zimmer for this event.

Challenge section: *Insomnia* has also been commissioned specially by Vlamo for the 2017 EBBC. Although the work is not programmatic, Bart Picqueur writes that 'the title suggests a certain amount of restlessness'. The piece consists of an eclectic mix of elements from minimal music to serial music, baroque fugue to fusion jazz. The composer hopes to create 'a state of mind the sleepless may recognise as "a million ideas crossing one's mind at the same time", but to bring together these elements into a consistent spectacle'.

Composer, conductor and clarinetist Bart Picqueur (b.1972) studied at the Royal Conservatory in Ghent. Since 2010 he has been principal conductor of the Royal Band St. Cecilia Zele and has worked with various professional ensembles such as the Municipal Band of La Coruña, the Slovenian armed forces and the Belgian Guides. His compositions for wind band are performed worldwide.

European Youth Brass Band Contests: All the bands in the Premier Section of the fourth European Youth Brass Band Contest, will all perform *Dimensions*, the first major competition piece from the pen of Peter Graham. Composed in 1983, this 9-minute work is established as a test piece in the 1st and 2nd Sections as well as the elite division of youth band competitions. Following the setting of Malcolm Arnold's youth band classic *Little Suite for Brass* (No. 1) at the European Youth Band Contest in Perth (2014), his bright, entertaining sequel, *Little Suite No. 2* (1962), has been chosen to challenge the Development Section bands in Oostende.