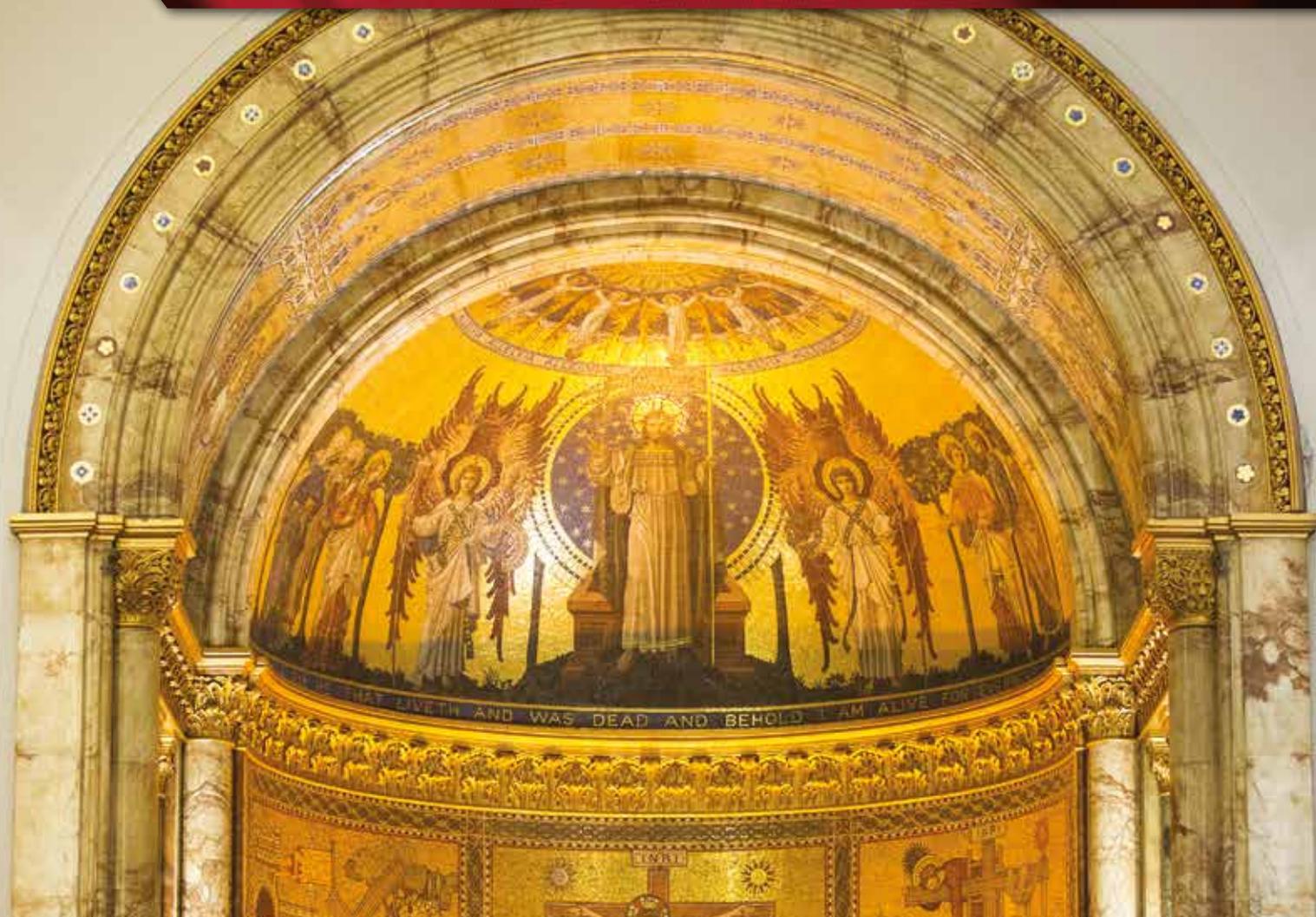


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A SYMPHONY OF THANKSGIVING CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF BANDMASTER JAMES WILLIAMS MBE





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CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF BANDMASTER JAMES WILLIAMS MBE

There was a definite buzz of excitement prevailing over the historic Guards Chapel as well over 350 people started gathering over an hour before the beginning of this unique concert, reports Malcolm Quinn. So many people, not only those with historic Enfield connections, but those of orchestral, brass band, teaching, military and journalistic backgrounds were thrilled to be joining the family in this celebration of the life of James Williams MBE, hosted by Enfield Citadel Band (ECB).



After a welcome and opening prayer from the Padre of the Guards Chapel, The Revd. S.J.H. Dunwoody C.F., a spectacular opening item, the cornet ensemble *Heralds of Victory* (Richard Holz) featured no less than 29 cornets of current and past Tottenham and Enfield bandsmen. This unannounced item got the evening off to a very uplifting start. Historically a favourite 'starter' of Bandmaster Williams, in previous years it featured the whole cornet section, including Keith Hutchinson, Richard Martin, Paul Young, Malcolm Hynd, Stuart Garman, and even the 2nd cornet players who were expected to be able to triple-tongue and play low A's below the staff – and if they couldn't, Jim would show them how it was done!

This event, coordinated superbly by Deputy Bandmaster Andrew Justice and former Enfield Principal Cornet Ralph Brill (HM Guards WO Class 2) was recognised as the first occasion a Salvation Army band has had the privilege of playing in this auspicious venue. The resonance of this building (lasting no more than two seconds) certainly proved to be an enjoyable enhancement to the clarity of the playing which we experienced throughout the evening

A celebration of the life of James Williams would be incomplete without using the festival

march, *Celebration*. Featuring the words 'We'll keep the old flag flying, flying round the world', it was written by Leslie Condon to mark the 75th Anniversary of the International Staff Band, of which Jim was briefly a member when Terry Camsey left for the USA. This was the first opportunity for the band to demonstrate a tightness and exciting lyrical tunefulness under the expert leadership of Bandmaster Iain Parkhouse.

In immediate contrast, the band chose one of Ray Steadman-Allen's smaller works, the masterly arrangement of William Herbert Jude's *Consecration Hymn*, as featured in many corps services by the band. In the playing of this beautiful music it demonstrated, yet again, the ability to take us to another place and mood of musical experience, recognised by the conclusion of the music being met with complete silence.

The festival arrangement *The Call of The Righteous* (Leslie Condon) is possibly the most played of any SA festival music pieces since its publication in the mid-1960s. It was written for Tottenham Citadel Band's 1964 tour of USA and Canada under Bandmaster Williams' leadership, and accompanied by the composer as tour leader. Based on the old gospel tune





When the roll is called up yonder, this music became a blueprint of style copied by countless others since. It also echoes the timeless quality of the 'call' that BM James heard at such a young age, and was faithful to throughout his life. Incidentally, the timpani solo prior to the last movement was played on this evening in its original form – a shorter version was published as it was felt to be too ostentatious to have a long timpani solo. An impeccable start by the cornets set the tone and standard for the whole of this rendition. Potential pitfalls in this piece – the cornet and euphonium duet, bass solo, solo horn and flugel hitting a top Bb in the last movement, and the *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* near the end, were all overcome easily, cleanly and efficiently enough to send a shiver down the spine.

And so, to our first soloist of the evening, Keith Hutchinson, who chose to play the cornet solo *Crossroads* (Stephen Bulla). Keith needed no introduction to the audience this evening, knowing his illustrious career as Principal Cornet of ECB for 23 years (many as Deputy Bandmaster) and his total support for Jim during that time and into his retirement made him the obvious choice as soloist for the evening. The solo was written by Stephen Bulla in the 1990s, who at that time was the Chief Arranger of the President's Own Marines Band in Washington DC, for use by the National Capital Band. It features the Joy Webb song, *Come into Our World*, and the hymn *In Christ There is No East or West*. Keith's performance was enthralling and quite justifiably received the only standing ovation of the night. Still a great player, and still an even greater person. Played with such passion, oh, how so many of us could learn from his perfection of performance and his humility that has graced the stage of some of the most prestigious concert venues throughout the world.

The privilege of sharing a tribute to James

Williams MBE fell to Bernard Snell, formerly Principal Cornet, Deputy Bandmaster, and cornet and piano soloist of the Tottenham Citadel Band. Now resident in Bournemouth, and corps pianist at the Boscombe Corps, Bernard gave a bandsman's insight to the expert leadership of James, highlighting his musicianship and integrity – the best for the highest – *Ad Optimum*.

As with Keith Hutchinson and many, many others, Helen Parker is a talent that Bandmaster Williams took a keen interest in. Helen grew up in the Enfield Citadel Corps, and her talent as a singer was recognised from an early age. He encouraged her as she developed through music exams and to the Royal Academy of Music, where she graduated and is now a freelance professional soprano soloist specialising in music of this period (Handel) internationally – having just returned, especially for this occasion, from performing in a concert at the Palace of Versailles, near Paris.

Her initial choice, *Eternal Source of Light* (Handel), accompanied by Simon Over (organ) and Dominic Purefoy (trumpet), is a stunning piece for soprano soloist, and that is exactly how she performed it. One of the more popular Baroque vocal compositions, it is taken from a larger Handel work – *Birthday Ode for Queen Anne*. The aria is an opening movement intended to set a calm and meditative tone. The work, after all, marked a peace treaty, in addition to a royal birthday. Helen was matched nearly phrase for phrase by the trumpet player (on this occasion her son, Dominic), as they musically complimented each other by performing on opposite sides of the gallery behind the band, using the acoustics to the full. Additionally, the organ accompaniment enhanced the music in a delicate and light way.

When Enfield Citadel Band toured Canada

coast to coast in 1986, Major Len Ballantine accompanied the band as representative of the Canada and Bermuda Territory. He shared with Jim his festival arrangement, *Shall We Gather?* at the beginning of the week. Expecting the band to take it back to the UK to rehearse, Jim took the piece from Len, saying "right chaps, we'll run this through and it will be on the programme this evening if it's any good!" The band did just that – it was good, and it played it that evening, then featured it as a solo piece at the Roy Thompson Hall in Toronto with the Canadian Staff Band the following weekend. Len was astounded that any group could assimilate his style and the technique and sound required in such a brief period, but he hadn't met Jim before! Jim was a great 'big band' fan, and this was right up his street, and that of the band, as evidenced in the exact style which was demonstrated this evening – relaxed yet exhilarating with a particularly juicy bass trombone sound.

Bandmaster Iain Parkhouse chose to finish the first part of the evening with *Resurgam*, by Eric Ball, a piece which is very much synonymous with James Williams and Enfield Citadel Band. Its performance on the *Kaleidoscope* LP is still universally regarded as one of the definitive interpretations by any conductor and band, within or outside of the SA. However, it proved to have an even more meaningful use. When the then Tottenham Citadel Band returned from the USA and Canada in 1964 and many members left and moved to jobs in North America, this was a period of great threat to the future of the band. Jim decided to feature it in the band's programmes, and told the band that, like the title suggested, "we will rise again". They did, and for more than 50 years the band has proclaimed the central message contained in the words associated with the main theme of the piece, 'The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God'. The performance on this occasion was, particularly



for this writer, probably the most soulful and moving rendition ever heard. So too for many of those in the Guards Chapel audience, many of whom could have heard it previously, even hundreds of times. In performance, mention must go to Maurice Patterson (Principal Cornet) and Paul Baker (Principal Euphonium) for their delicate, yet intense interpretation of the duet within this music. Their togetherness helped to create an inspiring atmosphere. It was a difficult point in the evening to take an interval, but after a few moments of reflection, we were all able to continue renewing acquaintances and memories before Bandmaster Don Jenkins took the baton to commence the second half, and what a start it was!

Faith is the Victory (James Curnow) is a march which Jim featured a lot, particularly with its exciting fanfare opening, its American marching band style, and its big band ending – all the right ingredients for a ‘Jim march’ – based around the old SA song of the same name, but given the American treatment by James Curnow. Slowing down the last section and introducing a distinct *pianissimo* was a great example of Don’s inimitable conducting!

By this time in the evening we were all stirred again and happy to join in the congregational song, *We have caught the vision Splendid*, sung to the tune of *Blaenwern*. Bandmaster Jenkins, who has ably supported ECB in Sunday worship and concerts for the past year, conducted the *Gowans and Larsson Overture*, by Bill Broughton, who is an accomplished professional arranger, trombonist and Salvationist, now based in Adelaide, Australia. This arrangement of several Gowans and Larsson songs captures the original sentiment of the tunes, but sets them in a contemporary big band style. Equally, Bandmaster Jenkins skilfully brought out this style, which one sensed the band really enjoyed. With the trombones, led by Deputy Bandmaster Andrew Justice, strong and dynamic throughout, special mention must go to Lloyd Hardwick, Solo Horn, for presenting the pressure solo *They Shall Come from the East* so tunefully and confidently.

Pianoforte soloist Bernard Snell introduced a welcome contrast in performing Rachmaninov’s *Polichinelle Op. 3 No. 4*, as a prelude to our vocal soloist’s last number. Bernard’s contribution was well chosen, well played and well received.

A Word on My Ear, by Flanders and Swann, a British comedy duo who collaborated in writing and performing comedic songs, is about a tone-deaf singer, and was one of Jim’s favourites,



Clockwise from top left: Pianoforte soloist Bernard Snell; Cornet soloist Keith Hutchinson; Vocal soloist Helen Parker; Compère Andrew Blyth; Principal Euphonium Paul Baker; Principal Cornet Maurice Patterson; Principal Trombone Andrew Justice; Trumpet soloist Dominic Purefoy

reminding us that Jim had a dry, and often wicked, sense of humour. Helen's rendition enthralled and captivated the audience to a degree that Jim, on her behalf, would have loved.

It is worth mentioning here that a new dimension to the sharing and reporting of such a significant event was added by Michelle Mercer, a professional photographer originating from Enfield Corps, who travelled over 300 miles to give her services free of charge and in such a sensitive and unobtrusive way. The results of her gift can be seen accompanying this report.

Guardian of Our Way (James Curnow) is music the band used often as a devotional interlude under BM Jim, featuring the songs *Saviour Like a Shepherd Lead us*, *The Lord's My Shepherd*, and *Where He Leads Me I Will Follow*, thus emphasising the image of Christ as a shepherd of his flock. Andrew Blyth, a former Enfield Bandmaster, who had expertly guided us through the whole evening with his knowledgeable, informative, sensitive and insightful, as well as humorous comments, led the band with flexibility and sensitivity through this chosen piece of music.

So it was appropriate during this time of reflection that Major Allison Gaudion then shared with us her own well-chosen thoughts. The 23rd Psalm speaks of Christ being our 'Good Shepherd' and how through our lives he tenderly cares and guides us. In every situation it is down the streams of time that he gently

leads us and loves us, and although Jesus knows us by our name, we must recognise Him also as our friend and saviour. Additionally, as a prelude to the penultimate music for the evening, her thoughts were based around a significant date in the history of the Guards' Chapel. On Sunday, 18 June 1944, a mixed military and civilian congregation gathered here for morning worship, when a V1 flying bomb directly hit and destroyed the church completely, leaving only a very small part of it standing. Tons of rubble fell onto the congregation. 121 soldiers, military musicians and civilians died and 141 others were seriously injured. This was the single most devastating V1 flying bomb attack of World War II. The operation to free them all took 48 hours. The candles and silver altar cross were also rescued, and have been placed in this replacement chapel, where they have burned ever since, as a tribute to those lives lost and damaged and as symbols of peace and reconciliation. As a military musician, James Williams had at that time been sent with half of the Grenadier Guards Band as medical staff to Italy, where he received his medal for service at Monte Cassino in Italy. Even so far away, the impact on fellow musicians of those who died in the Coldstream Band on that day would have been immense.

As a celebration of the life of Jim and all that he contributed, not only to the world of music, but also to the support and development of so many people, the band fittingly played Edward Elgar's *Nimrod* (arr. Dean Goffin) in memory of his military service, but also to the memory of those lost in that bombing of this building, who

will know that their sacrifice was not in vain, and who are remembered continuously in this place. It was at this point, as the evening was nearing completion, that former bandsmen joined the ensemble to even further enhance the excellent sound we had enjoyed all evening. Throughout, we had enjoyed and experienced clear and accurate note production at the start of every piece of music, a symmetry of parts interwoven in music and a clarity of conducting – all the ingredients for a wonderful night of music making.

The band's final programmed item of the evening was Commissioner Dean Goffin's *Symphony of Thanksgiving*, a good summary of what this event meant to so many who attending, as well as the many others who had the privilege of coming into contact with this great man, James Williams. Written for the Diamond Jubilee of the ISB in 1951, its presentation of the tune *Praise My Soul the King of Heaven* is a fitting climax to this evening of celebration of the life of someone who praised his 'King of Heaven'.

Was this really the final item? Of course not. Another former Bandmaster, Dr. Jonathan Corry had flown back from Chicago especially to attend the concert and it was only fitting that he was handed the baton to conduct the march encore, *The Red Shield* (Henry Goffin). Embellished by the expected choreography, the sight and sonorous sound of nearly 60 bandsmen enjoying playing to an excited audience was surely, for James Williams MBE, a true SYMPHONY OF THANKSGIVING!

