**Four Études for brass band**

This work was written during August and September 2016. In it, I wanted primarily to explore the elements of timbre, rhythm, texture and colour. The first three études (or studies) are based on a set of piano pieces I composed in 1982, whilst the last, the longest of the set, was composed specially. My reference point was the Four Études for orchestra of 1928 by Stravinsky, a work I have always admired, and of which the first three also happen to be based on a set of earlier pieces, in his case for string quartet, with the last being a re-arrangement of a work for pianola. I have also borrowed the titles he gave to the individual studies as they seemed to fit the mood of my pieces.

However, the exception is the final study, where instead of the exuberant mood of his colourful portrayal of Madrid, mine was influenced by the terrible human tragedy that was unfolding in Aleppo at the time I was writing it, and thus reflects the violence and barbarism of those events; yet towards the end it does offer a glimmer of hope for humanity with a return to the Canticle (Song) of the first study, and concludes quietly with the chords and bells that began the work. The titles of the Études are *Canticle, Dance, Excentrique*, and *Aleppo*. Like Stravinsky’s, the set is relatively short, lasting around 8 minutes.

The Four Études were commissioned by Black Dyke Band and were written specially for the recording marking the conclusion of my year as Composer-in-Residence. The concert premiere will be given by Black Dyke Band, conducted by the composer, at the RNCM Festival of Brass in January 2017.

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