**Of Men and Mountains**

*Of Men and Mountains* was commissioned by the Netherlands Brass Band Championships for their tenth anniversary contest in Drachten in December 1990. In July the previous year, Edward Gregson and his wife took the Trans Canadian Railway from Toronto to Vancouver. The journey through the Rocky Mountains was the starting point for Of Men and Mountains. Gregson writes that: ‘its high peaks and shafts of sunlight breaking through the clouds, its canyons and ferocious rapids made me understand a little more about the majesty of nature and the fragility of humanity. The eternal struggle between man and nature was personified in the building of this incredible railway… hence my title (after Blake).’

Here is the composer’s outline of the work:

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| A. | Slow introduction: themes in embryo – fragmented motives. |
| B. | First fast section: two main ideas – dramatic and very rhythmic. |
| B1. | Second fast section: development of B – scored for separate instrumental groupings. |
| A1. | Return of opening. |
| C. | Long slow section: new theme – solos for various instruments. |
| B2. | Scherzo: re-working of material from B in the form of a gradual, increasingly paced scherzo. |
| D. | Majestic: the culmination of the work – main theme now heard in its final and complete form. |
| D1. | Coda: a short, triumphant, fast section based on the main theme. |

Of Men and Mountains is dedicated to the memory of Eric Ball, who died shortly before Gregson started work on the piece. As he says in his note, ‘I greatly admired the man and his music and I am sure he would have shared the feelings behind the inspiration for this work.’

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