**The Plantagenets**

**(Symphonic Study)**

*The Plantagenets* was Gregson’s first major test piece, written specially for the 1973 National Brass Band Championships.

In this ambitious symphonic study he turned his attention to music which sets out to create a mood or atmosphere, in contrast to his earlier brass band works such as *Essay* and *Partita* where the underlying concerns are technical rather than expressive. However, Gregson is at pains to emphasise that *The Plantagenets* is not programme music. ‘Symphonic’ is the optimum word here. In its textural and harmonic complexity, its rhythmic and melodic variety, this was his most ambitious brass band piece so far. His language, with its roots in Hindemith and Bartok is further enriched here with the expressive language of Holst and Rachmaninov.

As he says in his notes on the work: *The Plantagenets* attempts to portray the mood and feelings of an age – that of the House of Plantagenet which lasted from the middle of the twelfth century to the end of the fourteenth. To many it conjures up an age of chivalry and this is represented by fanfare motifs which occur throughout the work in varied form.

Characteristically, the composer then goes on to describe not the atmosphere or mood he is trying to convey, but the means by which the music has been composed: the opening fanfares, based on the interval of the third, generating the musical material for the whole work; an exposition of two themes – one fanfare-like, one lyrical (on horns); a slow episode introducing a new melody on solo horn (answered by cornet and euphonium in canon); a little *scherzo*, fugal in character; and a recapitulation leading to a *maestoso* statement of the slow movement theme with a final reference to the fanfares as a triumphant conclusion.

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