**The Sword and the Crown**

In 1988 I was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company to write the music for The Plantagenets trilogy, directed by Adrian Noble in Stratford-upon-Avon.  These plays take us from the death of Henry V to the death of Richard III.  Later, in 1991, I wrote the music for Henry IV parts 1 and 2, again in Stratford.  All of these plays are concerned with the struggle for power (the crown) through the use of force (the sword) and they portray one of the most turbulent periods in the history of the British monarchy.

This work quickly became established in the mainstream repertoire and has received performances worldwide as well as five commercial recordings and many broadcasts.  In 2002 I was approached by the Parc and Dare Band regarding their summer festival and commissioned to do a version for brass band.  This was given its first performance in Treorchy Hall by the combined bands of Black Dyke and Parc and Dare conducted by Nicholas Childs.

When the Royal Air Force Music Services commissioned me to write a work especially for their British tour in 1991 I immediately thought of turning to this music and transforming some of it into a three-movement suite for symphonic band.

The first movement opens with a brief fanfare for two antiphonal trumpets (off-stage), but this only acts as a preface to a *Requiem aeternam*(the death of Henry V) before changing mood to the English army on the march to France; this subsides into a French victory march, but the English army music returns in counterpoint.  Finally, a brief reminder of the *Requiem* music leads to the triumphal music for Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, father of Edward IV and Richard III (the opening fanfare transformed).

The second movement takes music from the Welsh Court in Henry IV (part 1) which is tranquil in mood; distant fanfares foreboding battles to come are heard, but the folktune is heard three times in different variations and the movement ends as it began with alto flute and gentle percussion.

The final movement starts with two sets of antiphonally placed timpani, drums and tam-tam, portraying the ‘war machine’ and savagery of battle.  Trumpet fanfares and horn calls herald an heroic battle theme which, by the end of the movement, transforms itself into a triumphant hymn for Henry IV’s defeat of the rebellious forces.

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