**Variations on Laudate Dominum**

For a composer brought up in the Salvation Army, Edward Gregson has contributed relatively little to the repertoire for those bands (not surprising, perhaps, as he left the Army when during his time a student of the Royal Academy of Music in 1963). One work, however, stands out like a beacon from most of the Salvationist music published in the 1970s. His *Variations on Laudate Dominum*was commissioned for the 1976 British tour of the London Citadel Band (from Ontario, Canada) whose conductor then was the composer’s brother, Bramwell.

Edward Gregson has always found the requirement for Salvationist band music to include a familiar religious tune less than stimulating. However, in Sir Hubert Parry’s marvellous hymn tune *O Worship The King,*Gregson found a melody which, with its simple but strong contour and crisp and clear phrasing, was compatible with his own by now fully-developed musical language.

In his variations, Edward Gregson has always tried to avoid the obvious or predictable. The *Chorale and Variations*(in *Partita)* are unconventional in structure and content. In *Connotations*(1977) he transformed variations into something more flexible. ‘Theme within variations’ might be a more apt description. A more exact title for *Laudate Dominum*might well be ‘Variations and Theme’, since Parry’s noble melody is not heard in its full glory until the end of the work.

In 2007, as a tribute to Black Dyke, a band with whom Gregson has had a long and fruitful relationship, Gregson added two new variations; the first is an interrupted waltz, lyrical in mood, whilst the second is a brilliant tarantella, incorporating a little reference to an early ground-breaking Salvation Army march entitled *Praise* by Wilfred Heaton.

Now that Salvationist music is available to all brass bands, *Variations on Laudate Dominum* has become the favourite among bands all over the world of Edward Gregson’s pre-*Connotations*music, and in its new guise it has even more appeal.

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