

## The World Rejoicing

*The World Rejoicing* was commissioned by the National Brass Band Associations of Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, and the British Open, as the test piece for their competitions in 2020/21. Although the work was completed in 2019, the pandemic of 2020 meant that these competitions were postponed until 2021/22. The premiere will now take place in September 2021 at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, UK.

In searching for a common link between the brass band traditions of the various European countries that commissioned this work, I considered the fact that hymns have always played an important role in the relationship that brass bands have with their particular communities; and thus I turned to a well-known Lutheran chorale, *Nun danket alle Gott (Now thank we all our God)*, written around 1636 by Martin Rinkart, with the melody attributed to Johann Crüger. A number of composers have incorporated this chorale into their music, most famously J.S.Bach in his Cantatas no. 79 and 192, and Mendelssohn in the Lobsegg movement of his 2nd Symphony (the harmonization of which is usually used when this hymn is sung).

It seemed fitting therefore for me to return to a compositional form I have used many times before (Variations) and to write a work based on this hymn. I have used it in a similar way to that which I employed in my *Variations on Laudate Dominum* of 1976 – that is, rather than writing a set of variations using elaborations of the complete tune, I have taken various phrases from the chorale and used them within the context of other musical material, applying an overall symphonic process of continuous variation and development. The structure, or sub-divisions of the work, which is through composed and plays without a break, is as follows:

Prelude, Capriccio, La Danza 1, Processional, La Danza 2, Arias and Duets, Fuga Burlesca, Chorale, and Postlude.

The work, which is around 16 minutes in length, is also partly autobiographical - in the manner say of Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* - in that I have incorporated into the score brief quotations from many of my other major works for brass band. In that respect, *The World Rejoicing* sums up a particular facet of my life as a composer, and reflects the admiration I have always had for what is surely one of the great amateur music-making traditions in the world.