

## Impressive debut recording from 'Dyke' tubist

### DEBUT

Joseph Cook (tuba)

Black Dyke Band

Dr. Nicholas J. Childs

Doyen DOY CD249

Available from World of Brass, Midland CD and 4barsrest

There was a prophetic entry in BB edition 4077 on 6 December 1980, which stated: 'We hear that Linda Cook of Ever Ready Band has given birth to a son who weighed in at 9lb 5oz – a natural bass player, by the sound of things' (if only the BB Editor of 28 years later had such foresight!). Thus, Joseph Cook's first impression on the world of brass was duly made, and it's fair to say that he has since gone on to make a much bigger mark than by merely being the product of a musical family.

A former member of the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain and Ever Ready Band, he has, since May 1999, played an important role with Black Dyke Band and is now its principal tuba. In that position, he has performed solos in many prestigious venues, and this CD recording, appropriately entitled *Debut*, is a celebration of his career so far, containing a number of classics from the repertoire and a brand new work, written specially for the occasion, by Professor Philip Wilby.

*Concerto for Bass Tuba* by Ralph Vaughan Williams, composed in 1954, was arguably the first great work written for the instrument and it has maintained its popularity ever since, as well as becoming the cornerstone of almost every tuba soloist's repertoire. In Philip Littlemore's brass band arrangement, this particular soloist handles the work's many challenges with apparent ease, and special mention must be made of his approach to the many lyrical sections, in which he displays great sensitivity throughout.

Philip Sparke's *Tuba Concerto* is, unusually, in two movements and its accessibility to the listener has made it popular with audiences wherever it has been performed since it was written in 2006. Again, Joseph Cook gives an accomplished performance, ably backed by Black Dyke and Dr. Childs.

One of the most performed works for the instrument today is Rodney Newton's *Capriccio*, which was originally written for James Gourlay, before entering the repertoire of virtually every tuba student. Once again, the soloist is at his best in the lyrical, central section, but he also takes the outer movements easily in his stride in a stylish reading.

Any new work from the pen of Philip Wilby is eagerly awaited and, for good reason, *Cyrano* is no exception. Based on the life of the French dramatist and swashbuckling duelist, Cyrano de Bergerac, it is in two movements – *Soldier and Poet* and *Variations on La Folia* – each containing contrasting styles representing the varied lifestyle of the subject. Again, the soloist excels in the slower sections, but the cavalier manner employed in the finale shows that young Mr Cook is also a player of some versatility.

The well-worn path of Edward Gregson's *Tuba Concerto* is travelled once again in the disc's finale. Another very popular and accessible work, this is performed to a very high standard by soloist and band.

All-in-all, this is a recording of serious repertoire, which still manages to 'tick a few boxes' for what might be termed the 'casual listener'. It's also a faithful portrait of an emerging soloist on his way up the performance ladder who unquestionably deserves the attention of all aficionados of the tuba.

Kenneth Crookston

## An enjoyable recording from emerging Belgian band

### LYRICA

Brass Band Heist

Bert Van Thienen

Available from World of Brass, Midland CD and 4barsrest

This is an interesting and enjoyable recording from the emerging Belgian band, Brass Band Heist, conducted by the soprano cornet virtuoso, Bert Van Thienen, who is perhaps best known in his role as a star soloist of Brass Band Willebroek.

The band was formed only in 2004 and this is its first recording, which has been made under the Brass Band Heist's own label. It begins with Derek Broadbent's march, *Mühledorf*, which is followed by a fairly pedestrian reading of Edward Gregson's *Variations on Laudate Dominum*. However, these are mere precursors to the real quality meat in this particular sandwich. Jan Van der Roost's *Concerto Grosso* is performed by the band's conductor on trumpet and the outstanding Walter Hoeks on trombone, with Brass Band Heist conducted by the composer. Both soloists perform with panache and confidence throughout this challenging but enjoyable work, and Bert Van Thienen is on still on characteristically good form in the next piece, the title track, *Lyrice* by Stijn Roels, which is performed beautifully.

Glenn Van Looy is the accomplished euphonium soloist in *Lucy Long* and other highlights include arrangements by Alan Fernie of two Scottish tunes, *Eriskay Love Lilt* and *Ye Banks and Braes*. The last word, however, is reserved for the remarkable Bert Van Thienen, who delivers an encore in the shape of the Harry James *Trumpet Concerto*. Despite many previous attempts, this classic has rarely been carried off with such élan by a brass band and a trumpet soloist. Fantastic stuff, which alone makes this disc worth the purchase price.

Kenneth Crookston

