

Composer Stephen Roberts is well known through his prolific output of brass arrangements, which are played by bands and ensembles across the world. His contribution to the repertoire of the Fine Arts Brass has been featured on scores of their CDs and broadcasts.

Over recent years he has developed a reputation as a versatile and imaginative composer. His output includes orchestral commissions from BBC Radio 3, film and television scores, band pieces and chamber works, as well as educational commissions for groups of varying abilities. His ability to craft interesting music within a wide variety of styles has resulted in a steady flow of commissions and performances, which have received plaudits from both performers and audiences.

Some recent performances of his music include, *Sinfonia for Brass, Strings & Percussion* (BBC Radio 3 commission) with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by David Atherton; *The Nest Stop isAngel* with the Britten Sinfonia conducted by Richard Baker at the Spitalfields Festival; *Breathless* for the Fine Arts Brass 25th Anniversary; *World Dances* for brass, youth or wind band with the Parc & Dare Band and with the Sandwell Youth Band. This last work is to feature in joint performances around the country as part of the 2008 Brass Band Aid appeal.

Stephen Roberts was born in London in 1952. He studied horn at the Royal College of Music with Alan Civil and afterwards gained a PHD in composition at the University of Birmingham. At Birmingham he became one of the founder members of the Fine Arts Brass, performing with them on over two thousand occasions in sixty countries. In 2002 he left the ensemble to devote more time to composing and conducting. He has been musical director of various brass bands and is Associate Conductor of the English Symphony Orchestra. He is also Professor of Orchestration at the Royal Military School of Music, London.

Malvern Chase Suite was commissioned by the Malvern Chase Brass Band with funds from Arts Council, England and the Elmley Foundation. It was written to feature Fine Arts Brass and an accompanying ensemble of either brass or wind. At the premiere in Malvern Theatres in April 2008 this ensemble was the Malvern Chase Brass Band.

The work is designed to involve the virtuoso and the community musician together in a suite of movements centred round city themes. The music is designed to be played by musicians of all standards, whilst the quintet features as a solo group.

The movement titles are:

1. *“Busy Shopping” (Rue Mouffetarde – Paris)*
2. *Break Dance (Bronx - New York)*
3. *Installation (Tate Modern – London)*
4. *A Walk in the Gardens (Botanical Gardens – Kyoto)*
5. *Toreadors (Plaza de Toros – Sevilla)*
6. *Chorale & Fanfares (At the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier)*
7. *Good Times Past (Old Town - St Louis)*

The first movement is entitled *“Busy Shopping” (Rue Mouffetarde – Paris)* and characterises the popular pastime of retail therapy with Gallic ebullience. The second movement is a minimalist *Break Dance (Bronx - New York)* in which the band abandons its brass instruments in favour of percussion. Movement three features the solo brass quintet in a contemporary styled *Installation (Tate Modern – London)*.

A Walk in the Gardens (Botanical Gardens – Kyoto) represents a gentle stroll with an oriental flavour. Although Kyoto is mentioned in the title it could equally refer to the Malvern Winter Gardens or any gardens where a peaceful promenade may be enjoyed.

Toreadors (Plaza de Toros – Sevilla) contains references to the Spanish fandango dance and the famous old bullring in Seville.

Chorale & Fanfares (At the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier) has no specific city reference, but draws on the universal remembrance of the fallen soldier. It concludes with a quotation from Bach’s famous setting of the chorale *“Es is genug”*, (It is enough).

The finale looks back to *Good Times Past (Old Town - St Louis)* with a deliberate reference to the style of Scott Joplin and the city in which he gave many performances.

Stephen Roberts 2007

