The Lion and The Rose

Diversions for Brass Band Philip Wilby

In July 1634, Ben Johnson produced one of his last court masques at Bolsover Castle in Derbyshire. William Cavendish, who owned the castle, spent a lavish £15,000 on its performance, and his principal guests were King Charles 1st and his French wife Henrietta Maria. It marked the end of an era, since within a few years, Charles would have fought with his own Parliament in the English Civil War and been publicly executed.

The Masque was arranged around the three courses of a banquet, and featured a dance for the tradesmen, or 'Mechanicals' using the sound of their anvils to keep the dancers in time, and a romantic dialogue between two cupids. The whole scene was recreated in the ceiling of the castle's 'Heaven Room' where a group of cherubs hold aloft the various musical parts of Thomas Ravenscroft's 'Round of three Country Dances in One'.

My brass band score reuses many of these elements. Royal fanfares abound, alongside stately processions and a pair of characteristic movements positioned between more developed outer movements.

William Cavendish was a fascinating character who wrote books on swordsmanship and the training of horses. The extensive preparations for his Masque clearly tried the patience of his wife Margaret, who described an atmosphere at Bolsover which is far removed from the tranquillity of more recent times.

This disorder causes the Trumpets to Sound, the Drums to Beat, the Soldiers to Arm, and the Women to Weep, and to make it the more Fearful, the Great Bell, which is only Rung in time of Danger, either in cases of Fire, or War, or Mutinies, or the Like, Sounds Dolefully, all of which makes me Tremble Fearfully.

- 1. Prelude with Flourishes
 - 2. Fugue
- 3. Dance for the Mechanicals

(after the Round of Country Dances by Thomas Ravenscroft)

- 4. Dialogue for the Cherubs
 - 5. Rondo
 - 6. Royal Fanfare

Solo Cornet A in B THE LION AND THE ROSE

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