

What counts as an 'Original Work' for Brass Band at the Youth Champs?

When we're talking about what makes an 'original work' for brass bands, it's important to understand a few key points about composition, arrangement and copyright. Simply put, an 'original work' for brass band refers to music that's specifically written for the brass band setup, rather than being adapted from another style or type of music. Here's a simple guide to help you understand what qualifies as an original work in brass band music.

1. Composition v Arrangement

- **Original composition:** An original piece is music that's created from scratch for the brass band. The composer writes everything - melodies, rhythms, harmonies - specifically for the brass band instruments, thinking about how they all sound together.
- **Arrangement/ adaptation:** If the music was originally written for another type of ensemble (like an orchestra or piano) and then reworked for brass band, it's not considered an 'original' composition. It may still be a great piece, but it's more of an arrangement rather than an original work made specifically for brass band. Although still excellent music, pieces featuring folk songs like Gaelforce and Alloway Tales should be considered arrangements in this setting.

2. Written for the Brass Band

Brass bands are different from other musical groups because of their unique instruments and sound. A true 'original work' for brass band takes this into account.

A typical brass band includes:

- Eb Soprano Cornet
- Bb Cornets
- Bb Flugelhorn
- Eb Tenor horns
- Bb Baritones
- Bb Euphoniums
- Tenor and Bass Trombones
- Eb and Bb Tubas
- Percussion

For a composition to be original, it should make full use of these instruments and how they sound together. A piece written for brass band needs to work with this mix of instruments and not just sound like something that could be played by any other ensemble.

3. New melodies and harmonies

An original work should have brand-new melodies and harmonies. It shouldn't just borrow or rework other pieces of music from different composers. While it's okay for a composer to reference other tunes (like a folk song or national anthem), the main material in the composition should be original and created for that piece.

Original works can also be in the style of variations on a theme by another composer (Saint-Saëns Variations (Philip Sparke), Paganini Variations (Philip Wilby) etc...), where the vast majority of the work is composed specifically for the version in question, or music based on another composer's work (Torchbearer (Peter Graham), Titan's Progress (Herman Pallhuber) etc...). We recognise that most of these examples are pieces more likely to be played by elite level bands but they are useful in illustrating the general point.

4. Copyright and ownership

For a work to be legally considered 'original', it has to meet certain copyright requirements. The music must be created by the composer and fixed in a tangible form, like sheet music or a recording. This gives the composer the right to control how the music is used and performed.

If a piece is based on someone else's copyrighted music, it could still be performed, but it wouldn't be an original work; It would be considered a version or arrangement of someone else's music.

Conclusion

So, in a nutshell, an original work for brass band is a piece of music created just for the brass band, with fresh ideas and new music- not a straightforward reworking of something written for another type of group. It should take full advantage of the unique instruments and sounds of the brass band. By understanding these points, you can be sure that the music you're performing at the Youth Champs is truly original and contributes to the rich tradition of brass band music.