

The King's Messenger by George Lloyd

The King's Messenger was commissioned as a Test Piece for the 1994 Swiss, Dutch and Norwegian National Brass Band Championships. It proved a popular work and was played in subsequent years as their 'Own Choice' piece by several bands playing in the Swiss, Australian, Hartlepool and South West England Brass Band Championships. It was recorded for Albany Records by **Black Dyke Mills Band**, conducted by **David King**, and produced by **Paul Hindmarsh**.

The work takes its title from a poem written 3000 years ago in about 1000 BC, probably by Confucius and translated in **The Book of Odes**, (1908) by L. Cranmer-Byng.

The composer's interest in the poem arose in part from the driving regular rhythm of the verse, mimicking the sound of the horse's hooves, and in part because the **Odes of Confucius** are believed to be the oldest authenticated songs in existence. For George Lloyd, the poem also had a personal resonance with his close family. His father and grandfather were both military couriers, carrying sensitive wartime intelligence information on behalf of the British Admiralty.

KING'S MESSENGER

*Galloping, galloping, gallant steed;
Six reins slackened and dull with sweat,
Galloping, galloping, still we speed,
Seeking, counselling, onward set.*

*Galloping, galloping, piebald steed;
Six reins, silken reins, start and strain,
Galloping, galloping, still we speed,
News, what news? from the King's domain.*

*Galloping, galloping, white and black;
Six reins glossy and flecked with foam,
Galloping, galloping, look not back!
On for the King—for the King we roam.*

*Galloping, galloping, dappled grey;
Six reins true to the hand alone,
Galloping, galloping, night and day,
Seeking, questioning, galloping, gone!*



The silver greyhound

Emblem of the King's Messenger Corps



Chinese Horse, Han Dynasty

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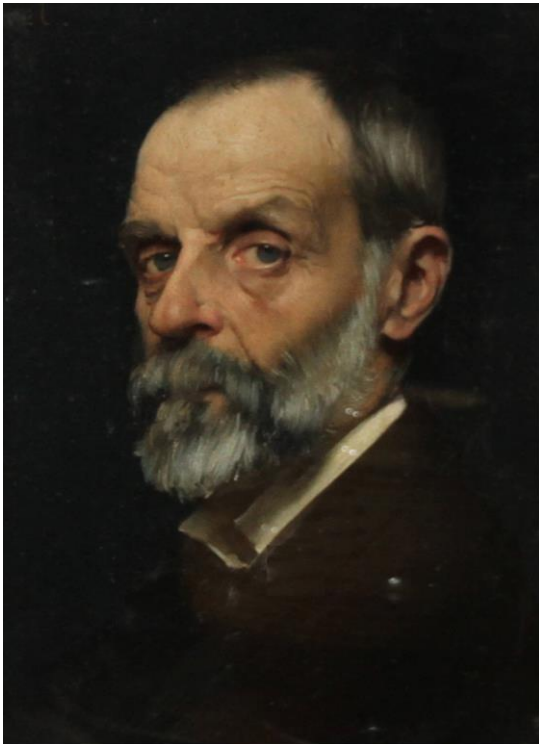
Major William A C Lloyd, the composer's father, had published several books of poetry and a biography of Vincenzo Bellini before 1914. He served as a Captain in the Leeds Rifles in World War One, winning a Military Cross at the Battle of Bullecourt. That battle resulted in a tactical victory, but the British and particularly the Australian forces suffered severe casualties, losing over 3000 dead, 7000 wounded and 1100 prisoners, for the sake of the capture of a small part of the German Hindenburg line. The horror and devastation of the battle stayed with William for the rest of his life, but in 1939 when World War Two broke out, he did not hesitate to sign up for service for a second time.

By 1939, William was 54 and considered too old for front line duty but owing to his previous rank and war record he served as an Admiralty Courier. He carried Naval Code Books from the War Office in London to warships and submarines in the Royal Naval Dockyards throughout the country. He travelled by train with a locked suitcase full of highly secret code books, wrapped in sealed canvas message bags, wearing civilian clothes but carrying a Smith and Wesson .45 Service revolver in his coat pocket.



The work of a Courier involved long journeys across country to Rosyth, Plymouth, Liverpool, Glasgow and Scapa Flow. He worked long hours with little food, poor sleep, and constant watchfulness.

William Lloyd's original 1908 edition of *'The Odes of Confucius'* containing the poem ***King's Messenger*** was amongst George Lloyd's own books.



Captain Walter Lloyd, William A C Lloyd's father and the composer's grandfather, had joined the Royal Navy as a Midshipman at the age of 14. He served in the Chinese Opium Wars and in the Baltic Sea during the Crimean War, where he carried out raids against the Russians on the Kemi River, rising to the rank of Post-Captain. In 1860, while serving on *HMS Leopard*, a few days after the start of the Mount Lebanon Civil War, he travelled on horseback into the mountains around Beirut, gathering military intelligence at a time when the roads were unsafe for civilian travellers. He witnessed the burning of villages and massacre of Maronite Christians, making many drawings and journal entries.



The burning of Dahr al-Baidar by Druze militia. (May 30th, 1860)

Watercolour by Captain G W E Lloyd

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Watercolour sketches by Capt. G W E Lloyd



Foothills of Mount Lebanon, near Beirut



Bedouin Arabs, Syria, 1860



The Citadel, Aleppo, 1860

With his family history of service as military couriers, the choice of the ancient Chinese song *The King's Messenger* was not only a dramatic subject. It was an appropriate tribute to the experiences of George Lloyd's father and grandfather and a personal gesture towards his own military service, which had cost him so dearly.

The King's Messenger is published by R Smith & Co
available from www.justmusicuk.com/publications/details/JM31083

The Albany recording is available on the CD **English Heritage**, TROY 051