

A musical interpretation by John Sangster

The Lord of the Rings

Volume 1

move

the lord of the rings trilogy | the composer recalls

"If you want a musical autobiography, it's all there in The Lord of the Rings albums. A crazed montage of all the jazz (and other) idioms I've been involved with during my life. All the musics I love are in there; some plainly stated, some distorted and disguised a little bit the way memories sometimes go."

John Sangster, Seeing the Rafters

A small army of Lunatic Musical Mates became the nucleus of the sometimes frighteningly large army of LMM's who helped me perpetrate the seemingly endless LOR phantasmagoria. The Lord of the Rings. The writing and recording of which took a good eight years of my life. After a further fourteen more years, people are still walking up to me saying how much they enjoyed my Lord of the Flies.

Those good eight years out of my life actually began about twelve years before, in 1958, when a lady friend of mine gave me The Hobbit to read, which of course instantly made me rush out and get my hot stickies on the LOR trilogy.

I looked at all the poems and songs and little verses contained inside and waited for someone to put them to music. Someone other than good old Donald Swann the Pom, whose pathetically dreary efforts ("The Road

Goes Ever On, a Song Cycle") I found so unbelievably pompous, outright painful, and thoroughly un-recommend.

Or the Swedish geezer who did some Tolkien stuff that sounded like music for going up and down in lifts to. Let's get a bit of life into it, I thought, as I waited and waited.

Then I started thinking about the whole overall thing, Tolkien's splendiferous world of Middle Earth. Where's the Hollywood musical? Where's the Grand Opera? Where's the Rock Opera, for that matter. Where's the kiddie's TV cartoon series? Where's the bloody Ballet? Where's the four full-length movies? Where's all the lovely music someone should have written about all this? Nowhere, that's where.

So out of sheer frustration I made a start. I decided to have a go. My way. I decided to tackle what Whitney Balliet so rightly calls "the slippery problem of making jazz composition as interesting as jazz improvisation".

First, *The Hobbit Suite*. Single album [now on Swaggie CD]. Then the flywheel began to pick up and I approached Nevill [L. Sherburn, of Swaggie Records] with the idea of a double album, *The Lord of the Rings: Volume One*. To the original band of seven I'd added another four brass, four more woodwinds, three voices and a string quartet. Just a little bit too rich for Nevill's blood; I sold the idea to EMI. Along with the provision for ample

studio recording and mixing time. And fought, and this time won, the battle to retain my Composer Copyright royalties. Ya live and Yallourn.

That was 1974. Two years later came the second double album *The Lord of the Rings: Volume Two*. Again for EMI, and rightly so, for Volume One had won for them the Australian Radio Record Awards "Jazz Award".

Then in 1977 came the third and supposedly final double-album, Volume Three, to complete the trilogy. By now the woodwinds had grown to six, the brass still at five, the strings enlarged to a full studio section. With the addition of Tony Ansell's synthesizers, the thing was becoming truly gargantuan.

And I thought I'd finished. Fifty-two pieces, plus the thirteen Hobbit pieces, making sixty-five in all. Nearly six hours of music.

But I kept hearing more, and EMI agreed to a fourth double-album, in 1978: *Landscapes of Middle Earth*. More reflective this time, no brass. Burrows and Graeme Lyall, with Jim Kelly and George Golla playing guitars. A rhythm section with percussions, the Claire Poole Singers, a large string section and Peadar O'Carroll's harp. Twelve pieces, bringing the total now to seventy-seven, and the total Middle Earth music time to an astonishing seven and a half hours. I just couldn't stop until it was all out of me.

Eight years of hearing the bands

playing inside my imagination, seeing the Professor's pictures in my mind's eye, listening to his words thundering the Spells and Incantations around in my head (I tell you it's Hell in there). And then, to cap it all off, EMI in their infinite wisdom made up another fifth album – excerpts from the previous four – and released it under the title *Lord of the Rings (Musical Interpretations)*. Good gravy.

The aim of all this, if I may quote from my own liner notes, "was simple, and best said in Professor Tolkien's own words:

'the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at a really long story that would hold the attention of his listeners, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them'"

Roger Bell was so excited and moved when he first heard the stuff that he went a bit overboard: "some of the most important music to come out of Australia as it shows the way out for the impasse modern classical music finds itself in, and it gives new direction to jazz." On yer, Badger.

John Sangster | 1988



**the lord of the rings
trilogy** | original liner notes | 1974

Professor J.R.R. Tolkien in 1954 first published his trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*. This album contains the first eighteen pieces of a Suite of music impressions of some of the places, characters, and events of the saga.

In no way is the Suite a literal description of the story, nor are any of the poems set to music; it's simply a set of very impressionistic sound-pictures to evoke some of the feelings and reactions one might experience on reading the adventure. And so the pieces follow only loosely the time-and-logic scale of the books. They are in a variety of styles, from a kind of early ragtime through small and larger orchestral idioms, to, at the other extreme end of the spectrum, musical collage where the composition is made up of elements of the other pieces of

the Suite put together on the 16-track machine. All of the music is composed and arranged and conducted by John Sangster, published by J.S.M., and recorded and mixed in the Sydney studios of EMI (Australia). The musical-collage piece *The Great Battle* is a joint composition of John Sangster and sound engineer Martin Goring Bengé, who also recorded and mixed the Suite as a whole. The photographs are by Howard Hughes, and the album was produced by John Sangster and Martin Goring Bengé.

In this Suite I have tried to show mostly the lighter, happier, more upward-moving things from the trilogy; however, some things must be faced: there *are* Nazgul, Orcs, Catastrophes and Battles.

More than fifteen annual re-readings of Tolkien, and fifteen and many more marshallings of music-ideas and impressions: there are so many, many musics, "sounds", in the saga; some plainly audible, some but dimly heard that the task finally, is one of selection and elimination. Some things, such as flute-and guitar-music, I have kept for volume three ("Tom Bombadil" perhaps?).

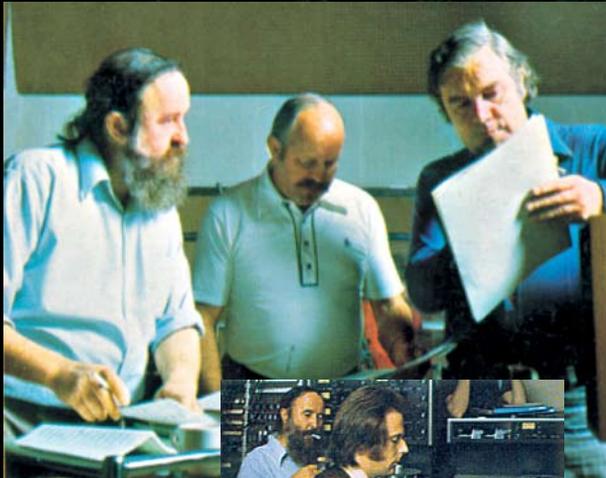
As regards lightness, tenderness, and magicanship, there isn't a musician playing on this album whom I don't consider "friend"; and I

treasure, beyond any measure, their participation, their improvisation, their understanding.

And all that goes double for my friend in this and previous and future musics: Mad Martin Goring Bengé.

Perhaps the Elves didn't take all the magic with them after all...

John Sangster | Sydney August 1974



1 | **off to adventures**

An introductory piece; to get things going. The soloists are John McCarthy, clarinet, and Graeme Lyall, soprano saxophone.

2 | **legolas elf**

To show the leafy forest of Lothlorien, and the nimble Elf-hero whose home it is. The soloist is John Sangster on vibes.

3 | **gandalf the white**

In a previous album, *The Hobbit*, Gandalf the Whiz-of-a-Wizard is shown. Here he assumes a stronger, more dignified and triumphant valence as the majestic White Wizard. Included there is a brief quote from the previous "Gandalf the Whiz" theme. The soloist is Graeme Lyall on soprano saxophone.

4 | **elvish dance**

The sort of dance that Elves would do. Soloists: Bob Barnard, trumpet, and John McCarthy, clarinet.

5 | **nazgul**

Fearsome winged aerial creatures; striking terror into the hearts of all with their terrible cry from above. The clashing and wing-beatings are from the Hub-Waters, the oppressive

claustrophobic bass-clarinet squalls are by Tony Buchanan.

6 | **sam the man**

Sam Gamgee: down-to-earth no-nonsense man. Probably loves brass-bands, so: after an almost obligatory drum solo by Len Barnard, the soloists are, in order of appearance: Alan Nash and Bob Barnard, trumpets, and Ken Herron and Bob McIvor, trombones.

7 | **the ride of the rohirrim**

Men, this time. The urgent galloping phalanx of massed riders. An environment for the three tenor saxophonists, in this order: Graeme Lyall has the first two solo choruses, Tony Buchanan the next two, and Errol Buddle the last two. Then a series of four-bar chasers: Graeme, Errol, Tony (on baritone) and Graeme again, leading back into the three-saxes unison-theme. The final excruciating tenor cadenza is, of course, by Graeme.

8 | **glad'riel**

The Elvish-Queen. A slim Lady, in a long white gown with garlands of flowers and stars in her hair. With whom just about everyone in the story, Elves, Dwarves, Hobbits, Men, and, sadly, even unfortunate Smeagol, falls desperately in love. Really one of the

Love-Goddesses. Perhaps just a tough of Mae West? Maybe the sweet sum total of every woman one has ever loved?

9 | **elvish tea-party, with dance**

A few late workmen setting up the last of the potted-palms, the final Aspodistras hurried into place, and the Elves sit down to enjoy their tea and lembas-cakes. The dance commences, and Lo! the Dwarves are up, first on the floor. (an "Elves' Excuse-Me"?). Then the Hobbits, and things start to get a bit rowdy. The M.C. calls "Thank you Ladeez'n Gentlemen, supper will now be served in the Outer Rooms. ..."

10 | **orcs**

Full of menace, horrible of aspect; scowling, slavering endlessly muttering in their foul tongue; and running, running tirelessly to their dread appointments. Probably the most terrifying baddies ever invented Soloist: John Sangster, marimba.

11 | **blues for boromir**

Twice fallen: first to the spell of the Ring, and then to the Orc-hordes, Boromir is laid out in battered state in a small Elvish-boat. His long dark hair combed and arrayed upon his shoulders, his broken sword and cloven

horn across his lap, the swords of his enemies beneath his feet. the great horn that he would in vain seeming to sound a last sad cry, the funeral-canoe is pushed slowly out into the current, and down, down to the falls. Rumour has it that the grey ghostly Elven-raft survived the cataract, and made its way finally out into the Great Sea at night under the stars at last. Bob and Alan have the plunger duet-theme, Erroll's alto the middle section. Graeme Lyall has the very beautiful tenor improvisation, and Alan Nash the short final cadenza.

12 | **uncle gandalf needs you!**

Sub-titled *Recruiting For War*.

A sort of gee-em-up March. Col Nolan plays the electric harpsichord. John McCarthy improvises throughout the written ensembles. The other improvisations are by Bob Barnard, Bill Motzing, and Alan Nash (over that heavy "after-beat" cymbal-rhythm). Supposed to be just exciting, jolly good fun. Wanna join up and Fight for Right?

13 | **ents and entwives**

A story-piece, in three joined sections, for the giant walking-trees; brooding, full of secret purpose. All of the sounds, by John Sangster, are those of wooden instruments: marimba, bamboo rattles,

guiro, etc. The piece opens with Nathan and George playing ominous winds high in the Ents' forest-roof, over slow ponderous walking rhythm. A clumsy, slow-awakening theme of two more wooden instruments, bass-clarinet and cello, leads into an un-utterably sad cello improvisation for the long-lost, forever-lost Entwives. Their theme made of scored cello, improvising cello, piano and voice (these last two by Len Barnard); then a brief return to the Ents' theme. Made of the bones of the earth, Treebeard's forest-army marching over the hills to war ...

14 | **the great battle**

A montage of elements from the other pieces in the Suite, arranged across the 16-track tape and then mixed into a Gathering of the Armies. The first skirmishes (on the right-hand stereo channel) building up, slowly zooming out to an aerial view of the vast battlefield. Clouds of dust and smoke, the cries of the lieutenants, the clash and crash of arms! Really, a six-minute composition for the sixteen-track tape-machine: the Score, or selection of elements, their various speeds and directions, their entries, and their overall layout, by John Sangster. And the realization of this score, the mix, by Martin Goring Bengé.

15 | **Vale Theoden**

In the midst of the great battle, King Theoden is slain. His Guard forming a defensive square about his body bear him upraised on his broken shield, draped in his torn Colours, the smoke and noise of the battle to the foot of the long, long ladder of stone steps that lead up and up to his fortress-castle-home. The cortege begin the ascent. At the top step stand his court. Stricken, but erect, proud and still, they await as the slow company bear up the body of their fallen King.

16 | **three cheers for smeagol**

Another trilogy:- over a recurring slippery-sliding bass-line three of the disasters of Gollum. Vibraphone leads into the first of them, Nathan's cello into the second, and Tony's bass-clarinet into the third and final Catastrophe: Smeagol, wearing the One Ring, plunges into the fire-filled Cracks of Doom, thus becoming a sort of unwitting Hero of the whole Saga. There is a brief tragic-heroic quote of Gollum's original theme from *The Hobbit*, and all is quietly resolved.

17 | **bilbo's birthday-party**

On their return home after all these adventures, the Company gather at the old Hobbit's last party. Bob Barnard is

the soloist. The ancient Bilbo nods off in mid-remembrance.

18 | **the grey havens**

The elves, bearers of all that is lightest, tenderest, and most magical, finally decide that they've had enough of the brawling roughness that increases all around them... they prepare to board the tall white ship that will bear them away from Middle-Earth. The gulls depart the rigging and return to land as the slow sad tall ship carries its bright cargo into the mists and on to the Grey Havens. Magic leaves Middle-Earth forever ...?

CD EXTRAS

In the "Extras" icon on the CD there is a Quicktime movie featuring rare television footage of John Sangster (The Don Burrows Collection, ABC-TV). There are also PDF files featuring the complete artwork from the original EMI LP set of Lord of the Rings (all four volumes).

THE SANGSTER/MOVE LEGACY

This first volume of Sangster's epic *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy plus *Landscapes of Middle Earth* is part of the new John Sangster jazz series

on Move Records, featuring some of his best music on CD for the very first time. ■ The series includes the tribute album *Last Will and Testament* of John Sangster (MD 3255), rare recordings from Sangster's own Rainforest Records label and previously unreleased material from the early 1980s, as well as archive and newly shot video.

Also available on Move are Sangster vibraphone/piano duets with Tony Gould on the re-issued *Gould Plays Gould* album (MD 3021), which also features Sangster conducting Gould's Improvisation for piano and string orchestra.

the players |

Bob Barnard | trumpet
Alan Nash | trumpet and flugel-horn
Bob McIvor | trombone
Ken Herron | trombone
Bill Motzing | trombone
Arthur Hubbard | tuba

the string quartet |

Harry Kirby | first violin
Della Woods | second violin
Irene Morozov | viola
Nathan Waks | cello

John McCarthy | clarinet
Graeme Lyall | soprano and tenor saxophones
Errol Buddle | oboe, flute and alto and tenor saxophones
Tony Buchanan | clarinet, bass-clarinet, and tenor and baritone saxophones
Col Evans | piccolo
Len Barnard | drums and percussion
George Thompson | acoustic and electric basses
Col Nolan | acoustic and electric pianos and electric harpsichord
Ian Bloxsom | percussion, marimba, glockenspiel, bass-drum, gongs and triangles.
John Sangster | percussion: vibraphone, marimba, hub-waters, tambourine, guiro, triangles, brake-drums, bell-tree, bamboo rattles, various wind-chimes and gongs

The voices are by John Sangster, Martin Goring Bengé, and Len Barnard, who also plays the stride-piano in "Ents and Entwives"

production | John Sangster and Martin Goring Bengé
© 1975 John Sangster © 1975 EMI Records Australia / Rainforest Records
CD reissue and remastering | Martin Wright
© 2002 Move Records

front cover and background graphics | John Franklin
Move Records | visit our website for more information about John Sangster and other jazz releases
www.move.com.au

ALL TITLES JOHN SANGSTER MUSIC

