Peter Meechan

Hougoumont

for Wind Orchestra

2013

Duration: c13’

Instrumentation

Piccolo, 2 Flutes, Oboe, Bassoon
E♭ Clarinet, 4 Clarinets, Alto Clarinet, Bass Clarinet
2 Alto Saxophones, Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone

3 Bb Trumpets, 4 Horns in F, 2 Trombones, Bass Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba

Percussion (4 players) – Bass Drum, Glockenspiel, Marimba, Snare Drum, Suspended Cymbal,
Tenor Drum, Timpani, Tubular Bells, Vibraphone, Xylophone

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Programme note

Commissioned by the Band of the Coldstream Guards to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Coldstream Guards Association, Hougoumont is a work for band and narrator that tells the story of the battle at Hougoumont Farm, a battle which the Duke of Wellington himself said was the single battle that led to victory in the battle of Waterloo.

Hougoumont opens with a saxophone solo, a lone soldier, having wearily made their way to Quatre Bras, in desperate need of rest and sleep. Instead, the order comes through to move on to Hougoumont Farm.

The battle at Hougoumont follows, with musket fire heard in shock notes through the band. The final, sombre, passage reflects on the victory (the chorale in the brass) before reflecting on the 1500 casualties suffered in the battle.

The Band of the Coldstream Guards, conducted by their Director of Music Darren Wolfendale, gave the world première of Hougoumont, the first work written for them as their “composer in residence” on 14 February 2013, Cadogan Hall, London.

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Before the music begins:

June 17, 1815. The Duke of Wellington, in battle once more with Napoleon Bonaparte, ordered his troops to Quatre Bras, situated south of Brussels.

As the army reached their position there was a tremendous thunderstorm with torrential rain – within minutes everyone was soaked to the skin. There was no shelter, they had received no rations that day and they were exhausted, having marched almost non-stop for the previous two days.

Just as the men were settling down came the unwelcome order came that the four light companies of the two Guards Brigades, including 2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards, were to move forward immediately and occupy the farm and orchard of Hougoumont.

The light companies had been the last to arrive at Quatre Bras, having been with the rear guard, and they were more exhausted than most. But they now set off in to the driving rain with the prospect of a sleepless night ahead.

Once the château and buildings were occupied, the men may well have thought that they would enjoy a comfortable night under cover, but they were soon disillusioned, for they were put to work fortifying the buildings in every way possible. All entrances were closed, and where possible, barricaded. Only the Great Gate was deliberately left open, so that reinforcements, supplies and ammunition could reach the farm from the main position behind.
The torrential rain finally eased off as dawn broke on Sunday, June 18 and everyone 'stood to' ready for the expected French attack. It was a miserable, muddy morning, and 72000 sodden Allied troops faced and equally sodden 68000 French troops, a mere 1000 yards away across the valley.

All was set for the Battle of Waterloo.

The first attack against Hougoumont was made and as the French troops emerged from the wood, confident that Hougoumont was not within their grasp, they were stopped in their tracks. Between them and the farm was a thirty yard strip of open ground, swept by accurate musket fire from the windows and loopholed walls manned by the Coldstream.

Sweeping around, the French were attempting to force their way in through the Great Gate. Lieutenant Colonel Macdonell, who was in overall command of both Coldstream and Third Guards, had become aware of the danger that this posed, and shouted to three other Coldstream officers nearby to join him. They were followed by more, and by using their shoulders, they very slowly managed to push the two heavy doors together, holding them shut until the massive crossbar could be dropped into place.
Rehearsal figure S

Following a brief lull for the defenders of Hougoumont, a new threat developed when the French began to shell the buildings with incendiary devices. Soon, many roofs were ablaze and it was not long before many of the buildings were alight too. Napoleon's hope that fire would succeed where his troops failed would be thwarted by the bravery of the Allied troops. Following a nine hour battle, the French disappeared into the woods where they had appeared from at dawn that same day.

Wellington would later declare that “The success of the Battle of Waterloo turned on the closing of the gate”. He also went on to say that “You may depend upon it that no troops but the British could have held Hougoumont and only the best of them at that.

After a while the Coldstreamers in Hougoumont were ordered to move back and bivouac for the night in a field just behind the farm.

At Roll Call that evening there were many names read out that went unanswered.

The 2nd Battalion lost 348, while the Third Guards' casualties were 236. Altogether 6000 Allied troops were eventually involved in the defence of Hougoumont, suffering around 1500 casualties.
Narrator: ...Only the Great Gate was deliberately left open, so that reinforcements, supplies and ammunition could reach the farm from the main position behind.

\[ q = \text{c.96} \]
repeat as required
Narrator: They were followed by more, and by using their shoulders, they very slowly managed to push the two heavy doors together, holding them shut until the massive crossbar could be dropped into place.
\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Picc.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Fl. 1+2}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Ob.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Bar.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{E.-Cl.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Cl. 1+2}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Cl. 3+4}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{B. Cl.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Alto Sax. 1+2}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{T. Sax.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Bar. Sax.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Tpt. 1}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Tpt. 2+3}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Hn. 1+3}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Hn. 2+4}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Tbn. 1+2}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{B. Tbn.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Euph.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Tba.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{B. D.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{S. D.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{Vib.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{T. D.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{q}} \text{= c.132}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{p cresc. poco a poco}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{mf cresc.}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{ffpp}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{pp cresc. poco a poco}}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{p cresc. poco a poco}}} \]
slower (\( \text{\( \cdot \}) = \text{c.104} \))
repeat as required

last time only solo

mf

f

mf

f
Narrator: ...The 2nd Battalion lost 348, while the Third Guards’ casualties were 236. Altogether 6000 Allied troops were eventually involved in the defence of Hougoumont, suffering around 1500 casualties.