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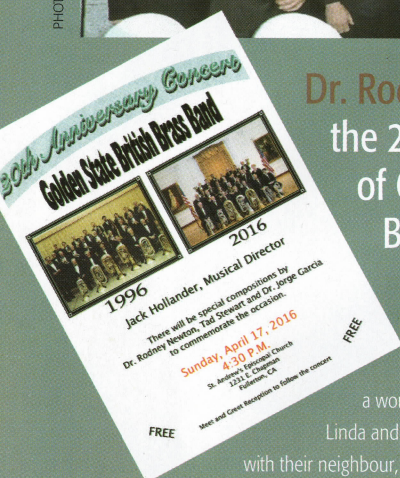


A Golden State

PHOTOS: COURTESY GOLDEN STATE BRASS BAND OF CALIFORNIA



The Golden State British Brass Band of California



Dr. Rodney Newton reports on the 20th anniversary concert of Golden State British Brass Band of California, USA

Golden State British Brass Band celebrated its 20th anniversary on 17 April 2016 and I had the privilege of being invited to conduct the band in a work I had specially written for the occasion.

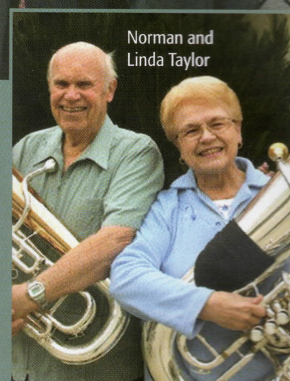
Linda and Norman Taylor founded the band in 1996, together with their neighbour, tenor horn player Penny Dodd. Their aim was to create a British-style brass band and to explore the burgeoning repertoire for the medium. Linda Taylor explained: "In 1995, we were introduced to British brass bands by Ritchie Clendenon, a professor at Fresno State University, in connection with a weekend that he was sponsoring in association with the Yamaha instrument company. Yamaha provided all of the instruments, the music and a conductor for a two-day course on British brass banding. This was Yamaha's initiative to get brass bands going in the United States and, of course, to sell instruments. We went to several more of these courses over the next year and decided in, 1996, that we absolutely needed to get a British-style brass band going in the Los Angeles area. Illness has prevented Penny from being active as a player of late, but we have always included her as part of our organisational team. We usually don't recruit new members as they always find us. It seems we have been lucky over the years because, whenever we have had a vacancy (which is rare), the right person always seems to just show up to fill the seat."

The band, which currently numbers 36 members, rehearses in a Salvation Army hall in the city of Whittier (Los Angeles County) and draws its membership from across the region. Current members of the band include British ex-patriots, Andy and Katharine Spry, Scottish cornet player, Christine Moor (who played with Girls of Brass in the UK), and 92 year-old cornet player and former Los Angeles police officer, Lloyd Glick, who must be one of the world's oldest active bandsmen. The band rehearses twice a month and gives on average six or seven concerts every year across the local area.

Golden State's Musical Director is Jack Hollander, a former cornet player and an alumnus of the University of California, Los Angeles, who teaches at El Toro High School, directs school bands and adjudicates at contests throughout the region. Founder members Linda Taylor, the band's Principal Eb Bass player and her husband, Norman, who plays Principal Euphonium, have been regular attendees at the International Brass Band Summer School held at Swansea University and continue their annual pilgrimage to Britain by attending the Brass Band Summer School at Framlingham, Suffolk, where they have imbibed the British-style of brass band playing from tutors such as Dr. Robert Childs, Professor Nicholas Childs, David Childs,

Dr. Bramwell Tovey, Richard Evans, Steve Sykes, and the many other expert players and conductors who have taken part in these events.

Five years ago, I wrote a work specially for Golden State British Brass Band entitled *California Concerto* (featuring solos for three of the players that I had met at the Summer School in Swansea that year) and, in 2012, I conducted the world première at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Fullerton, Orange County (about 25 miles south-east from central Los Angeles, not far from Disneyland, Anaheim), along with my *Four Cities Symphony*, which appears regularly in the band's programmes. This time, I wrote a work especially for the band's 20th anniversary entitled *Pictures from Yosemite*, the five



Norman and Linda Taylor

movements describing some of the outstanding natural features of Northern California. Although I have never visited Yosemite National Park, I based my suite on photographs posted on the Facebook social network by an environmental scientist friend, who worked there as a park ranger for some years. The movements, *El Capitan*, *Yosemite Falls and Cook's Meadow*, *Cathedral Peak*, *The Half-Dome by starlight* and *View from Glacier Point* form a kind of continuous musical travelogue, with opportunities for the band's soloists to shine.

The band's celebratory concert, which took place at St. Andrew's Church, Fullerton, included two other world premières, Jorge Garcia's *Fanfare for the Golden State* and *A Celebration Suite* by Tad

This was Yamaha's initiative to get brass bands going in the United States

Stewart. Dr. Garcia is the band's Principal Bb Bass, whilst Mr. Stewart - a prolific arranger and band director - flew from Dayton, Ohio, specially for the première of his three-movement work, conducting it himself along with his arrangements of the hymn tunes, *Calon Lan* and *Fairest Lord Jesus*, and his own *Proclamation for Brass Band*. The rest of the concert was conducted by Jack Hollander and included Goff Richards's arrangement of *Crimond*, a medley of marches arranged by Gordon Langford and Peter Graham's arrangement of *Abide with Me*, along with my *Four Cities Symphony*. The concert officially concluded with Sir Hubert Parry's *Jerusalem*, but Jack Hollander sent the audience off into the Californian sunshine with an encore of Kenneth Alford's *Colonel Bogey*, inviting his hearers to whistle along if they wished!

The event was quite demanding for this non-contesting community band, but everyone gave of their best and all seemed to enjoy the occasion thoroughly, judging by the smiling faces and appreciative comments at the reception afterwards. ■