

# BRASS BAND NORTHWEST

## AND COMPOSER JEFF TAYLOR

Perhaps one of the most delightful tunes heard at Brass Band Northwest's (BBNW) Christmas concert came from the mind of one of its own, Eb tubist Jeff Taylor. "Suite Holidays" describes in three parts the excitement, the joy and a bit of the contention of an American family's gathering at Christmas-time. In doing so the work not only freshens a notoriously overworked holiday repertoire for British brass band, but also shows off the long-developing composing skills of author Taylor.

A electrical engineer by profession, Seattle resident Taylor is an artist in the rough, working diligently to polish his skills. He began composing in high school, relying on his musicianship to delve into an array of writing, for brass quintet, symphony orchestra, concert band and now British brass band. But it was not until 2006, when studying at the Pacific Northwest Film Scoring Program, under renowned composer Hummie Mann, that Taylor gained the grounding in music theory that he needed to blossom.

Taylor now has three works for brass band in his portfolio and is working on a fourth. Taylor himself conducted "March Maligned," one of his favorites, at BBNW's 2009 Northwest Brass Band Festival. The following June he soloed with BBNW on tuba in "Incantations for Tuba and Brass Band," a mysterious brew seeming to arise from a witches' sabbath before resolving to gentler, less menacing themes. And "Suite Holidays" is included in BBNW's Dec. 13 "Deck the Halls" concert.

Taylor currently is working on "Washington Statements," which he describes as a travelogue of his home state, in the vein of "Grand Canyon Suite." BBNW will perform the work in its June 2012 concert. He also would like to arrange Camille Saint-Saens' "Danse Macabre" for brass band, probably designating the most challenging passages for euphonium.

Ironically, Taylor, long a performer with (and composer for) brass quintet and community orchestra, was unaware of British brass bands until he joined BBNW less than 10 years ago.

"Now I think, wow, here's an ensemble that can do so much with its potential for big sound," he said. While the brass band may lack a variety of musical voices, he said, "it has a big, round sound that you can't find anywhere else... it's a wonderful ensemble to write for."

"My biggest problem right now is orchestration," Taylor said, alluding to his limited formal training in composition. He chuckled when recalling a recent rehearsal that introduced BBNW to "Suite Holidays." Conductor Judson Scott, upon reviewing a passage in which the melody paired soprano cornet and trombone, suggested, "Maybe we should ask the composer what he had in mind there." Taylor expects improvement with orchestration to come with good old time and experience.

Creativity often comes to Taylor in the shower, and he keeps pad and pen in the bathroom to capture it. The five-note theme he will use in "Washington Statements" arrived there. Taylor confesses the creative aspect of composing is often the easiest. "I'm getting backed up" with the task of orchestration and "polishing for an actual performance." Most of his work is done in the evening hours, leaving just five hours for sleep and no time for television.

Taylor has placed his many compositions – for brass band, brass quintet, piano, orchestra; even pop tunes – on his personal website, [www.artsnsounds.com](http://www.artsnsounds.com). In addition, "Incantations" is one of a handful of works Taylor has published through Solid Brass Music Co.



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