

JOHN BURDEN

Legendary Horn Blower



TIM BURDEN
Voice Over Artist

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By the mid – 1950s trouble was brewing at the LSO. Many of its players felt the orchestra should be taking film soundtrack work; the management however was intent on its remaining solely a concert and recording orchestra. The dispute came to a head in 1955 when a group of players, including Burden, resigned en masse. Like many of them, he joined the Sinfonia of London, a group founded by the conductor Muir Mathieson, the head of music at the Rank Organisation, to record for films. Over the next two decades Burden played on the soundtrack to some of the era's best known movies, including *The Ladykillers* and Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, as well as all the earlier James Bond films and the *Pink Panther* franchise.

Burden left the Sinfonia of London in 1958 and joined the Virtuoso Ensemble of London, a chamber orchestra which again included many of his old LSO colleagues. The following year he founded the London Horn Trio with the violinist Lionel Bentley and the pianist Celia Arieli, which gave many performances over the next 20 years.

He met Menuhin during recording sessions in London and was invited to become principal horn of the violinist's Bath Festival Orchestra (later the Menuhin Festival Orchestra).

In 1967 Burden was approached by the EMI producer George Martin, who was recruiting musicians to play on the Beatles' album *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. "They didn't really know what they wanted," Burden later recalled. "I wrote out phrases based on what Paul McCartney was humming to us." Burden's playing – in that hastily scribbled arrangement – can be heard on the album's title track. Burden also made a number of appearances as a bandsman when Dizzy Gillespie toured Britain in the late 1960s.

Burden kept up a daunting workload which combined film sessions with the orchestral and theatre work, often all on the same day. In the 1970s this started to take its toll, and in 1979 he found that his Embouchure had been permanently affected. He retired from playing and took up a position as professor at Trinity College of Music, where he taught until 1988. Two years later he accepted an invitation to move to teach at Ballymena Academy, and he remained there until his retirement in 2005.

John Burden, horn player, was born on April 13, 1921. He died on October 31, 2010, aged 89.

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Friday 3 March

Studio Two: 7.00pm – 2.15am. Recording 'Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' (SI onto take 10). Mono mixing: 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds' (remixes 1-4, from take 8). P: George Martin. E: Geoff Emerick. 2E: Richard Lush.

Since it was now clear that Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band was a (pretend) real band, a brass overdub was called for. Four outside musicians were recruited to play French horns – James W. Buck, Neil Sanders, Tony Randall and John Burden, then an ex-London Symphony Orchestra freelancer. "I wrote out phrases for them based on what Paul McCartney was humming to us and George Martin. All four Beatles were there but only Paul took an active interest in our overdub".

John Burden would not have known it but his last observation was not strictly true. John Lennon had tape op Richard Lush record all of the conversation between the four players, Paul McCartney and George Martin. Then, for reasons best known only to himself, he took the tape home for his private collection! After the musicians had secured Beatles autographs (a common practice) and gone home, George Harrison became the focus of attention with the overdubbing of the stringing – and much distorted – lead guitar solo onto the same song, now complete except for one final overdub on 6 March.

The session ended with the four new mono mixes of the 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds', with extensive use of ADT. Remix four was deemed 'best'.

Horn player who performed at the Coronation and transcribed Paul McCartney's hums into the brass part of the Sgt Pepper's title track. John Burden was a distinguished horn player who enjoyed a successful career as an orchestral and chamber musician as well as being one of the most prolific film session artists of his era. As principal horn of the London Symphony Orchestra he appeared on celebrated recordings with Colin Davis, Josef Krips, and Sir Malcolm Sargent, and also played at the coronation in 1953. Later his work ranged from the Pink Panther films to the West End, and worked with artists as diverse as Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Dizzy Gillespie and the Beatles.

The Times Obituary written by Mark Walker (son of Flautist and friend of John Burden, Gordon Walker)

John Harold Burden was born in London in 1921. His father, a priest in the East End, wanted him to take holy orders, but as a child Burden was more interested in music than the Church.

At 16 he took up the French horn and defied his father's wishes by winning a place at the Royal Academy of Music two years later.

His teacher at the RAM was the most celebrated player of the era, Aubrey Brian; his contemporaries included Brian's son Dennis, who was soon to eclipse even his father's fame. Before Burden could conclude his studies, however, war broke out and like Brian he joined the RAF as a member of its Central Band. This ensemble, which for the duration of hostilities, had also been extended to a full symphony orchestra, was based at RAF Uxbridge and maintained a busy schedule playing concerts for troops.

After demobilisation Burden was invited to join the London Symphony Orchestra in 1946 as its second horn. Two years later he succeeded Alan Hyde in the Principal chair. This was not always a pleasant experience: several bruising rehearsal encounters with Sargent damaged Burden's confidence. But the arrival of the Viennese musician Josef Krips as conductor-in-chief in 1950 brought a decided improvement in Burden's – and the orchestra's – fortunes.

Under Krips the LSO gave some exceptional performances, of Mozart and Beethoven in particular. Burden appeared as concerto soloist in a successful Mozart series in 1951. He also played in concertos with the Boyd Neel Orchestra and in chamber concerts; in 1953 he was second horn in the orchestra assembled for the Coronation in Westminster Abbey, sitting next to his friend Dennis Brian (first horn), in the Abbey's gallery.

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John Burden - a Student's Perspective
by Robert Parker

twelve minutes" of student was done, so his to were very quiet. When the car came to the music, the big bass drum on the music stand, and the rest of the band, and it was allowed the freedom to start his embouchure and, suddenly, as if by magic, had three parts to do the same.

Once in London I discovered the joys of baroque music. Hearing quickly made friends with fellow students at more Wood House (the house for music students in Cambridge), we went to many concerts along with Andrew Jones (a former student of the Academy of St. Martin in the City of London) and the principal horns of the London orchestra in their group, Jeff Bryant and John Brown (JPO), David Craig (JPO), Michael Thompson (Philharmonia), Alan Civil and Derek Taylor (BBCSO), and Nicholas Bush, who, armed with his Reynolds and alongside his colleagues in the LPO have since given a great performance of Don Quixote. I'll always remember the independence. The just form, Colin Norman, had a bumper load of students, and John Burden fit in! Like me, those in my cohort - Hans Sauer, Christopher Reid, Martin Wall - knew nothing. Gradually we heard snippets of information about him from older students - Janice Ballal, Charles Berke, Isaac Krouch, Steve Aron, Peter Harrison, Simon Grant and John Hayward - the brief biography in the later book only mentions the eight years in principal horn with the LSO plus a few other activities, what really caught the imagination was our teacher playing on the "Beethoven and Lady Love and 'Ray' about Colin used to be of a student age.

In my first lesson, I played a phrase (one of a thousand from Copland, probably not No. 1), but that was the last time for nearly five years. The horn professor got me to buy his own music stand (my "A-ha" moment), and I did a bit of buzzing and practicing, then another buzzing and long notes. He explained that in the early days, he was "reluctant for

music college professors who are made through being someone, or perhaps on the professor, or in the view of those students, have more "inner love" than those who play such as later horns, although that is "not" can not guarantee that they can teach". The reasoning just at London music colleges, when fellow horn players discovered that we were trying to get taught by John Burden, was "Oh, you must use the no-pressure method. I use no-nothing pressure, teacher" in essence, he always referred to his "method" as being to use minimal pressure, and at Trinity from about 1960 to 1965, he was successful in convincing generations of students with his approach to horn playing. Recently I was asked by both Robert to contribute some observations about brass technique for his book *Confident Music Performance* (and edited), and I related there how his insistence on establishing a good technique part of for me in the long run, regarding the acquisition of certainty with the stability of understanding.

When we had learned and finished enough, he introduced us to four fabulous arrangements, three of them in the same style, by Eric Westwood (English director and sometime professional horn player) of popular songs that he had performed with the John Burden Horn Quartet and rhythm section in the late 1950s early.

During my PGCE year in 1961 I decided to take my PGCE, and had some lessons with my old professor. I happened to mention that I was thinking of applying for the brass job at Trinity College in Long Eaton (horn player David Curtis got the job and in 1963 there I understood he checked and said that was where he went to school. He said he had started to learn the horns in nearby Nottingham, which is now my hometown - it's a small world.

By 1964 I had built up a good reputation with my old professor, John Bush, Bob King and Ernest Connor - and thought of those who were in contact with him to ask if I could have opportunities to use with my students.

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