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Secret city music star set for global TV fame

PAUL Leonard-Morgan: you might not know the name, but if you watch TV, you're certain to have heard his music.

He has provided the backdrop for countless TV moments, including *Spooks*, *Silent Witness*, *The Brief*, *Body Shock*, *Dispatches*, *Galapagos*, and adverts for Herbal Essences, Vauxhall cars, Airtours and Heineken.

Away from the small screen, he has worked with musicians such as Simple Minds, Texas, Snow Patrol, Belle and Sebastian, New Yorkers Joy Zipper, as well as indie outfit Arab Strap.

But now the Bafta-winning Glasgow composer is set to take his compositions on to a world stage after recording the American Olympic team's anthem for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

And he did it right here in Glasgow.

The composer asks: "Why should I go to London or America to do it when I could use the players I've been working with here for 15 years?"

Paul was approached by the American Olympic Committee after he worked on the music for the opening ceremony of the Freedom Tower, on the site of the World Trade Centre in New York.

"I was at the airport about to fly off to Barcelona for a weekend off, when I got a call saying they wanted me to pitch for the Olympics anthem," he says.

Paul, who last week released his first album of solo music, *Filmtales*, recorded the orchestral parts for the anthem at the City Halls, in the Merchant City, using local musicians.

He said: "I'd never been in the City Halls, I was blown away by the acoustics. All the players love rehearsing up there because of all the light."

He and engineer Michael Bannister, who is also Texas's keyboard player, flew to Colorado to finish it off.

"Michael came to engineer, set up the piano and all that. It's good having someone you trust in that room with all these people.

"I wasn't nervous in the slightest - at first. The first time I got nervous was at the sound-check. It was at this concert hall, and I had to do an hour-and-a-half question-and-answer session with Olympic gold medallists!

Michael said to me afterwards that he'd played in front of crowds of 30,000 or 40,000, but he'd have been really nervous!"

Livewire Paul, 32, has also recently been commissioned to compose the soundtrack for a £25million Audi advertising campaign.

The music will be based on his album track *Snatched*, and will feature artistic work by renowned album sleeve designer Peter Saville.

Paul has also been approached to work with the BBC Symphony Orchestra on 10 episodes of a new history series for BBC Scotland.

He may not be a household name yet. But his ascendancy, which was marked by the Bafta for Best New Composer in 2000, has been sure-footed.

The germ of the idea for Filmtales came after former Belle and Sebastian singer Isobel Campbell asked if he did any of his own material.

"I said I used to, but I couldn't remember what my style was. I'm used to directors saying 'More emotion, more drama'.

"I started working on the tracks two years ago, but I never intended it as anything other than doing it for the hell of it. It was never going to be a commercial release, I just wanted to rediscover my style.

"I never even thought about doing gigs - I'm bad about those sort of things, which infuriates everyone else!"

Paul moved to Glasgow from Kent 15 years ago, and studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama for three years.

"It was good getting a grounding but I just realised that writing film scores is not one of the things you can teach. You can teach orchestration, how to write violins, but you can't teach how to write tunes, you've got that ability or you haven't."

His first foray into music was playing the recorder, piano and violin. "But when I got to the Royal Academy, I realised there are a lot more talented people out there playing violin, so I gave that up."

Instead, he hired out a studio behind legendary West End recording spot CaVa, and began composing music for films, working several times with David Mackenzie, director of *Young Adam* and brother of *Monarch of the Glen* star Alastair.

Tony Doogan, the famed Glasgow producer, was starting at around the same time and was working in CaVa regularly.

"If bands wanted strings on a track, he'd say, 'There's this guy next door, he could do some,' and I would lay down keyboards or some strings for them.

"And because Glasgow's a small place, everyone used to hang out in the same pubs, so I got to know the bands."

Filmtales was recorded at Wet Wet Wet guitarist Graeme Duffin's Foundry Lab studio in Motherwell, over two years. He was delighted to get Graeme's daughter Esther doing vocals. "I had worked on her solo album, and adored her voice. When I met her she was 17 and she had this voice, so raw, Sheryl Crow kind of thing."

Apart from letting people hear his own music for the first time, one of Paul's other ambitions is to get more people into orchestral music.

"People who say 'I'm not into classical music, all orchestras are dead posh,' they're wrong. Chill-out tracks use orchestras. Massive Attack's *Unfinished Sympathy*, one of the most popular tunes in recent years, has strings in it. People shouldn't be afraid of orchestral music."

Paul Leonard-Morgan's Filmtales is out now on Rage Music.

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