



[Brassed Off](#) at [Liverpool Philharmonic](#)

**Director:** Mark Herman; **Starring:** Pete Postlethwaite, Ewan McGregor, Tara Fitzgerald

**Reviewed** by [Charlotte Starkey](#) January 2011

This is not so much a review as an acknowledgment of a memorable event last week. The screening of *Brassed Off* at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on Tuesday 25th January was particularly appropriate and poignant, a fitting tribute to the much admired Pete Postlethwaite who died on 2nd January 2011.

He began his acting career just a few yards from the Philharmonic Hall, at the Everyman in the 1970s. Since then he has touched almost everyone in theatre and film both here and abroad as well as gathering a huge following among audiences. He enriched any scene with his presence. He was a wonderful teacher, actor and northerner born just down the road in Warrington sixty four short years ago. He played in Alan Bleasdale's *The Muscle Market* (1981), a separate 'addition' to the rest of *Boys from the Blackstuff*

episodes. He has played most major theatres, Bristol Old Vic, Manchester's Royal Exchange among them, and he has been a lead actor in memorable Shakespearean performances.

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In *Brassed Off* he brings his amazing presence onto the screen eventually finding in his confused, angry, anxious bandsmen and sole bandswoman Gloria (played with great touches of humour, subtle and earthy by turn, by Tara Fitzgerald), the discipline and dedication required to compete in, and win, the national brass band competition.



Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall is a magnificent 1930s building with stunning acoustics. With the raising of the unique Walturdaw screen from the bowels of the building beneath the stage, complete with proscenium arch, curtain and Wurlitzer organ music, the concert hall is transformed into a cinema. The screen evokes, like the film itself, a world of communal entertainment all but lost in the modern cinema – the Regals, Hippodromes, Essoldos of yesteryear. The impact of the scenes grew in significance on the large screen – the symbolism of the colours (especially red – all the 'p's and 'f's' of the title shots picked out), the crisp uniform of the band, the images of the pit head, the cage, the grimed miners' faces, the angry women's protest pitch, the community in turmoil, the lyrical hills behind, the intimacies, humour and sadnesses – all these leapt out with a forceful beauty, defining a world betrayed, a community of workers and families in the process of being scrapped like the pit itself.

