

In Search of the Wind-Band: An International Expedition

By Daniel Rager



In Search of the Wind-Band: An International Expedition is a new interactive E-book, exploring 16 countries. The first-of-a-kind, interactive encyclopedic e-book uses text, video, mp3 and pdf files to bring the history and development of the wind-band to life.

The following pages contain a sample of
Chapter 2:

Introduction into European History & Development (France, Prussia, Germany, Spain)

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In Search of the Wind-band

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Wind-band Music
12722 Bass Lake Rd.
Chardon, OH 44024
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In Search of the Wind-band

Catalog # WB – 1004 \$49.95



CHAPTER 2: Introduction into European History & Development (*France, Prussia, Germany, Spain*)

It is reasonable to say that over the centuries, most music, evolved somewhere in Europe before moving abroad. European styles and genres have influenced cultures far abroad and manufactures of instruments, music publishers and engraving all began in Europe where they continue to thrive today.

Much of the world's greatest music has come from this part of the world, making it one of the richest and innovative regions. The world's first and finest composers and musicians began to be educated in music while the rest of the world was still being discovered and settled. Few cultures can boast of such rich musical heritage. The region consists of many countries that are linked politically, socially and economically. Each European country has influenced the other through music, art, dance, architecture, religion and almost all cultural boundaries.

The evolution of music, its composers and performers are well documented over the past millennium since Gregorian chant was being sung in the 12th century. A wealth of historic information on wind music is available in research documents, thesis, articles and books for each historic period including:

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With so much information available on the subject of wind-bands and its evolutionary transformation, this chapter will provide a brief history beginning shortly before the Medieval period.

The first European wind bands were small mixed ensembles that date back to the 13th century. They were made-up of the following instruments: shawms (oboe), trumpets (natural), and drums.

Around the 15th century we find the first recorded evidence of a slide instrument being constructed by Hans Neuschel of Nürnberg Germany called the sackbut. The instrument later became known as the trombone. It was made of brass and introduced into the existing wind groups of the period. The instrument was popular in Royal Court bands and Pope Leo X had several silver Sackbuts made to be used in Rome. Once the sackbut became the standard instrument of the existing wind group, the ensembles' popularity soared, making it the favorite choice for dances and festivals.

String instruments began to improve throughout the 16th century, replacing most wind groups. The new and improved instruments were to become what is now the modern orchestra. Although these string instruments (violin, viola, cello, bass) evolved into the finest ever built, they had limitations because

they were unsuitable for use outdoors. This created an opportunity for the wind-band which helped keep them alive by augmenting and transforming them into the ensemble that is used today. This mixed wind group from the Medieval period developed into a military band. The instruments could be used outdoors and were loud enough to be heard at great distances. They were used in parades, in battle, or when military field calls were needed, to provide directions.

Transformation in the 18th Century

Military bands during this period adopted the newest instruments as they were developed or improved and replaced the older obsolete instruments augmenting the instrumentation of the band. By the 18th century, most Royal Army Bands had a variety of instrumentation. The Royal band in Switzerland for example consisted of: 4) oboes, 4) clarinets, 4) horns and 4) bassoons. Frederick the Great declared that Prussian bands use only two of each instrument, while the English military bands augmented their instrumentation with trumpets and kettledrums.

The evolution of instruments continued with the introduction of percussion brought from Turkey via Poland and Russia. By the mid-18th century, the percussion section was adopted into the military band. Composers of orchestral music took notice and began to incorporate them into the orchestra.

The Turkish Janissaries took notice of the splendor and dramatic effect that percussion instruments provided and adopted the bass drum, triangle and cymbals. In addition, they found that the piccolo's high pitch cut through the sound of the percussion and adopted it to the instrumentation. The addition of percussion created audibility problems in that the wind instruments were drowned out, so the decision was made to increase the size of the wind section. The number of wind instruments varied from one wind-band to another and had much to do with a country's economics, a military band's function and educational philosophies of its leaders.

Religion, Revolution and the Military Band

The French Revolution occurred from 1789 to 1799. This was a period of radical social and political upheaval against the monarchy which had ruled France for centuries; it collapsed in three short years. Religious and aristocratic privileges were under attack from left-wing political groups. French citizens wanted to replace the old ideas about hierarchy and tradition with citizenship and inalienable rights. The Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), a series of onslaughts against Napoleon's French Empire, were more or less a continuation of the original revolution.

In 1789, the National Guard Band in Paris was formed by Bernard Sarrette (1765-1858). It numbered 45 musicians and is considered to be the first modern wind-band because of its size, repertoire and functions, both militarily and civilian. Public concerts were popular, but not until the French Revolution was there such a fervor for nationalism and democratization that excelled the arts, propelling the National Guard Band and wind-band music. In May of 1790, the municipality of Paris increased the size of the band to 78 musicians, making it the largest military wind-band up to this time. The instrumentation included ...

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Beethoven's Military Wind-band Marches:

- York'scher March in F major for Military Music, WoO.18 (1809). *Dedicated to Maria Ludovika (1787-1816), the marches original title was "Marsch für die Böhmsche Landwehr", a march for the Bohemian militia.
- March in F major for Military Music, WoO.19 (1810) ("Horse-music")* Maria Ludovika
- March und Trio for Military Music, WoO.20 (1820) (Zapfenstreich /Grand Tattoo)
- March in D for Military Music, WoO.24 (1816)

View complete score and recording (mp3) of the York'scher March in F major for Military, WoO.18



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Wilhelm Wieprecht and his Massed-Bands

By the mid-18th century, the military band had reached its peak as massed-band festivals and band contests' became large spectacles. Wilhelm Wieprecht (1802-72), a Prussian band leader, was given the task of organizing a grand massed band festival in 1838. He combined the wind-bands of sixteen military regiments totaling over 1,000 musicians with an extra 200 side drummers. The festival was to honor the visiting King of Prussia of the Russian Emperor Nicholas. According to written accounts from the first performance, "the uniform of the performers was magnificent, but Wieprecht himself almost ruined the show by conducting in civilian clothes". This annoyed the Emperor so much that he sent Wieprecht to a military tailor to be properly fitted, so his uniform matched the military band for the second performance four days later.

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Military Band / Brass Band

As the military wind-band with its ever-changing instrumentation continued to develop, so did the brass band. The 19th century saw a juxtaposition between the military wind-bands and the brass band. For one thing, there was a lack of original wind music from composers, especially English composers, in the 19th century. The military bands viewed brass bands as competition and believed performance was more important than the musical quality of a composition. On the other hand, the popularity of the

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brass band was seen as a phenomenon that represented music of a lower social order performed for lower and middle class people. Thus, compositions of much breadth were discouraged. The English music renaissance of the 20th century, coupled with the few enlightened patrons of the time, began to change the status quo. By the 1920s and 1930s, patrons began to commission compositions from English composers to use as test pieces for wind-band contests. Compositions consisted of criteria that would fit all bands, rendering them equally accessible.

Interestingly enough, this ideology did not sustain itself thru the 20th century as composers lost interest in it. With one exception, Gordon Jacob (1895-1984), who continued his work writing a large body of music for winds that included concertos and chamber music.

There were other famous British composers who began to write wind music. In 1909, Gustav Holst (1874-1934) was asked to compose music for military band. He attended Kneller Hall (military band school founded in 1857), so he knew the genre well as a composer and as a trombonist. A few of his wind works include two suites for band, The First Suite in E-flat (1909) and The Second Suite in F (1911), Hammersmith - Prelude and Scherzo (1930) Two Songs Without Words (1906), and a band arrangement of J. S. Bach's Fugue in G Major (BWV 577) referred to as the Fugue a la Gigue.

Ralph Vaughn Williams (1872-1958) had an illustrious career as a composer who had a sense of nationalism and patriotism. He studied at Cambridge at the Royal Academy of Music, with additional studies at the German Romantic School. Some of his compositions for wind-band include: Rhosymedre (based on a Welsh hymn tune for organ) for concert band (1920), English Folk Song Suite for military band (1923), Sea Songs (1923), Toccata Marziale for military band (1924), Overture: Henry V for brass band (1933/34) and Flourish for Wind Band (1939).

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The Napoleonic Period (1803 - 1815)

A dramatic political change occurred during the years Napoleon was conquering the European countries. In the years between 1803 and 1815 there is little evidence of military wind-bands performing in England. The reasons are many and it's not to say there were no military wind-bands, but the military band was no longer financially supported by the government, but became privatized and used foreign conductors. Unlike the last decades of the 18th century when wind-bands dominated musical events in large-scale festivals, with an emphasis on patriotism and propaganda, the government issued a decree that diminished the size of the military band in support of the war effort. The government needed soldiers to fight the war, not musicians. An example in 1802 permitted the First Dragoons of Horse Guards band to enlist someone for five years to direct the band as long as the government did not have to pay for it. One year later, another resolution was passed and aimed at officers directing private bands that they not divert soldiers from the ranks of fighting platoons in order to train them in music. Even if a soldier was being trained in music, the order warned that in time of need, musicians were to revert to soldiering.

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The official governmental view contends military music was nearly non-existent during the Napoleon period and that there are no records to support their existence. Private accounts support the fact that bands not only performed, but were present on the battle front and on the battlefield during the war years.

During the Napoleonic era,...

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END OF CHAPTER 2 SAMPLE

For more information, or to purchase the *In Search of the Wind-Band*, contact Daniel Rager at windbandhistory@gmail.com

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