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## *In Search of the Wind-Band: An International Expedition*

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By Daniel Rager

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*In Search of the Wind-Band: An International Expedition* By Daniel Rager  
EXCERPT CHAPTER 3

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*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 3: Historical Homogeneous Wind-bands**  
*(Waits/Garden Spas/Church/Court)*

More chapter samples of *In Search of the Wind-Band: An International Expedition* can be found at  
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# In Search of the Wind-band

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## CHAPTER 3: Historical Homogeneous Wind-Bands (Waits/Garden Spas/Church/Court)

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Beyond the traditional military, municipal civilian, community, police and educational school bands are other wind-bands of equal importance, but they have been given lesser attention over the centuries. They, too, are woven into the wind-band fabric and are responsible for its development from the inception of the first instrumental ensembles known as 'alto bands.' This term is used to describe bands from the middle of the 16th century through the 17th century and beyond, but its inception was in the period of the Middle Ages. The instrumentation, repertory and function of these miscellaneous groups have had to be as versatile as any of the other wind-bands with specific roles, whether communal or military. The history of these groups can be traced to ancient times and evolved, as did wind instruments, over the ages.

Alto bands existed throughout Europe and the United States and experienced similarities of evolution and diminution abound between the Pleasure Gardens, Churches and Court bands. The stories may vary between countries, but the struggles and triumphs unite them.

### **The Waits**

Many of the first musicians in the Middle Ages were known as Minstrels. They had no legal rights as citizens, most were homeless itinerants and immigrants who traveled from place to place. As towns and villages grew, they recognized the need for town bands to provide important functions that included everything from celebrations to signaling the town in case of fire or attack. Every town in the Middle Ages had multiple gates, church steeples and watchtowers from which the Waits used to watch, thus warning and protecting its citizens from fires, wars and bandits. During daylight hours the watchtowers used flags to signal people but at night, flags and other visual signals could not be seen. Musicians were needed to warn of any threat during the evening hours and thus, the night watchman was born. In England, these people were known as "Waits" which meant to watch and wait. The term 'Wait' has other occupational names such as the Wayt(e), Wait(e), Wate, Gait, Wakeman, etc. The 'Waits' job was so important that in 14th century Paris, it was forbidden to play an instrument or make a sound at night except for the watchman. The exception to this rule was a wedding ceremony. The definition of "waits" has three meanings. The first is related to a person (watchman) who patrols the town streets. Secondly, it refers to a musician who plays a pungent –sounding oboe-like shawns (early oboe) and thirdly is defined as a group (band) of musicians who play for civic events, often from the town hall balcony or tower. The "waits" sang songs, played an assortment of instruments including string instruments, but their wind instruments were of most importance because they could be heard outdoors at great distances. The "Wait Band" consisted of four musicians in the Middle Ages who played a variety of instruments. Over time, the instruments changed but the main instrumentation consisted of a shawm, (reed instrument with vent holes) predecessor to the hautboy, slide trumpet and later the sackbut, lute,

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viol, bagpipes, recorders and fiddles. The “waits” were used until the 19th century when village bands began to organize and performed an array of social functions that originally was done by “waits.” These groups eventually created the establishment for the emergence of the brass band. First appearing around the 1830s, these bands eventually led cities such as Britain to disband its “waits.” Although the “waits” were traditionally wind players, their dissolution had little to do with the popularity of the brass band but more to do with technology and changing times. We could consider the “waits” as the predecessor to today's wind-band...

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#### **Pleasure Gardens & Spa Wind-Bands**

A place for leisure was found in the Pleasure Gardens & Spas throughout Europe and America. During the 18th and 19th centuries, these public places contained a variety of music including full orchestras, singers, organ music and wind-bands. Although Pleasure Gardens were open to the public, there was a charge that helped to keep out petty criminals and lesser-desired elements, including prostitution.

During the year, music ensembles changed as traveling musicians, singers and bands traveled throughout the land. Music included famous works from leading composers as well as arrangements of popular tunes of the day. The musicians working in Pleasure Gardens during the summer months were often the same musicians who performed in the opera and theatre halls during the winter months. Here is an example of wind harmony music finding its way from the Pleasure Gardens into the opera hall via the musicians themselves.

Many English composers applied wind music effects into their compositions. An example of this was Thomas Augustine Arne's (1710-78) wind band music in *Thomas and Sally* (1761), and *Artaxerxes* (1762), which Mozart may have heard in London that foreshadowed his use of wind harmony in his later mature operas.

This long list of civilian and military wind-bands performing in Pleasure Gardens is impressive and can be read in Marshall Stoneham's "Wind Ensemble Sourcebook and Biographical Guide." He chronicles the groups and composers including the works performed at various periods.

The music, alto bands and musicians have changed over the centuries at Pleasure Gardens with little consistency or similarity. The programs of spa bands and military bands from the 1830s to 1840s became similar throughout Europe, as bands performed many of the same shows as they traveled.

In modern times, Pleasure Gardens have become private country clubs, party centers and venues where the public goes to attend weddings or celebrations that include all types of music.

#### **Church Wind-Bands**

Occasionally, societal values shift, taking people into other directions. According to Marshall Stoneham, Sunday observances sped up the decline of pleasure gardens and their music, but encouraged new music of its own. The abundance of English church bands varied over the years. After the English

restoration (1660), wind-bands were in need of good singers. By the mid-18th century, quality musicians were in short supply and organs were replacing wind-bands across Europe. Church instrumentation during the 1760s was mixed with amateur musicians playing flutes, oboes, bassoons and various types of woodwinds, strings and brass. A few changes were made after the 1830s as bands began to prefer the use of the C clarinet instead of flutes and oboes. A new timbre was born called Harmoniemusik. It came to be known as a clarinet band, as it was similar to the oboe band of the Classical period. The clarinet had now replaced the oboe as the principle melodic instrument and is known to have been used by wealthy citizens of Paris and in the courts of French aristocrats.

A new group called the civilian militia band had sprung up during the Napoleonic Wars of 1790-1815. They were known as volunteers in England and Schutzencorps in Germany. Made-up of civilians, these assemblies were interested in all things military thus creating their own military organizations in small towns. The ensembles were generally modeled after clarinet bands, but occasionally employed a trumpet, percussion, pair of horns and bassoon. Militia bands performed for the public in an array of venues including church services. By the 1890s, an expansion of militia bands breathed life into the diminishing church wind-band, providing composers an opportunity to create new music for church and country.

Just as the military wind-bands had entertained people at pleasure gardens, some of them, such as the Royal Artillery, performed for church services. There are valid links between the church and state that are found in the repertory of the period. An example of this is the march Hallelujah composed by Willoughby Bertie (1740-99), the 4th Earl of Abingdon. The first page of his score mentions trumpet, flag and weapons linking the church and state. Symbolism was often used by composers of the period including by J. S. Bach (1685-1750). Bertie was a patron of the arts and a composer, ...

[SOME PAGES ARE OMITTED]

### **Court Wind-Bands**

Over the centuries, some of the best wind harmoniemusik was found and developed for the courts. As the wind-band worked its way up the social ladder to perform for royalty and society's elite aristocrats, its function served a new purpose and its identity became based upon dynamic contrasts. Beginning in Medieval times, the ensemble was divided into two types based upon the instruments' loudness or softness. The loud instruments became one band which had specific functions. They consisted of trumpets, trombones, shawns, horns and percussion. This group performed in large indoor events or outdoors for special occasions that the king or aristocrat might have. Trumpets, for example, were sounded to herald the occasion of visiting dignitaries, the king or queen, processing or pomp and circumstance that went with the royal occasion. They also provided the 'call to dinner' at large banquets or courtly events, such as masquerade parties.

The second group was the soft instrument band. Made up of flutes, lutes, recorders, keyboards or other soft spoken instruments, they performed indoors or in small chamber settings during dinner or other social functions when background music was required.

Dancing was a favorite medieval court pleasure and the basse-dance (solemn dance with gliding steps) was performed with shawns and bagpipes (later a slide trumpet).

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**Court Band Events:**

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END OF CHAPTER 3 SAMPLE

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

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