



# Nineteenth-Century Bands: Making a Movement

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The growth of brass bands in Victorian Britain can be viewed as something of a watershed. It represents an important manifestation of change in popular music culture, and even though it is but one aspect of the wider phenomena underlying the rise of popular music, it possesses features which make it special. It provides a prime example of the fusion of commercial and philanthropic interests and attitudes; of art music and vernacular musical practices; of technology and ‘art’; and of dominant and emergent ideologies. It could also be regarded as one of the more important aspects of British art music in the nineteenth century, and certainly an element which impacted in a lasting manner on the broad infrastructure of British music: its industry, institutions, and even styles. One of the achievements of the brass band movement is that it created what was probably the first mass engagement of working-class people in instrumental art music, not just in Britain, but possibly anywhere. But even while this process was taking place, as early as the 1880s, there were sure signs of the reassertion of traditional social divisions forcing brass bands into the uneasy, ambiguous middle ground between art and popular culture. In the first edition of Grove’s dictionary, J. A. Kappey, an army bandmaster

I am grateful to the librarians and archivists who have assisted me during my research for this chapter, and to Dave Russell, Richard Middleton, Mike Lomas, and Arnold Myers, for reading the earliest draft and making valuable suggestions; also to William Boag; to Alma Sanders for material relating to the Besses o’ th’ Barn Band; to the custodians of the Black Dyke Mills Band library; to the Curator and staff of the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum; to Julia Williams, who typed the original manuscript, and Jill Grey who typed this revised version. Also, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr Helen Barlow.

and self-styled musicologist, who, through various enterprises, had made no small profit from brass bands, declared that ‘many bands had reached a high state of excellence’, but, ‘of course, looked upon as high art culture, brass bands are of no account’.<sup>1</sup> Given the status that *Grove* was to assume, Kappey’s short article may have sown the seeds of a schism between bands and élite art culture which many in the movement would argue has existed ever since.

It is possible to see the development of the brass band movement in the nineteenth century as falling into three, perhaps four, overlapping periods in which critical developmental stages are evident, and in which such developments are explained by the presence of vitally important social, musical, cultural, and economic trends. Also significant are particular events, such as the invention of valves, which gave brass instruments fully chromatic facilities, and the parallel careers of groups of key individuals such as Distin, Sax, and Jullien, or Swift, Gladney, and Owen, names that figure prominently later in this chapter.

These periods condition the structure of this chapter. The first occupies the opening years of the nineteenth century, and ends at about the time when Victoria came to the throne. Although most writers have linked the wind bands of the early nineteenth century to the brass band movement,<sup>2</sup> I see these relationships, even though they are plentiful enough, as more circumstantial than causal. The second period, beginning around 1840, is one in which a number of potent forces combine, explaining why brass bands, as opposed to any other type of amateur ensemble group, gained popular ascendancy. The third of my periods starts around the 1860. From this time, the growth of the movement accelerates most strongly. The number of bands multiplies, and their prominence in working-class life, as well as their function in the common territory *between* classes, is evident. In the last twenty or thirty years of the century, about half-way through this ‘third period’, it is possible to distinguish two subtle but major structural changes taking place. The first concerns what may be described as the ‘standardization’ of musical identity. While it is reasonable to regard this as one of the most important features of the period, it is worth exercising some caution, for, even though many vital musical identifiers which eventually defined the brass band idiom were consolidated at this time, the majority of bands still did not conform to the ‘standard’ line-up of instruments. The second change is in some ways more interesting. Whereas brass banding had previously been led either by commerce or by socially superior classes, from this time the working classes were vital participants in what was, at the very least, a consensual partnership between organized working people and entrepreneurs. Also, brass bands became largely decoupled from patronage and paternalism, elements which were in any case not always

<sup>1</sup> G. Grove (ed.), *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1879–90), s.v. ‘Wind-band’.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. D. H. Van Ess, ‘Band Music’, in N. Temperley (ed.), *Music in Britain: The Romantic Age 1800–1914* (London: Athlone Press, 1981), 138.

clear.<sup>3</sup> It is in this period, interestingly enough, that brass band people start referring to themselves as a ‘movement’.<sup>4</sup>

### BRASS INSTRUMENTS IN BRITAIN BEFORE THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Prior to the nineteenth century, there had not been a widespread tradition of amateur brass playing in Britain. There were comparatively few professional brass players, and these were based in London and the main provincial centres. Furthermore, only three types of brass instrument existed before the nineteenth century—the trombone, the trumpet, and the horn. The trombone has remained largely unchanged since its invention in the fifteenth century. The horn and trumpet were of relatively simple construction, giving their players the facility to produce a single harmonic series from each fixed tube length. Trombones were introduced into England at the beginning of the Tudor dynasty. Indeed, their importation was part of the cultural expansion that was intended to assert that dynasty. The players were all foreign; the most important were Venetians, many of them clandestine Jews, who established a highly skilled dynasty of trombonists at the Tudor court.<sup>5</sup> From the early sixteenth century until the Commonwealth period, the importance of trombonists in the royal musical establishment was reflected in the consistency of their employment and the size of their fees. Trombones were used to play gentle chamber music, dance music, probably (although none survives) declamatory processional music, and, from the closing decades of the sixteenth century, to support sacred music, even the music of the liturgy itself.<sup>6</sup>

The chief provincial employers of trombonists were the civic authorities who still employed waits. Waits, who had been part of civic foundations since the Middle Ages, performed at ceremonial functions, and in earlier times were, it seems, employed to keep and sound the watch. Although the waits were regulated by local authorities and were required to conduct themselves under strict disciplinary regulations, evidence shows that they also freelanced independently of these authorities—either collectively or as individuals.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (London: Methuen, 1982), P. Joyce has argued that processes such as this reflect the changing nature of business and the shift to limited liability companies.

<sup>4</sup> By the end of the century, it seems to have been usual to refer to ‘the brass band movement’. It is impossible to say when this first occurred, but a report on the Crystal Palace Contest in *The Times* of 11 July 1860 mentions the term.

<sup>5</sup> R. Prior, ‘Jewish Musicians at the Tudor Court’, *Musical Quarterly*, 69/2 (1983), 253–65.

<sup>6</sup> See T. Herbert, ‘The Trombone in Britain before 1800’ (Ph.D. thesis, Open University, 1984), 361–76.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 37 ff. and 427 ff. The first record of a trombonist being employed as a wait is found in the Repertory of the Court of Aldermen for the City of London in 1526 (Guildhall Library, London, R7.f.137).

The other main provincial employers were cathedrals, many of which accommodated trombonists in their statutes. It is probable that in some cities the cathedral players were waits who were freelancing; it is certainly true that cathedrals without trombone players on their statutes made *ex gratia* payments to trombonists for special services.<sup>8</sup>

Before the last few decades of the seventeenth century, trombonists played with any combination of quiet and loud instruments. The most frequent treble partner for the trombone was the ‘cornett’ (It., *cornetto*; Ger., *Zink*). This is *not* the nineteenth-century cornet, but an entirely different instrument made from wood, having a finger-hole system similar to that found on the recorder, and a cup-shaped mouthpiece similar to those used on brass instruments.

For most of this period the trumpet and horn had little special and individual significance in art music in Britain. Trumpets were maintained at court and in other places, but they were primarily declamatory ceremonial instruments. Horns, too, were exclusively functional, and were associated with the hunt. But towards the end of the seventeenth century and through the eighteenth century, fundamental changes took place in the musical role and status of brass instruments. These changes form an important context in which the development of brass bands should be seen.

The trombone (unlike the trumpet and horn) was entirely chromatic across its entire pitch range—a player could produce every note between the highest and lowest point of the instrument’s compass. But by the end of the seventeenth century, it was obsolete in Britain. It began to fall out of fashion in the later years of the reign of Charles II, and by the opening years of the eighteenth century, few in England knew what a trombone (or *sackbut*, to give it its old English name) was. There are several reasons for this, but the primary one is that tastes current in art music in England during the mid-Baroque period favoured homogeneous sonorities of the type produced by balanced string and wind groups. British tastes in art music have always been fairly uniform and centrally determined, and for this reason the trend was national. There is abundant evidence of trombones being discarded and players switching to other instruments. It is not unusual to find records such as that in the Canterbury Cathedral Inventory of 1752, which refers to a chest containing ‘only two brass Sackbuts not us’d for a grete number of years past’.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, just as the popularity of the trombone was declining, the trumpet had entered a period of ascendancy. A school of exceptional London-based trumpeters was contemporary with composers such as Henry and Daniel Purcell, Jeremiah Clarke, and John Blow, and there emanated from this coincidence a rich virtuoso repertoire, the musical characteristics of which

<sup>8</sup> Canterbury Cathedral included trombonists on its statutes in the 16th cent. See Herbert, ‘Trombone in Britain’, 83.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 293.

were to define the idiom of the trumpet in Britain for more than a century. This musical idiom was strengthened and underlined by the high and jealously protected social status with which trumpet playing, and, to a lesser extent, horn playing, were endowed. The most overt and powerful device that established trumpet playing as a professional, centralized, and in many other ways hierarchical activity, was the office of ‘sergeant trumpeter’. This office was first instituted in the sixteenth century, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries all trumpeters had to submit themselves to the sergeant trumpeter (a royal appointment) to be licensed. This system of licensing may well have been in direct imitation of the Imperial Guild of Trumpeters and Kettledrummers, formed in 1623, and operated throughout the Holy Roman Empire under sanction of Ferdinand II.<sup>10</sup>

The regulatory systems for trumpeters were less strongly enforced in the later eighteenth century, but it is possible that this thinly disguised freemasonry continued to condition some attitudes to professional trumpet playing—except, perhaps, in the military, which had its own regulations. The office of sergeant trumpeter continued to exist until the early twentieth century, but its function was titular by that time.

The trombone was reintroduced into Britain in 1784 for the celebrations at Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon in commemoration of the birth of Handel. The music historian Charles Burney wrote that players of the ‘SACBUT, or DOUBLE TRUMPET’ were sought, ‘but so many years had elapsed since it had been used in this kingdom, that, neither the instrument, nor a performer upon it, could easily be found’.<sup>11</sup> Some were found, however—seemingly all foreigners (almost certainly Austrian or German) who had recently moved to England. In the late eighteenth century, the trombone was effectively a new instrument as far as the British were concerned, and for more than a hundred years before the nineteenth century there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that there was a single native-born trombone player working in Britain. Indeed, one observer at the Handel celebrations was so confused by these novel instruments that he jotted on his programme against the word ‘TROMBONES’, ‘Are something like Bassoons, with an end like a large speaking trumpet’.<sup>12</sup>

The waits were finally and formally made defunct in the early 1830s under the terms of the various municipal and parliamentary Reform Acts. The changing administrative infrastructure, together with the expediencies caused by financial pressures that local and civic authorities faced, removed the last mechanism that supported them. Some writers have given this date and

<sup>10</sup> S. Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1980), s.v. ‘Trumpet P’.

<sup>11</sup> Herbert, ‘Trombone in Britain’, 471.

<sup>12</sup> Trevor Herbert, ‘The Sackbut in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, *Early Music*, 18/4 (Nov. 1990), 614.

these events undue significance.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the waits had been an anachronism for more than half a century. The link which some have erroneously drawn between the waits and Victorian brass bands, and which Arthur Taylor,<sup>14</sup> for example, has treated with appropriate scepticism, is based on the fact that two members of the York waits (whatever they were in the 1830s) were subsequently members of a brass band. By the nineteenth century, the waits had no general characteristics which make it appropriate for them to be regarded as the embryonic form of the brass band movement.

### EARLY MILITARY AND CHURCH BANDS

The early nineteenth-century bands that are relevant to the development of mid-nineteenth-century brass bands were those of the army and the auxiliary forces, village bands, and church bands. Full-time military bands of sorts can be traced back to the seventeenth century, but most have their origins in the late eighteenth century. In the early nineteenth century most regimental bands were restricted to ten players, and all were the private bands of the commanding officers concerned.<sup>15</sup> A standing order issued by letter in 1803 instructed that ‘not more than *one* Private soldier of each troop or company shall be permitted to act as musicians’.<sup>16</sup> This order was largely ignored, and eighteen years later, letters were still being dispatched instructing commanding officers to restrict the number of musicians in each troop or company.

Regular army bands (or their prototypes) were but one feature, however, of ‘military music’ in Britain in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many bands were associated with the militia which had been revived in 1757 and the volunteer corps which emerged in the 1790s. They were widely dispersed, and were funded primarily by subscriptions, as well as (unwittingly) by government funding, and by the direct patronage of officers. They normally numbered between six and twelve players, and were usually amateur, though many contained professional players. As well as percussion, the most common instruments were trumpets, clarinets, fifes, and flutes on treble parts, with horns, bassoons, serpents, and (much less usually) trombones on the lower parts.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This link is mentioned in *New Grove* (s.v. ‘Brass Bands’); it is also given some emphasis in J. F. Russell and J. H. Elliot, *The Brass Band Movement* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1936), ch. 1.

<sup>14</sup> A. Taylor, *Brass Bands* (St Albans and London: Granada Publishing, 1979), 23.

<sup>15</sup> See H. G. Farmer, *The Rise and Development of Military Music* (London: W. M. Reeves, 1912; revised edn., 1970).

<sup>16</sup> University of Glasgow Library, Farmer MS.115. (Letter dated 5 Aug. 1803 from Harry Calvert, Adjutant General of the Forces.)

<sup>17</sup> See E. Croft-Murray, ‘The Wind Band in England’, in T. C. Mitchell (ed.), *Music and Civilization* (British Museum Yearbook, 4; London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1980), 135–63. See also M. J. Lomas, ‘Militia and Volunteer Wind Bands in Southern England in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 67/271 (Autumn 1989), 154–66.

Such bands played a mixed repertory. Concert programmes included titles of national and patriotic melodies, as well as arrangements of popular art music. There was also a minor publishing industry centring on military bands. Many bands had marches 'dedicated' to them by publishers, and issued in parts and score with a keyboard reduction. The music was not technically demanding, but functional and entertaining. As well as the published copies, manuscript sources survive. Probably the most eminent composer to contribute to this repertoire was Joseph Haydn, who, during his stay in London in the 1790s, wrote a *March for the Prince of Wales* and two *Marches for the Derbyshire Cavalry Regiment*.

Some of the players in the early military bands were to have an influence on brass bands later in the century. John Distin, for example, started his career as a bandboy in the South Devon Militia,<sup>18</sup> while John Gladney, widely referred to at the time of his death as 'the father of the brass band movement', was the son of the bandmaster of the 30th East Lancashire Regiment,<sup>19</sup> and William Rimmer, one of the most eminent late nineteenth-century conductors, was the son of a militia bandsman.<sup>20</sup> The Godfrey family, which included the composer, Dan Godfrey, and the conductor, Charles, could trace its association with the Coldstream Guards Band back to the late eighteenth century.

The church bands of rural Britain, particularly England, also provided a tradition of amateur instrumental ensemble music making. Such bands were common throughout the country. The survival of a large written repertory of church band music indicates widespread musical literacy among players in these types of ensemble. It is doubtful, however, whether the repertoire of such musicians was confined to what is revealed in the surviving manuscript sources, or to the music of the church, or, indeed, to any written music. As Vic and Sheila Gammon point out later in this book, there existed alongside the text-based practices of the church and village bands a vernacular, instrumental 'plebeian tradition', which was well developed, improvised, and 'popular'.<sup>21</sup>

Evidence of the extent of instrumental performance in English churches is abundant. McDermott<sup>22</sup> cites dozens in Sussex alone. Galpin<sup>23</sup> has drawn a similar picture in Dorset. William Millington, in his *Sketches of Local Musicians and Musical Societies*,<sup>24</sup> describes a network of bands in the north

<sup>18</sup> J. L. Scott, 'The Evolution of the Brass Band and its Repertoire in Northern England' (Ph.D., University of Sheffield, 1970), 441.

<sup>19</sup> R. A. Marr, *Music for the People* (Edinburgh and Glasgow: John Menzies, 1889), 120.

<sup>20</sup> Southport Public Library, Sp. 920. RIM (William Rimmer Documents).

<sup>21</sup> See also V. Gammon, 'Babylonian Performances: The Rise and Suppression of Popular Church Music, 1660–1870', in E. Yeo and S. Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590–1914* (Brighton: Harvester, 1981), 62–88.

<sup>22</sup> K. H. McDermott, *Sussex Church Music in the Past* (Chichester: Moore and Wingham, 1923).

<sup>23</sup> F. W. Galpin, 'Notes on the Old Church Bands and Village Choirs of the Past Century', *The Antiquary*, 42 (1906), 101–6.

<sup>24</sup> W. Millington, *Sketches of Local Musicians and Musical Societies* (Pendlebury, 1884).

of England; and even on the island of Anglesey in North Wales, where the Anglican religion cohabited with the Welsh language, there are sources for instrumental church music.<sup>25</sup> One of the main functions of church bands was to double and support sung parts. It is undoubtedly true, however, that the bands were important and even focal agencies in church communities, in a way suggestive of the social significance which Nonconformist hymn singing acquired in Wales later in the century. The social function of bands may, in some cases, have been born of necessity, because though some parish priests encouraged church bands, others were absenteeist.<sup>26</sup> According to J. A. La Trobe, many left it to the church community to ‘regulate and inspirit [*sic*] the music of the church. In most places, the choir are left to their own fitful struggles, without any offer of clerical assistance.’<sup>27</sup>

Brass instruments did not figure prominently in church bands. Nicholas Temperley’s summary of the instrumentation of church bands in the first thirty years of the nineteenth century cites no brass instruments,<sup>28</sup> but other sources occasionally do. McDermott’s investigation of Sussex church bands revealed eight trombones, four serpents, and a bass horn.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, McDermott’s energy in research was not equalled by the detail in which he cited his findings, and the dates when these instruments were found are not known. It is extremely doubtful if the trombones, for example, were in use very early in the century. The most common instrumentation for early nineteenth-century church bands was strings with woodwind. Bassoons and cellos were the most common bass instruments. Treble parts were generally played on violin, flute, clarinet, or oboe.

Church bands were most common between about 1780 and 1830;<sup>30</sup> the militia and volunteer bands were at their strongest somewhat earlier. But it is important to stress that such ensembles did not die out early in the century. Church bands existed in some parts of the country even at the end of the nineteenth century, and military bands, particularly those of the regular army, were a constant musical feature of the Victorian period.

Numerous accounts exist from the second and third decades of the century, which show that bands were featured in local functions such as fêtes, fairs, and seasonal festivals. The bands are seldom named, but they seem to have been well established in the tapestry of community life. Arthur Taylor has cited numerous examples of bands existing in the years previous to Victoria’s reign,<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> A clarinet and syrinx from this period survive at the Old Church of Llaneilian, Anglesey. I am grateful to H. E. Griffiths, rector of Amlwch, for providing me with this information.

<sup>26</sup> See Gammon, ‘Babylonian Performances’, 71 ff.

<sup>27</sup> J. A. La Trobe, *The Music of the Church Considered . . .* (Thames Ditton, 1831), 72.

<sup>28</sup> In N. Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 197.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 198.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 197.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor, *Brass Bands*, 17–21.



and there is evidence of similar bands being formed in Scotland<sup>32</sup> and southern England<sup>33</sup> in the same period.

Many sources can be drawn on to link early village, church, and military bands with distinguished brass bands,<sup>34</sup> but while such examples may show how a particular band originated, they do not illustrate or explain the origins of the brass band *movement*. The zest with which some modern bands have adopted a strictly linear approach to this history in order to establish a distant, unbroken pedigree has created some important distortions in this respect. The early military, church, and village bands did, however, provide an important legacy for the eventual development of the brass band movement. These early bands were the first to create a tradition of literate instrumental ensemble music making outside the professional, middle- and upper-class enclaves in which such activity had previously been centred. Their activities established an infrastructure that was to be sustained and developed through the century. That infrastructure was rooted in five critical conditions underlying the commercial, economic, and social factors which in turn fuelled the rapid growth of bands: (1) evidence of amateur instrumental performance; (2) a performance convention that was primarily literate and text-based, as opposed to aural and improvisatory (though aurality was to remain fundamentally important); (3) the witness of that activity by ‘audiences’ who were the peer groups of the performers; (4) some evidence of supporting services for music (shops, instrument repairers, teachers, and arrangers); and (5) some evidence of cultural crossover between art/middle-class music and the lower orders. The evidence of the latter condition is found in the repertory that these bands played, which was primarily but not exclusively the repertory of the military bands.<sup>35</sup>

### THE EARLIEST BRASS BANDS

It is perhaps worth mentioning the question of the ‘first brass band’, an issue which has been debated widely since the 1880s. Several publications cite the first brass band as the one formed near Blaina, Monmouthshire, at the Brown Brothers Iron Mill in the village of Pontybederyn in 1832. The first author to proclaim this was Enderby Jackson, in his ‘Origin and Promotion of Brass Band Contests’ (1896). At the time of writing, Jackson was 65 years old, and was confidently referring to matters which occurred during the year of his

<sup>32</sup> See ‘The History of the Brass Movement’, University of Glasgow, Farmer Manuscripts 99/2, a 2p. typescript article by H. G. Farmer referring to the researches of Mr George Thompson of Airdrie, and listing a number of early Scottish wind bands.

<sup>33</sup> W. Alberry, ‘Old Sussex Amateur Bands’, *Sussex County Magazine*, 18/12 (1944), 314–20.

<sup>34</sup> e.g. see Taylor, *Brass Bands*, chs. 1 and 2, *passim*.

<sup>35</sup> e.g. Millington (*Sketches*, 11 ff.) writes of parish instrumentalists and choirs meeting ‘for the practice of vocal and instrumental music, principally oratorios of Handel, Haydn and other eminent composers’. See also R. Elbourne, *Music and Tradition in Early Industrial Lancashire 1780–1840* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1980), 115–33.

birth, an event which took place in Hull, a town hundreds of miles from Blaina. He did not say how he had acquired this information, but this was not untypical of Jackson. All this would be of no significance were it not for the fact that almost every text (including *Grove 6*) in which the history of brass bands has been addressed has quoted this ‘fact’ without discrimination. It matters comparatively little which band was the ‘first brass band’, compared to the need to understand the sequence of events which established brass bands as a form of mass recreation and entertainment. The present writer does not know which was the first brass band—nor does he especially care; but suffice it to say that his best efforts in the archives of South Wales, and his scrutiny of all the major relevant topographical works, have failed to establish the existence of a place called Pontybederyn (or even variants of this spelling), or of Brown Brother’s Iron Mill, or a morsel of evidence to support Jackson’s claim. There was indeed an ironworks in Blaina in the 1830s, and one of its directors was a man called Brown (hardly an uncommon name), but there were no brothers, and the works was not known as ‘Brown Brothers’.

Though the early bands provide evidence of an ‘infrastructure’, the real and immediate prehistory of the brass band movement is found in the period between the late 1830s and the middle of the century. In this period, there was a sudden increase in the popularity of brass instruments. Though it was common for bands to describe themselves as amateur, ‘brass band’ playing was neither exclusively amateur nor working class. Bands made up entirely of brass instruments existed from the 1830s.<sup>36</sup> In 1838, the Preston United Independent Harmonic Brass Band petitioned Mr Thomas Clifton, of Lytham Hall, Lancashire:

Sir, by the desire of a Fue Respectable Friends of yours in Preston has caused hus to write to you with a Petition as a Solisitation for a job of Playing at your Dinnering Day as they told hus is taking place on Tuesday the 10th of March Inst. at Lytham which if you are having a Band of Music at Dinner we shall be very glad to be ingadged for your on that Day it is one of the first Bands in the country. Our Band consists of 10 in number it is a Brass Band and the Name of the Band is the United Independent Harmonic Brass band Preston which our charge is not so much considering the Band the charge or Pay for hus for one Day is 8/6 each man for the number of 10 comes to £4-5-0 and Meat and Drink as soon as we get their and all the time we stay their, if so hapen we have to come if you make up your Mind for hus to come to Play for dinner on that Day we shall please no doubt.

N.B. if writing for hus you must Direct to our leader Edwd. Kirkby Leader of the United Independent Harmonic Brass Band at No. 31 Alfred Street, Preston. We can come either in uniform or not according to the weather.

From your Humble Servants

The Band<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> There are several claims as to what was the first all-brass band. (See Taylor, *Brass Bands*, ch. 1.)

<sup>37</sup> Lancashire County Records Office, DDC1 1187/18 (Clifton of Lytham Muniments).

There is no other surviving information concerning Preston Harmonic Band; it was a *brass* band, and this was deemed worthy of emphasis. The fee, by the standards of the time, was fairly substantial, certainly compatible with the players being professional or semi-professional. The day on which work was being sought was a Tuesday, suggesting that the players were earning a living either solely or partly from playing. If they were semi-professional, it follows that they were self-employed or had jobs in which they had a modicum of control over their working hours.

An example of a different type of origin for a band is illustrated by the story of the Cyfarthfa Band, founded in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales, in 1838, by the industrialist Robert Thompson Crawshay.<sup>38</sup> (See Fig. 1.1, the earliest picture of the band.) By the 1830s, Merthyr was by far the biggest industrial town in Wales, and one of the greatest centres for iron smelting in the world. The scale of immigration into the town was unprecedented. Crawshay started the band from scratch. He enlisted some local talent, but appointed to critical positions players who were already established as professionals. These included a distinguished family of musicians from Bradford, London theatre players, and travelling musicians such as those who visited the town with Wombwell's Circus and Menagerie.<sup>39</sup> Although the function and status of the band changed over the remaining years of the century, it was founded as a private band. The players were given jobs in Crawshay's ironworks and probably some help with housing. Whether they received payment for performing is difficult to establish, but it is probable that fees for engagements were distributed among members.

Sources relating to the Crawshay band are more extensive and wide-ranging than those for any other band of this period, but the practice of a well-to-do landed gentleman supporting a brass band, primarily for his private use, was not unique to Cyfarthfa. There are, of course, many precedents for aristocratic patronage of musicians. In England, the strongest immediate precedent is found earlier in the century, in the support given to volunteer and militia bands by landed gentry who were the commanding officers of auxiliary force corps. There are, however, other examples. Thomas Lee, one of the earliest conductors of Besses o' th' Barn Band, was responsible for the formation of a private band for Lord Francis Edgerton at Worsley (Edgerton later became 1st Earl of Ellesmere). Lee was also associated with the Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeoman Cavalry Band, which was a brass band.<sup>40</sup> References are made in Chapter 3 to the private band of Sir Walter W. Burrell, a wealthy Sussex land-

<sup>38</sup> See T. Herbert, 'The Virtuosi of Merthyr', *Llafur: The Journal of Welsh Labour History*, 5/1 (1988), 60–7.

<sup>39</sup> Wombwell's was in Merthyr in 1846 (*Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, 1 Aug. 1846); it is probable that it made an annual visit to the town.

<sup>40</sup> B. Rogerson, 'A Touch of Local Brass', *Eccles and District History Society Lectures* (1977–8), 4.1–4.4.

owner and Member of Parliament; and a private band was also formed in the 1840s by the son of the mill owner, W. L. Marriner, at Keighley in Yorkshire. Like the Cyfarthfa Band, Marriner's Band took part in early contests. It is also worth noting that Queen Victoria formed a private band in 1837 which consisted of seventeen players. Apart from a percussionist, all of them were brass or woodwind players and 'master of more than one instrument'.<sup>41</sup> This private band eventually merged with the state band, by which time it was, in effect, a small, multi-functional orchestra, but in the middle of the century it was primarily a brass/wind band, playing arrangements of works by Spohr, Meyerbeer, Weber, and Beethoven, a repertory similar to that which was being performed by the Cyfarthfa Band.<sup>42</sup> Such patronage of private bands may well have been a model for some of the industrial meritocracy a decade later, many of whom took great pride in having their works band play at garden parties and other social gatherings for their well-heeled friends and associates.

#### OTHER PROFESSIONAL ENSEMBLES AND SOLOISTS

Many of the players in private bands were drawn from travelling show bands. Circuses and travelling shows are important in the history of British popular music, because they are one of the first types of well organized, commercial entertainment which sought to attract audiences from different classes, and which—because of their itinerant nature—were among the first agencies for spreading similar or identical tastes in popular music and comedy across wide areas of the country. In this respect, such shows, which eventually became important stages for American entertainers, can be said to be prototypes of the thoroughly commercial and sophisticated professional entertainments that manifest themselves as music hall. These travelling shows almost always had bands which were featured in their advertisements. Although Wombwell's Circus and Menagerie was the most famous and perhaps the best, it was not the only itinerant troupe to have a distinguished band. Others included Batty's Menagerie Band, and Howe's Great London Circus. As early as 1833, the *Yorkshire Gazette* was praising the skill of four trombonists from Cooke's Equestrian Circus who had agreed to perform in the 24th Annual Yorkshire Amateur Musical Meeting. 'It is a pity', the paper lamented, 'they are not placed in a situation where their acquisitions would be more conspicuously displayed.'<sup>43</sup>

Some of the brass players in these entertainment troupes were conspicuously displayed. Around 1839, Tournaire's Circus featured 'Herr Popowitz',

<sup>41</sup> J. Harley, 'Music at the English Court in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Music and Letters*, 50 (1969), 334–6.

<sup>42</sup> See T. Herbert, 'The Repertory of a Victorian Provincial Brass Band', *Popular Music*, 9/1 (1990), 117–31.

<sup>43</sup> *Yorkshire Gazette* (5 Jan. 1883).

a musical clown who amazed audiences with masterly performances on brass instruments. His performances, according to the recollections of Enderby Jackson, included ‘operatic solos, national melodies and airs with brilliant variations in a style unknown before his advent’.<sup>44</sup> There were other brass virtuosi who gained national respect and fame among middle-class audiences. The most celebrated was the trumpeter, Thomas Harper. He was born in Worcester in 1786, and was sent to London to study with Eley, the Duke of York’s military bandmaster. At the age of 10 he played in Eley’s East India Brigade Band and various London theatre orchestras. Both he and his son, Thomas John Harper, taught at the Royal Academy of Music, and also performed regularly in the provinces.<sup>45</sup>

Another great force was the popular (not to say populist) conductor, Louis Jullien. In his London concerts, which began in 1840, and in the provincial tours he undertook every year, brass instruments were prominently featured. No individual players in Jullien’s orchestra were afforded a higher profile than the cornet player, Koenig (whose *Post Horn Gallop* became something of a classic), and the ophicleide player, Prospère (Jean Prospère Guivier). Many other great brass players were either permanently or temporarily associated with Jullien, including Thomas Harper, though Harper—who became Sergeant Trumpeter—was generally involved with more élite sectors of the profession.

It is easy to cast scorn on Jullien’s unashamed extravagance and excess, and many have been reluctant to afford him his proper place in nineteenth-century British music history.<sup>46</sup> It cannot be denied, however, that his impact on audiences was immense. His brass players possessed genuine virtuosity, and no matter how excessive it may seem to twentieth-century tastes, the sound of ‘Suona le Tromba’ from Bellini’s *I Puritani*, played on twenty cornets, twenty trumpets, twenty trombones, twenty ophicleides, and twenty serpents<sup>47</sup> must have been not only astonishing but also influential at a time when all-brass bands were trying to gain a foothold in British musical life.

In December 1844, Jullien featured the Distin family at one of his London concerts. They played saxhorns which they had recently acquired from the inventor, Adolphe Sax, while on a visit to Paris.<sup>48</sup> The Distins already had a

<sup>44</sup> E. Jackson, ‘Origin and Promotion of Brass Band Contests’, *Musical Opinion and Music Trades Review* (1896: serialized).

<sup>45</sup> Sadie, *New Grove*, s.v. ‘Harper, Thomas’. See also S. Sorenson and J. Webb, ‘The Harpers and the Trumpet’, *Galpin Society Journal*, 39 (Sept. 1986), 35–57.

<sup>46</sup> See e.g. R. Nettel, ‘The Influence of the Industrial Revolution on English Music’, *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 77 (1946), 33.

<sup>47</sup> A. Carse, *The Life of Jullien* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1951), 53–4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 52. See also W. Horwood, *Adolphe Sax 1814–1894: His Life and Legacy* (Baldock: Egon, 1983), ch. 4, *passim*. The instruments were not announced as saxhorns at Jullien’s concert. According to Distin, the organizers had refused to give this title to them because their launch a few weeks earlier had been a failure.

distinguished reputation as performers on brass instruments. They were playing as a family quintet in 1835,<sup>49</sup> and gave performances throughout the country, but it was not until they converted to saxhorns and took out the British agency for the instruments that they had their most significant effect.<sup>50</sup> They toured widely, performing mostly in music and concert halls, and their main contribution to the development of brass bands (apart from the interest that they aroused through their own virtuosity) lay in their popularization of the Sax instruments. They were also involved from the early 1850s with a highly successful publishing enterprise which was responsible for a large number of widely distributed journals and score arrangements.

Jullien and the Distins had a great influence in the 1840s, but it is doubtful how many of their concerts were attended by the people, or indeed the *class* of people, who would be the members of brass bands in the decades that followed. Although it is impossible to be certain, it seems that the audiences for the Distins' concerts and for Jullien's extravaganzas were often middle-class. *Punch* provided a lucid description of those attending one of Jullien's concerts:

Amid the merry, but decorous throng, we notice several families of professional gentlemen and tradesmen, as well as persons of higher rank; and many men, who we personally knew, had brought their sisters . . . Many of the young men wore plain black suits and white ties, and though some of these youths, thanks to the early closing movement, may have been linen-drapers' assistants, a greater proportion evidently were of the aristocracy, and not a few, who abstained from actually dancing, had all the appearance of curates. A bishop occupied a private box among the spectators . . . The general tone of the assembly was that of perfect ease, and perfect propriety; the unrestrained and correct expression of amiability and animal spirits.<sup>51</sup>

## THE NEW TECHNOLOGY

The invention of the piston valve system and its application to brass instruments is described as the principal reason why a large, working-class, brass band movement came into existence. The various developments in brass instrument technology are detailed later in this book by Arnold Myers. However, it is worth mentioning at this point the fundamental advances that took place and the manner in which those advances affected mass working-class music cul-

<sup>49</sup> See the *Scotsman* (11 July 1835 and 13 Apr. 1836).

<sup>50</sup> The Distins performed primarily on horns, slide trumpet, and trombone before the famous meeting with Sax. However, Enderby Jackson, 'Origin', states that they were playing valve instruments made by the London firm, Pace, before 1844.

<sup>51</sup> *Punch*, 27 (1854), 255, quoted in Carse, *Life of Jullien*, 49–50. Some impressionistic evidence loosely links working-class audiences with Jullien's concerts. Manuscripts relating to Marriner's Band at Keighley refer to some members of the band walking from Keighley to Bradford to see Jullien; it is not known, though, what social status these players had. Enderby Jackson, 'Origin', somewhat floridly describes 'foundries and workshops . . . [being] crowded with disputants on the music marvels Jullien brought to their district'.

ture. It is also worth emphasizing that, while these technical advances were fundamental to the brass band movement, they were also momentous in the entire field of instrumental music. It took some time for the changed idiom of brass instruments to find expression in the work of major composers—Brahms, for example, wrote little for the trumpet which could not be played on valveless instruments—but these technologies were to have an irrevocable effect on art music. However, it is in many ways interesting that the exploitation of these new instruments, and the techniques which were associated with them, was most radical among brass bands and other vernacular or working-class music makers.

From the late eighteenth century onwards, experiments were being conducted independently in different parts of Europe which were aimed at the invention of a system which would enable brass players to play the entire chromatic spectrum on instruments of various sizes and pitches. It is perhaps worth explaining why, apart from the trombone, brass instruments of the time lacked such a facility. The pitch of a note played on a brass instrument is determined by the speed at which the player's lips vibrate. This depends on the control of the player's embouchure muscles, and is strongly influenced by the resonance frequencies of the air column in the tube of the instrument. On an instrument which has a fixed length of tubing—such as a bugle—a player can obtain a series of notes. The frequencies of vibration of the player's lips when playing the natural notes of a brass instrument approximate to a harmonic series. The natural notes of an instrument in 7ft D (such as many natural trumpets) would be as shown in Ex. 2. A player with an instrument made from a longer length of tubing would be able to play a lower series of notes, but with the same musical intervals between the notes. The natural notes of an instrument in 8ft C would be as shown in Ex. 3.

At the lower end of the series the notes are widely spaced; at the top end, the notes are closer together. The technical problem as it stood at this time was that it is extremely difficult to play these very high notes (this is why Bach's trumpet parts, in, for example, the Mass in B minor, could be played by only a few very skilled professionals), while at the other end of the range, the notes have so many gaps between them that the possibilities for playing tuneful melodies are extremely limited. What brass players needed was what most other instrumentalists had, the facility to play every adjacent note in the range of the instrument. The trombone had such a facility: the telescopic, U-shaped, slide mechanism of the trombone gives that instrument complete chromaticism, because every time the slide is extended or retrieved, the tubing through which the player is blowing becomes (respectively) longer or shorter. In the late eighteenth century, this principle was successfully applied to much shorter lengths of tubing than those used on trombones, by the English inventor John Hyde, and the resulting instrument was used by some professional players as a 'slide trumpet'.

A more widely used invention was the keyed bugle. Keys (larger in size than those on a clarinet, but similar in design) were applied to bugles, and the instruments were widely manufactured. The most celebrated early English key system was that patented by Joseph Halliday in 1810.<sup>52</sup> It was similar to eighteenth-century Austrian inventions for the keyed trumpet or *Klappen-trompete* (it was for such an instrument that Haydn's Trumpet Concerto was written), but no evidence exists to show a direct link between Halliday and other inventors. Valve systems eventually superseded the other designs, but it is important to exercise some caution in attributing the development of brass playing in Britain in the nineteenth century exclusively to the invention and distribution of valved brass systems.

Perfectly serviceable valved instruments were invented by the end of the 1820s, but the complete range of saxhorn instruments was not easily available in Britain until the mid-1840s. Before that time, valved instruments were no more common in brass bands than keyed instruments. The early development of bands was primarily the development of keyed instruments in combination with other types of instrument. The publications of brass music were aimed as much at keyed brass players as at valve instrumentalists. Thomas Harper published his *Airs* for keyed bugle in about 1825, and Tully's *Tutor for Keyed Bugle* was published in 1831 as part of Robert Cocks & Company's Series of Modern Tutors. In 1836, Cocks also published McFarlane's *Eight Popular Airs for Brass Band*, which is regarded as the first British publication specifically for brass bands of sorts. MacFarlane's instrumentation calls for three keyed bugles on the *primo* treble parts, as opposed to cornopeans (the early name for the cornet), but of course the same music could be played on either instrument.<sup>53</sup> In 1836, Blackman and Pace published *The Cornopean Companion of Scales . . .* and it is evident from publications and surviving records of the instrumentation of bands that cornopeans were used throughout the country, but it is equally obvious that early valve systems did not usurp the popularity of keyed instruments. The London firm of Pace was advertising cornopeans in the late 1830s, and, according to Enderby Jackson, the Distins possessed Pace piston instruments before their famous Paris encounter with Adolphe Sax in 1844. However, the Distin family had made their reputation using slide trumpets, french horns, keyed bugles, and trombone, and it was keyed instruments that Robert Crawshay bought from Pace in 1840.<sup>54</sup> The fact should not be overlooked that most of the best British brass players of the

<sup>52</sup> A. Baines, *Brass Instruments: Their History and Development* (London: Faber, 1976), 194–5.

<sup>53</sup> See Scott, 'Evolution of the Brass Band', 124–9 and 194–6. D'Almaine published a collection under the title *The Brass Band* in 1837; the arrangements were by J. Parry, formerly bandmaster of the Denbigh Militia.

<sup>54</sup> National Library of Wales, Cyfarthfa Papers, Box XIV (Invoice from Pace to Crawshay 21/3/1840).



first forty years of the nineteenth century played keyed or slide instruments; valve skills were not especially widespread until well into the 1840s.

The other proof of the continuance of older, key-based technology is the dogged survival of the ophicleide until quite late in the century. The ophicleide was eventually replaced by the euphonium—manufacturers encouraged the change by offering euphoniums as prizes for the best ophicleide players at contests—but mid-century reports of the death of the ophicleide were greatly exaggerated. Ophicleides were much in evidence at the Crystal Palace contest in the 1860s, and Sam Hughes, who, with the possible exception of Prospère, was the greatest ophicleide player of the nineteenth century, never, as far as is known, played a valved instrument. It was as a specialist on the ophicleide that he was appointed to a professorship at the Military (later the Royal Military) School of Music at Kneller Hall in 1859, and at the Guildhall School of Music in 1880. Indeed, Kneller Hall appointed Alfred Phasey as euphonium professor at the same time as it appointed Hughes.<sup>55</sup>

A yet more vivid example of the way in which the older technology overlapped with the new was the persistent faith of Thomas Harper in the future of the slide trumpet. He played it all his life, and his *Instructions for the Trumpet*<sup>56</sup> is almost entirely devoted to the slide trumpet. His son, though a brilliant valve instrument player, continued to teach the slide trumpet at the Royal Academy of Music, and, while he was the author of *Harper's School for the Cornet-à-pistons* (undated), in the mid-1870s he also published *Harper's School for the [Slide] Trumpet*.<sup>57</sup> Even at the very end of the century, trumpet players at the Royal Opera House were wrestling with the demands of the Italian opera repertory on slide instruments. One of the Royal Opera House players, W. Wyatt, invented a double-slide instrument in 1890.

A related point here concerns the idea that technical progress goes hand-in-hand with musical, cultural, or artistic improvement, and it is worth rebutting the absurd notion that virtuosity on brass instruments is exclusively related to valved instruments. Since the 1970s, a number of professional trumpet players have learnt the techniques of keyed brass instruments, and have demonstrated a technical facility on keyed brass just as on valved instruments. Primary sources in the form of manuscript music for keyed instruments bear out the same point.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> See Lieutenant Colonel P. L. Binns, *A Hundred Years of Military Music* (Gillingham, Dorset: The Blackmore Press, 1959).

<sup>56</sup> T. Harper, *Instructions for the Trumpet* (facsimile of the 1837 edn., with commentary on the life of Harper by John Webb and Scott Sorenson; foreword by John Webb (Homer, NY: Spring Tree Enterprises, 1988)).

<sup>57</sup> Sadie, *New Grove*, s.v. 'Harper, Thomas'. See also Sorenson and Webb, 'The Harpers'.

<sup>58</sup> See T. Herbert, 'The Reconstruction of Nineteenth-Century Band Repertory: Towards a Protocol', in S. Carter (ed.), *Perspectives in Brass Scholarship: Proceedings of the International Historic Brass Symposium* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1997), 185–213; R. T. Dudgeon, *The Keyed Bugle* (Metuchen, NJ, and London: 1993).

The Distins gave the Sax designs a powerful endorsement which stimulated more instrument manufacturers, music publishers, and others to recognize that a market had come into being which had not existed previously. That market was easily identified as constituting the inhabitants of the comparatively new industrial communities, and especially the more 'affluent' members of the working class. Valved instruments possessed qualities that rendered them particularly suitable to be produced and marketed in large quantities. The musical virtues of the newly designed instruments were self-evident. When a valve was depressed, it instantly changed the length of tubing through which the player was blowing (see Fig. 1.3). The instruments were, therefore, fully chromatic, and reasonably in tune across their entire range, and furthermore, the valve principle could be applied to *any* voice of instrument from the highest cornet to the lowest bass or bombardon. This was a critical advantage of the valve over key-system instruments, for in the latter, only bugles and ophicleides were successful enough to be commonly used.

Valved brass instruments had other features that were equally important. Their production required a less exacting process of manufacture than key-system instruments. After the initial 'tooling' was completed, they could, at least in part, be manufactured by mass-production methods. The older designs, and other instruments such as keyed, woodwind and string instruments, continued to rely on traditional craft skills.<sup>59</sup> Each valve instrument was played with just the three most dextrous fingers of the right hand. To a right-handed player, the initial experience of holding a brass instrument in its playing position is instantly comfortable and natural; this is much less the case with a violin or flute, for instance. Consequently, brass instruments could be learnt easily, and a common fingering technique could be applied to each voice of instrument. The instruments were durable, they used easily available raw materials, and the manufacturing process employed variants of many existing processes of metal fashioning used for a plethora of domestic and commercial machines and utensils.

From the middle of the century, the number of manufacturers and retailers of brass instruments increased dramatically. Some companies were just importing foreign instruments and engraving them with their own names, but many started manufacturing their own models. By 1852, the Manchester firm of Joseph Higham, formed in 1842, was advertising itself as 'Makers to the Army'. The Distins set up a manufacturing business in the early 1850s, and some of the longer established firms eventually diversified into brass instrument manufacture.<sup>60</sup> Scott<sup>61</sup> has cited eighty-six British patents relating to

<sup>59</sup> See R. Barclay, *The Art of the Trumpet-maker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

<sup>60</sup> W. Waterhouse, *The New Langwill Index: A Dictionary of Musical Wind-Instrument Makers and Inventors* (London: Tony Bingham, 1993).

<sup>61</sup> Scott, 'Evolution of the Brass Band', 424-30.

brass instruments registered at the London Patent Office between 1853 and the end of the century, and between 1845 and 1862 twenty-nine specifications for improvements to brass instruments were registered under the terms of the 1843 Design Act.<sup>62</sup> Interest in the newest designs of brass instruments was intensified by the appearance of many at the 1851 Great Exhibition. The most successful exhibitor was Sax, who won a ‘Council Medal’, but two British designers won ‘Prize Medals’: George MacFarlane for his ‘Improved cornet-à-piston’, and John Köhler for his ‘Slide Trombone and for the application of his patent valves to other metal wind instruments’.<sup>63</sup>

The widespread adoption of valve instruments, mainly the Sax designs, occurred at a time when the impact of entrepreneurialism on the music industry was at its strongest, and ran parallel to what Cyril Ehrlich has called ‘the flood’ of activity that occurred in the music profession in mid-nineteenth-century Britain.<sup>64</sup> Between 1841 and 1851, the number of professional musicians and music teachers active in England and Wales rose from 6,600 to 11,200. In the next decade, the numbers were to rise again to 15,000,<sup>65</sup> and though there was a steady increase over the remainder of the century (to 38,600 in 1891), it is in the 1840s and 1850s that the real origins of the musical buoyancy of the late Victorian period are found. The growth of the music profession in Britain is important to the development of bands, because it corresponded with an increase in the entire range of services and activities that supported music, and this phenomenon was not confined to London and a few provincial centres. Concert-going became a more common activity, and, perhaps more importantly as far as the story of brass bands is concerned, the franchise for listening to ‘serious’ music widened beyond the middle classes. It was not the first time that this had happened, but in the second half of the century it was on an altogether unprecedented scale. One wonders, indeed, how prominent the middle classes were in concert audiences. A report in the *Sheffield Independent* in 1858 noted that ‘with the exception of the gallery’ (which was, presumably, occupied by the less well-off), ‘the house was not more than half filled’.<sup>66</sup>

During the nineteenth century, the population of Britain doubled, but the number of people who made their living from music increased sevenfold.<sup>67</sup> An important element of this development was the increase in music education at all levels. Many private teachers of music—most, apparently, with a lust for the acquisition of diplomas and certificates—set up shop as ‘Professors of

<sup>62</sup> J. Webb, ‘Designs for Brass in the Public Records Office’, *Galpin Society Journal*, 38 (Apr. 1985), 48–54.

<sup>63</sup> P. Mactaggart and A. Mactaggart, *Musical Instruments in the 1851 Exhibition* (Welwyn: Mac & Me, 1986), 104–6.

<sup>64</sup> C. Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), ch. 5.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 236. <sup>66</sup> *Sheffield Independent* (22 May 1858).

<sup>67</sup> See Ehrlich, *Music Profession*.

Music'. These teachers were of critical importance to the development of brass bands. Conductors listed for the 1860 and 1861 Crystal Palace contests included the evocatively named Thomas Tallis Trimnell, Professor of Music, who conducted the 6th Chesterfield Volunteer Band; James Melling, Professor of Music (Stalybridge Old Band); Isaac Dewhurst, Professor of Music (4th West York R. V. Halifax); W. Froggitt, Professor of Cornet (Deptford Pier Saxhorn Band); and A. Scoll, Professor of Music (Scoll's Operatic). Many more bands throughout the country were trained by men who probably knew little or nothing about brass instruments, but considered themselves qualified to teach virtually anything musical. Such teachers were aided in their endeavours by the existence of 'primers': instruction books which gave the most basic information about playing brass instruments.

### THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Another factor which was helpful to the development of banding was the belief, widely prevalent in the Victorian period, that music, and, in particular, art music, represented a force for the moral elevation of working people. The performance, and, indeed, the reception of music, was a 'rational recreation', a panacea for the many ills to which the working class were believed to be susceptible. Evidence of these views abounds, ranging from the bizarre postulations of the Reverend H. R. Haweis (whose *Music and Morals* (1871)<sup>68</sup> cheerfully proclaimed that certain types of melody could induce virtue, and was reprinted twenty-one times between 1871 and 1906), to the equally enthusiastic, but more measured, testimonies of George Hogarth. In 1846, Hogarth had written in his short-lived weekly newspaper, the *Musical Herald*:

The tendency of music is to soften and purify the mind . . . the cultivation of musical taste furnishes for the rich a refined and intellectual pursuit . . . [and for the working classes] a relaxation from toil more attractive than the haunts of intemperance [and in] densely populated manufacturing districts of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire, music is cultivated among the working classes to an extent unparalleled in any other part of the kingdom . . .<sup>69</sup>

Brass bands were often held up as exemplars of the potential of the working man. This is evident from an article entitled 'Music in Humble Life', which Hogarth wrote with W. H. Wills for Charles Dickens's journal, *Household Words*:

Another set of harmonious blacksmiths awaken the echoes of the remotest Welsh mountains. The correspondent of a London paper, while visiting Merthyr, was exceedingly puzzled by hearing boys in the Cyfarthfa works whistling airs rarely heard except

<sup>68</sup> H. R. Haweis, *Music and Morals* (London: Strahan & Co., 1871).

<sup>69</sup> *Musical Herald* (4 July 1846), 24. This article contains materials from Hogarth's *Musical History: Biography and Criticism* (London: John W. Parker, 1835).

in the fashionable ball-room, opera-house, or drawing room. He afterwards discovered that the proprietor of the works, Mr Robert Crawshay, had established among his men a brass band which practises once a week through the year. They have the good fortune to be led by a man (one of the 'roll-turners') who must have had somewhere a superior musical education. I had the pleasure of hearing them play, and was astonished at their proficiency. They number sixteen instruments. I heard them perform the Overture to *Zampa*, *The Caliph of Bagdad*, and *Fra Diavolo*, *Vivi tu*, some concerted music from *Roberto*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Lucia*, with a quantity of Waltzes, Polkas, and dance music. The bandmaster had them under excellent control; he everywhere took the time well, and the instruments preserved it, each taking up his lead with spirit and accuracy; in short, I have seldom heard a regimental band more perfect than this handful of workmen, located (far from any place where they might command the benefit of hearing other bands) in the mountains of Wales. The great body of men at these works are extremely proud of their musical performance, and like to boast of them. I have been told it cost Mr Crawshay great pains and expense to bring this band to its present excellent condition. If so, he now has his reward. Besides this, he has shown what the intellectual capacity of the workman is equal to, and, above all, he has provided a rational and refined amusement for classes whose leisure time would have been less creditably spent than in learning or listening to music.

The habits and manners of these men appear to have been decidedly improved by these softening influences . . .<sup>70</sup>

There are a number of views as to how and why music was perceived to be operating in this way. Mackerness has argued that any act of collective endeavour, such as banding, which by definition required cooperation among working people, was seen as being good.<sup>71</sup> Another explanation concerns the 'goodness' that many believed was inherent in high art music. Association with it through performance was, therefore, association with virtue. A less complex, but equally compelling reason why playing in a brass band was regarded as a 'rational recreation', was that many working-class men quickly acquired and lucidly demonstrated deft skills as instrumentalists. These skills could be immediately recognized and appreciated by their social superiors, because they could be easily assessed according to a long-established scale of middle-class values. There was another related reason as to why, initially at least, the impetus for the formation of working-class brass bands in the valve era was encouraged by a socially superior sector of society. The higher classes, witnessing the growth of a self-conscious working-class identity, perceived it to be a potential problem. Whether that problem was real or imagined is of little consequence to us here. The important point is that the more enlightened members of the middle classes sought to engage working-class people on a

<sup>70</sup> 'Music in Humble Life', *Household Words* (11 May 1850), 161-4. The authorship of the article is identified in A. Lohrli, *Household Words: A Weekly Journal 1850-1859* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1973), 60.

<sup>71</sup> E. D. Mackerness, *A Social History of Music* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 164.

cultural middle ground where certain activities, pastimes, and pursuits were commonly shared across class boundaries.<sup>72</sup> Ultimately, the parameters of that middle ground, and, indeed, its internal identity, were determined from above rather than below, but the point of contact is unambiguously revealed in the repertoire that the bands played, because that repertoire consisted primarily of light, middle-class, and art music.

### SETTING UP BANDS

The availability of relatively cheap instruments that were comparatively easy to play, the existence of a network of educated music ‘professors’ of one sort or another, the new social environment in which working people found themselves, and the commonly held belief among the most influential in society that music was a path to rectitude, combined to provide the context which nurtured the mid-century development of brass banding. It is impossible to measure the number of bands with any accuracy. At the end of the century, brass band magazines tried to calculate the number of bands in existence; their estimates were almost certainly exaggerated. For the period between the 1840s and 1880s, one can only draw on impressions of the number of bands that were active in Britain; these impressions have to be gained from those reports that merited press attention or are mentioned in concert advertisements. Several sources mention the proliferation of bands. Enderby Jackson reflected that in the middle of the century, after cheap valve instruments became generally available, ‘almost every village and group of mills in the north of England had its own band. It mattered not to them how the bands were constituted, or of what classification of instruments was in use.’<sup>73</sup>

The 1850s were a particularly important period of growth for banding. Many of the most important developments which generated a widely based, brass band movement, primarily involving working-class people, date from that decade. There was no standard pattern for the origins (or transformation) and sustenance of brass bands, but from the middle of the century, and leaving aside private bands, there appear to be three major types of band. First, there were those which were linked to a single workplace, or which were the beneficiaries of some form of paternalism or direct and sustained patronage from a single, wealthy, benevolent source. The second type were subscription bands which relied for their origin and development on support from a wider community, perhaps through other institutions such as mechanics institutes or temperance societies. These two categories are often difficult to distinguish from each other, because works bands were often subscription bands. The

<sup>72</sup> H. Cunningham, ‘Class and Leisure in Mid-Victorian Britain’, in B. Waites, T. Bennet, and G. Martin, *Popular Culture Past and Present* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 69–70.

<sup>73</sup> Jackson, ‘Origin’.

fact that a band carried the name of a mill or factory did not necessarily mean that it owed its origins to the owner of that mill or factory. Indeed, as I discuss below, while it is commonly presumed that Victorian brass bands received direct philanthropic sponsorship—for example, from mill, factory, or mine owners—such patronage probably accounted for only a small percentage of the bands that were formed. The wealthy industrial middle classes were indeed important, however, because subscription bands, while taking money from anywhere they could get it, relied heavily in their early days on such people as major subscribers. The third category consists of those bands which originated with or were adopted by the 1859 volunteer movement. Some volunteer bands received funds through subscription, others through some form of middle-class patronage. But the funding of volunteer bands is sufficiently complex and interesting to warrant special attention, and this is given below.

This is not to say that there was no direct industrial patronage; such patrons existed from at least the 1840s. The cotton manufacturers, George and Joseph Strutt of Belper, formed a musical society, and ‘whatever time [was] consumed in their musical studies [was] recovered in their working hours’. They were often heard to be ‘blasting on the ophicleide and trombone’.<sup>74</sup> Another industrialist, Titus Salt, was sufficiently ambitious for his *Saltaire Band* to promise it a bonus of £50 if it won the 1860 Crystal Palace Contest.<sup>75</sup>

Of the bands that originated through direct industrial patronage in the 1850s, none is more famous than the one formed in the village of Queensbury in the West Riding of Yorkshire. There had been a band of sorts associated with the village since 1816; it appears to have been run by a local publican called Peter Wharton. The village grew rapidly in the first half of the century due to the successful enterprise of John Foster. Foster was the son of a yeoman farmer. He was initially involved in coal mining, but later he established a cotton mill on a piece of land known as ‘Black Dike’. Queensbury, or ‘Queenshead’ as it was known at that time, was a typical example of a small community which existed around a single employing institution. In 1855, Foster, who is reported to have been an amateur french horn player earlier in the century, created a brass band, apparently from the barely smouldering embers of the old village band. The *Halifax Courier* noted that Foster had provided all the principal requisites: (valved) instruments, a room in which to practice, a band teacher, and uniforms.<sup>76</sup> The essential price for Foster’s altruism was that the band should henceforth be known as the John Foster and Son Black Dyke Mills Band; it is doubtful whether he anticipated that, despite the high quality of his textiles, the mill would become more famous for its band.

The story of the Black Dyke Mills Band is exceptional because the band’s achievements are so exceptional, but it offers a neat illustration of several

<sup>74</sup> *Musical Herald* (28 Aug. 1846), 40.

<sup>75</sup> Taylor, *Brass Bands*, 54.

<sup>76</sup> *Halifax Courier* (15 Sept. 1855), 1.

features that were common to bands of its type. It was formed in a small community rather than a large conurbation. To Foster, its foundation was an act calculated to 'improve' his work people. Many more of the Foster family's gestures in the nineteenth century were aimed at expanding the cultural base of the community: the building of an Albert Memorial outside the mill gates within eighteen months of the Prince Consort's death, and the provision of a school, a library, and a modestly ornate 'Victorian Hall'. Indeed, the adoption at the same time of the name 'Queensbury' instead of Queenshead (the name of one of the local pubs) was a part of the same process. The origin of the 'Black Dike' band provides a good illustration of the sharp difference between brass bands and their immediate predecessors, which casts doubt on theories of continuity in small-town music making during the nineteenth century. Though Wharton's band is known to have existed in 1816, and though there was some sort of musical activity in the village in the years immediately prior to 1855, there is little evidence of continuous musical activity through the first half of the century. Within a few years of its formation, the Black Dyke Mills Band was playing transcriptions of art music in major contests. To draw a causal relationship between the old village band and the 1855 band is analogous to claiming that the motor car was the direct descendant of the bicycle.

Subscription bands, which became more and more numerous as the century progressed, were often started from scratch. Notices were posted in the village of Lynn in Norfolk in November 1853, announcing 'a public meeting' at the Town Hall, 'precisely to take into consideration the propriety of forming a saxhorn band, when the attendance of all persons favourably disposed towards such an object amongst the working class of society is respectfully invited'.<sup>77</sup> By 1855, the Lynn Working Men's Band was firmly in existence, playing quadrilles in the town's 'commodious room' to collect money for 'coals for the poor'. In August 1853, 'A Grand Musical Fête' was held at the Pomona Gardens, Cornbrook, for the benefit of the City Royal Brass Band.<sup>78</sup> The Accrington Band was a subscription band which, as early as 1842, was successful in getting enough money from local gentry to buy instruments.<sup>79</sup> Most bands eventually became subscription bands, because as the century progressed, they relied less on direct patronage and more on homespun entrepreneurship.

### THE 1859 VOLUNTEERS AND BANDS

The relationship between the volunteer movement and the brass band movement is complex and intriguing. Contest reports testify to the number of bands which, from as early as 1860, carry the names of volunteer corps. Many of these bands existed under different names before the formation of volunteer

<sup>77</sup> Lynn Museum, Norfolk.

<sup>78</sup> *Manchester Guardian* (20 Aug. 1853).

<sup>79</sup> Taylor, *Brass Bands*, 25.



movements. By the 1850s, the perceived threat of invasion by a foreign force had grown to proportions that could not be ignored—this period has been termed ‘the second scare’. Two factors sharpened concern. The first was the strength of the French armed forces. Franco-British tensions seldom subsided during the century, and were heightened by the foreign policy of Napoleon III. The second cause of concern was that, though the British armed forces were large, well equipped, and highly trained, at any one time a significant proportion of them were abroad, defending and enlarging the Empire. The militia was re-established by the Militia Act of 1852, but seven years later steps were taken to constitute a widely dispersed home volunteer force. On 12 May 1859, Jonathan Peel, Secretary of State for War, sent a circular letter to the Lord Lieutenants of all counties instructing them to form a force of volunteers. The principal and most important provisions were that volunteers would ‘be liable to be called out in case of actual invasion’, and that while under arms they ‘would be bound by military law’.<sup>80</sup> Thirteen days later, Peel circulated a second letter which was less earnest and more aware of the need to make the service attractive to potential recruits: ‘The conditions of service should be such, while securing and enforcing the above necessary discipline, to induce those classes to come forward for service as volunteers who do not . . . enter into the regular army or militia . . . Drill and instruction for bodies of volunteers should not be such as to render the service unnecessarily irksome.’<sup>81</sup> There was no necessity for an Act of Parliament to establish the 1859 volunteers. The terms of the 1804 Yeomanry and Vounteers Consolidation Act were invoked. Volunteers were exempt from the militia ballot, but were required to receive military training and attend twenty-four drills a year.

From the beginning, bands were seen as a desirable and, to many, an essential part of the volunteer movement. They had a practical use at drills, and they afforded a sense of occasion to special events such as ‘annual reviews’. In many respects, they authenticated, or at least gave an air of authenticity to, the activities of the volunteers as they strove for a serious military image with all the necessary resonances of imperialism and patriotism. They were also valuable in promoting good relations between volunteer corps and communities. No provision was made for the funding of bands by the government through the War Office. It is obvious, however, that moneys paid in the ‘capitation grant’, the official mechanism for government funding, were being appropriated to pay for bands, and soon the issue of volunteer banding became controversial. Within a year of the foundation of the first corps, a correspondent of *The Times* criticized the extravagance of the movement, which, he feared, would

<sup>80</sup> C. S. Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Force: From Earliest Times to the Year 1860* (London, 1908), 403.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

be 'the rock on which it is likely to split': 'The expenses of some corps are enormous 400 l or 500 l; being expended on their bands . . . Now, bands ought to be viewed as luxuries, and paid for, as is done in some cases, not out of the funds of the corps, but by a special subscription.'<sup>82</sup>

Many bands were formed by the volunteers from scratch, and, of these, most were probably funded in the proper way by private subscription. A popular way of raising money was to impose on officers an annual subscription over and above the normal corps subscription (as a rule, about 10 guineas a year), specifically for the band fund.<sup>83</sup> Concerts were also held to raise funds. A graphic account of how bands were formed within the spirit of the standing orders was given by Charles E. Murray, Captain commanding the 16th Middlesex Rifles, in a response to *The Times* letter quoted above. 'Marching without a band', he said, 'would become a dismal business':

Out of some 30 applicants . . . I have formed a band of 17 performers . . . from a separate subscription I have furnished them with instruments and clothes and given them paid instruction.

The terms on which they serve are

- 1 They are attested members of the corps.
- 2 On leaving, they are bound to resign their instruments, etc.
- 3 They agree (beside meetings for practice) to play once a week at 6pm at HQ.
- 4 If wanted for a whole day, for instance for the great review, then and only then to be paid for loss of time.<sup>84</sup>

Murray emphasized that the men were 'respectable', and, he added, 'As to position in life they are of the tradesmen and respectable artisan class'. He hoped that 'unpaid bands may become as general as they are possible'. However, many bands were engaged and paid *en bloc* by corps to perform the duties of volunteer bands. In 1874, the Penrith Volunteer Band was costing its corps £52 a year, and the Whitehaven Band £74 a year.<sup>85</sup> In the 1880s, the Dobcross Band was demanding £60 a year to wear the mantle of 'Band of the 34th West Yorkshire Volunteers'.<sup>86</sup>

In 1861, at least ten of the entrants to the Crystal Palace Contest carried the name of a Rifle Volunteers Corps. The well-established band of W. L. Marriner from Keighley openly referred to themselves as 'W. L. Marriner's Band, also the Band of the 35th Rifle Volunteer Corps'. A year later, they were again calling themselves 'W. L. Marriner's Private Brass Band'. The 1st West

<sup>82</sup> *The Times* (15 Aug. 1860), 5.

<sup>83</sup> I. F. W. Beckett, *Riflemen Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1859-1908* (Aldershot: Ogilby Trusts, 1982), 41. <sup>84</sup> *The Times* (22 Aug. 1860), 5. <sup>85</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, 116.

<sup>86</sup> H. Livings, *That the Medals and the Baton be Put on View* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1975), 15.

Yorkshire Volunteer Fire Brigade Guards was the same band which a year earlier had entered as the Flush Mills Band from Heckmondwike.<sup>87</sup>

The patriotic element of volunteering afforded it the status of a rational recreation; but the discipline of volunteer corps was variable. There was sustained and stout defence of volunteering in the establishment press, but there was much to defend—not only the behaviour, but also the incompetence of some corps in the exercise of operational duties. In 1861, volunteers at Exeter ‘by some strange oversight . . . forgot to keep their sponge wet’ and were ‘horribly disfigured’ by the resulting explosion.<sup>88</sup> There were regular reports of volunteers being accidentally killed when ‘on the march’, and the *Volunteer Gazette*, in one of its regular reports of such incidents, mentioned the ‘unfortunate occurrence’ of a young boy being shot while the 3rd Cheshire Rifles were practising.<sup>89</sup>

Men who carried arms and attended a specific number of drills were termed ‘effectives’. Bandsmen were not classed as effectives unless they had satisfied the relevant requirements. Some bands contained no effectives, because the means by which they were funded was deliberately disguised. This was especially the case when the band was no more than a civilian band which was contracted in by a discreet and dubious local arrangement. Despite the desirable qualities of these bands, they were a mixed blessing, as it was often impossible to impose military discipline on them. A correspondent of the *Volunteer Service Gazette* in 1868, who signed himself ‘a commissioned officer of the volunteers’, described bands as ‘one of the main causes of the disgrace which has recently fallen on the volunteer force’. He had found at camp a volunteer band marching along with ‘a train of boys and girls kicking up dust’, and had later found the same men in a railway train, where they were using ‘disgraceful language and were too drunk to stand’. Some had challenged a fellow passenger to a fight. He added: ‘I think that this incident shows that it is from the bandsmen of some corps that the volunteers get into disrepute. They are notorious for straggling away from their corps and feeling themselves under no sort of constraint and acknowledging no authority whatsoever.’<sup>90</sup>

It is difficult to distinguish the motives of some bands which subscribed to the volunteer force, particularly in respect of their political or radical affiliations, but it seems that some were not always impartial. In August 1868, the Band of the 2nd Cambridgeshire RVC allegedly escorted the Liberal candidate at Wisbech, and in July 1873, the Band of the 5th Fife Artillery Volunteers illegally participated in a trade-union demonstration. The 1st Worcestershire

<sup>87</sup> Private collection of Mr Raymond Ainscoe of Kirkby Lonsdale, kindly conveyed by Arnold Myers.

<sup>88</sup> *The Rifleman* (23 May 1861).

<sup>89</sup> *Volunteer Service Gazette* (20 June 1861), 406.

<sup>90</sup> *Volunteer Service Gazette* (25 July 1868), 531.

AV Band gave a concert in aid of the Conservative Working Men's Association in Newport, Gwent, and in August 1883, a volunteer band at Renfrew allegedly took part in a procession of the Orange Grand Black Chapter in Glasgow.<sup>91</sup> A further incident took place on the outskirts of Liverpool in September 1883, when two volunteer units fought each other; the fight was apparently caused by a volunteer band deliberately playing a tune which inflamed an Irish mob.<sup>92</sup>

An 1862 Royal Commission on the volunteers<sup>93</sup> concluded that there was too much emphasis on the social activities, which seemed to be the real reason why many joined the corps. This social side can be traced back, at least in part, to the second of Peel's 1859 circular letters to Lord Lieutenants of counties, which strongly inferred that volunteers' duties should be enjoyable, and, in the most desirable sense, 'recreational'. While the volunteer movement was regarded as serious and important—reports of volunteer activities were regularly featured in *The Times*, and usually focused on the formal functions of the movement—it is evident that the recreational aspect persisted. This ambiguity surrounding the image of the volunteer movement continued in the 1860s and 1870s, and the bands often acted as a focus for such controversies.

The relationship of the volunteer corps to the brass band movement in the nineteenth century is probably more important than is generally realized. Some proof of this is revealed in the 1878 Departmental Committee Report on the Volunteer Force of Great Britain, chaired by Lord Bury.<sup>94</sup> For the Bury Report, all volunteer corps in the country were circulated with a questionnaire that asked them to detail, under a number of separate headings, their average expenditure over the five-year period from 1873 to 1877. Though there was at this time no formal device to fund bands from volunteer finances, of the 278 of those who returned questionnaires, all but a handful admitted that they supported bands. It was in the interests of the respondents to understate their expenditure on bands, and it is certain that estimates under this heading were artificially low. However, many returns show that the support of a band was a major financial burden. Some officers who were called to give evidence to the Commission admitted to spending a large part of the capitation grant on bands. Lieutenant Colonel J. A. Thompson of the 1st Fifehire Light Horse VC was challenged: 'Your band cost you 10s. a man: that is a heavy item to come out of the capitation grant: it was £62 last year for 119 men—that takes up the whole equipment fund . . . it runs away with your capitation money.'<sup>95</sup> To this, the officer replied: 'Yes, it does'. Captain and Adjutant Ball of the 1st

<sup>91</sup> Beckett, *Rifleman Form*, 145.      <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* 273.

<sup>93</sup> PP 1862 [c.3053] xxvii. 89, *Report of the Royal Commission of the Condition of the Volunteer Force*. See also A. Tucker, 'The Army in the 19th Century', in R. Higham (ed.), *A Guide to the Sources of British Military History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).

<sup>94</sup> PP 1878/79 [c.2235] xv. 181, *Report of the Bury Departmental Committee*.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* 1216 ff.

Middlesex Engineer Volunteer Corps admitted to an average annual expenditure of £280 on the band. When asked for particulars of that expenditure, he replied:

. . . we pay a bandmaster. That expenditure will be lower in the future. We have a new system. We give the bandmaster £12 a year and he provides instruments, clothing and everything for the band. We enrol any men that he likes and we give him the capitation grant for those men. If he has 30 men he can draw the capitation allowance.<sup>96</sup>

Major Sloan of the 4th Lancashire RVC declared an expenditure of £105, and further pleaded that the band 'should be exempt from firing as the buglers are. Their attendance as bandsmen qualifies them for efficiency as far as drill is concerned'. He suggested no substitute duties: 'We have as good a band as we can get . . . but they look upon firing as a heavy task . . . to keep up a good band is one of our difficulties and a good band is necessary in order to get recruits.'<sup>97</sup>

The value of a good band to a corps was not disputed, but issues concerning their discipline and funding remained a subject of contention. Ralph H. Knox, deputy accountant general at the War Office, who was also a lieutenant in the 2nd Middlesex RVC, cited bands as one of the three principal causes for excess expenditure on volunteer corps (the other two were extra pay to permanent staff, and county associations). J. R. A. MacDonnal, editor of the *Volunteer Service Gazette*, suggested that the cost of bands should be exclusively borne by commanding officers. Bury concluded: 'No allowance for bands is made in the disembodied period for any branch of the auxiliary forces, any expense under this head being defrayed by private subscription. The Committee cannot advocate any allowance under this head.'<sup>98</sup> In 1887, the Harris Departmental Committee, being sympathetic to the problems of recruiting officers because of the costs required of them for 'balls, bands, refreshments and so on', and noting the recent changes in the funding of regular army bands, recommended that 7.5 per cent of the capitation grant be made for the funding of bands.<sup>99</sup> However, this recommendation was not acted on until the end of the century.

The repertoire of volunteer bands was not strikingly different from that of civilian, contesting bands. The music they were required to play at drills—primarily marches—was a standard feature of the non-volunteer band repertoire, and there is sufficient evidence of volunteers playing band contests and concerts to conclude that when volunteer bands were brass bands (as opposed to a combination of woodwind and brass instruments), as most probably were, their musical identity was barely distinguishable from that of their non-volunteer counterparts.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 2213.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. 2550.

<sup>98</sup> Bury Report, p. xviii.

<sup>99</sup> PP 1887 [c.4951] xvi. 271, *Report of the Volunteer Capitation Committee*.

Notwithstanding the controversies that surrounded the behaviour and discipline of a proportion of bands, others probably benefited from the patriotic and respectable associations of volunteering. The material results of such associations manifested themselves most potently in the band funds. It was in the economics of banding in the nineteenth century that the volunteer force had its impact. It provided a ready source of financing for instruments and bandmasters; drill halls very often doubled as band rooms, and the provision of uniforms was an additional bonus.

Apart from those bands which owed their foundation to the volunteer movement, many were either saved or revived by it. The Bacup Band, after disintegration and amalgamation, were reconstituted to great effect in 1859 as the 4th Lancashire Rifle Volunteers.<sup>100</sup> The Oldham Band, formed in 1865, became Oldham Rifles in 1871, and was extremely successful under Alexander Owen. The volunteers were also responsible for stimulating interest in banding in areas of the country distant from the industrial north. In Sussex, for example, the Arundel Band was maintained for years as the 2nd Administrative Battalion Royal Sussex Rifle Volunteer Regiment, and there were similar stories at Rudgwick, East Grinstead, and Crawley.<sup>101</sup>

#### THE ECONOMICS OF BANDING

The volunteer movement sustained many brass bands and may even have saved some from extinction in the second half of the nineteenth century. This was a time when their number multiplied further, when popular interest in them was at its height, and when brass band contests were woven not just into the movement but into the entire fabric of popular music culture. The period has appropriately been called the 'Golden Age'. It was also a period when the commercial zeal of the brass instrument and sheet music industry was most impressive. The seductive pressures exerted by the forces of commerce were adequately matched by brass bands with organized, lucid, and entirely rational strategies for self-determination and economic independence.

From the late 1850s, the cost of musical instruments fell. This was due partly to the removal of protective tariffs through such measures as the 1860 Cobden-Chevalier Treaty, and partly to increased trade volume and a higher level of competition among domestic manufacturers and retailers. Cyril Ehrlich has shown how the prices of woodwind and string instruments fell in the second half of the nineteenth century;<sup>102</sup> a similar picture emerges for brass instruments. In 1839, D'Almaine was advertising corneopians at prices between £5. 12s. 6d. and £8. 8s. 0d.; in 1840, Charles Pace was charging £8

<sup>100</sup> Taylor, *Brass Bands*, 50.

<sup>101</sup> Alberry, 'Old Sussex Amateur Bands', 318–19.

<sup>102</sup> Ehrlich, *Music Profession*, 11 ff., gives an excellent succinct account of the economics of the music industry at this time.

and £10 for corneopans. In about 1873, Boosey & Co., trading as Distin, were offering a 'new model cornet in B $\flat$ ' for £3. 3s. *od.* Even in 1889, Joseph Higham was able to advertise new cornets at £3. 3s. *od.*<sup>103</sup> It is true that these prices were for the cheapest models, but even the more luxurious versions were not beyond the means of a reasonably successful, enterprising band. It is often difficult to determine the actual price of brass instruments in this period. Virtually every purchaser seems to have benefited from a Byzantine system of discounting. Cash, cheques, deferred payments, and any other means of payment, were discounted. There must also have been a huge market for second-hand instruments, for while many bands started up and flourished in the second half of the century, many folded after a few years. Given the durability of brass instruments—even the cheaper ones—it is possible that many of them continued to circulate.

There was no precedent for the quantity of instruments available. By 1895, Bessons employed 131 men in its London factory, making 100 brass instruments a week. Between 1862 and 1895, the firm produced 52,000 brass instruments. Joseph Higham employed 90 men who produced 60,000 instruments between 1842 and 1893.<sup>104</sup>

From the middle of the century, hire-purchase schemes were available. In 1855, the Bradford Brass Band was engaged in a hire-purchase agreement,<sup>105</sup> and as the century progressed many others entered into similar agreements. At the end of the century, Algernon Rose observed that 'the credit system has become the very basis of the brass band'.<sup>106</sup> Brass instrument manufacturers used several ploys to persuade people to buy brass instruments or exchange their current ones for newer 'improved' models. The award of new instruments as contest prizes for 'the best soloists of the day' was a calculated effort in this direction. Instruments were often advertised not just as new models but as entirely original systems and designs. New and improved valve systems were being introduced, each one claiming to be better than the others. As Arnold Myers explains later in this book, there was a genuine problem with the way some valve designs affected intonation, especially on larger instruments. Manufacturers frequently claimed to have found a definitive solution to the problem, and turned their endeavours to searching for appropriate superlatives to proclaim their availability. In the 1860s, Distins marketed instruments with names such as 'Distin's Celebrated Patent Light Valve Cornet' and the 'First-Class Equisonant Piston Cornet'. The advertising

<sup>103</sup> Price lists for most of the companies quoted here are reproduced in Appendix 1.

<sup>104</sup> Scott, 'Evolution of the Brass Band', 103.

<sup>105</sup> D. C. Russell, 'The Popular Music Societies of the Yorkshire Textile District 1850–1914' (D.Phil. thesis, University of York, 1979), 38; see also pp. 138–45.

<sup>106</sup> A. Rose, *Talks with Bandsmen: A Popular Handbook for Brass Instrumentalists* (London: William Rider, 1895; facsimile with an introduction by Arnold Myers, London: Tony Bingham, 1995), 305.

explosion was not confined to Britain. In the USA, Ernst Albert Couturier, a cornet virtuoso who had made a name for himself with Gilmore, employed autobiographical sketches to endorse instruments:

One night before I was to play solos with *Le Garde Republicaine* in Paris, I did five miles at a dog trot in driving rain. I had been practising for five hours daily on my European tour. The next night, as I stood before the audience, waiting for the conductor's nod, a question assailed me. 'Why is it', I thought, 'that, train as we may for breath control, and practice as we will for technical perfection, we brass players must remain at the mercy of an imperfect instrument?'<sup>107</sup>

Some manufacturers offered cash incentives to those who won contest prizes using their instruments. In the 1890s, Silvani and Smith were offering the first band to win a first prize at the Belle Vue Contest, Manchester, using 'a complete set of their instruments', a reward of £50 in cash. Manufacturers also set great store by the endorsement of leading army bands, and on the award of prizes at international inventions exhibitions. Besson's proud boast in 1888 was that it had won forty-two highest honours from international exhibitions, and thirty-nine medals of honour awarded to 'the Besson prototype band instruments', including one award which was 'the ONLY medal ever awarded for TONE quality. Another proof of the incontestable superiority of the prototype instruments.'<sup>108</sup> Attempts were also made late in the century to seduce bands to the latest fashions. An example of this was the pressure put on bands by manufacturers to convert from a brass to a 'silver' band. This meant nothing more than that the brass instruments were subjected to a process of electro-silverplating (ESP). This process added considerably to the cost of instruments, and in 1892 the Pendleton Brass Band paid the high price of £339. 14s. for a set of twenty-four ESP instruments from Besson—they may well have discarded perfectly good brass instruments.<sup>109</sup>

There was a variety of ways in which bands met the costs of buying instruments and otherwise sustaining themselves. In 1893, a brass band was started at the Broadwood Piano Factory. In order to provide the workers with an adequate context for their endeavours, the official in charge, Algernon Rose, gave a series of lectures on the history of brass instruments. He subsequently appended a couple more discourses to his writings, and published these as a book which he called *Talks with Bandsmen* (1895). Rose had travelled widely in Britain and abroad—one of his compositions was in the Sousa repertoire. He was an urbane, apparently knowledgeable musician, whose relationship with Broadwood's was not smooth. His book is the most substantial of its type to survive from the nineteenth century, and is particularly valuable for

<sup>107</sup> Quoted in G. D. Bridges, *Pioneers in Brass* (Detroit: Sherwood Publications, 1972), 38.

<sup>108</sup> *British Bandsman* (Dec. 1888).

<sup>109</sup> *Wright & Round's Brass Band Journal* (1 Jan. 1892).



the insights he had gained from visiting various manufacturers of brass instruments. The final chapter of the book, 'How to start a brass band', appears to be a combination of his personal reflections on the subject and an account of his observations of common practices. He advocates a procedure which aspiring bandsmen could use when approaching their employer for his support, supplying them with a model letter:

Dear Sirs,

We, the undersigned, being desirous of employing our leisure time in practising music, request permission to form a brass band in connection with this factory. We shall feel honoured if [you] will consent to become President of the Band. Unfortunately, we are unable at the beginning to defray the entire cost of the purchase of instruments. Messrs. [Bessons] are prepared to sell us the brass instruments required, provided that the firm, whose name we should like to take, will act as surety for the deferred payments.

We are, dear sirs, yours respectfully<sup>110</sup>

Rose was probably describing a practice that was well established, and one which was doubtless instigated by the purveyors of musical instruments. It is interesting that his advice was to procure guarantees, not sponsorship. As I said earlier, a number of bands were the recipients of direct patronage by industrial entrepreneurs, but it is doubtful if this type of practice was extensive. R. T. Crawshay, as far as we know, was not simply donating instruments and facilities to the members of his band. Though Crawshay's name was engraved on the bells of the instruments, his cash books contain indications of regular payments *to* him from the bandsmen 'for instruments', suggesting that they were repaying loans.<sup>111</sup> It was much more usual, particularly towards the end of the century, for bands to rely on entrepreneurial income and subscriptions. Subscriptions came from the members of the bands themselves; for example, as early as 1842, W. L. Murriner's Band was imposing monthly subscriptions on its members.<sup>112</sup> Special expenditures, such as the purchase of new instruments, caused bands to issue appeals for general subscriptions. In 1866, the Llanelly Band purchased a set of fifteen instruments at 'the lowest trade price of £75. 16. 3'. This amount was raised as follows:

Subscriptions at the start of the band	£36. 2. 6
Concert, November 1885	£ 7. 3. 2
Athletic Sports, June 1886	£13.16. 11 <sup>113</sup>

The band also carried an amount of £14 made up from subscriptions from the members for 'current expenses'.

<sup>110</sup> Rose, *Talks*, 303–4.

<sup>111</sup> See Herbert, 'Virtuosi of Merthyr'.

<sup>112</sup> University of Leeds Brotherton Library, W. L. Murriner's *Caminando Band Minute Book*.

<sup>113</sup> *Llanelly and County Guardian* (28 Oct. 1886). I am grateful to Dr David Evans of the University College of Wales, Bangor, for sources relating to the Llanelly Band.

Income from concerts was very important in the economics of nineteenth-century banding. In 1885, the St George's Works Brass Band, Lancaster, operated on a monthly balance of about £4. This amount included total contributions of about 4s. to 7s. a week from members. But the collection or fee for a single concert would raise almost £4 in one evening.<sup>114</sup> Seaside bands at major resorts were often professional. They operated on much larger balances, up to about £500, but their funding was based on the same principles. For example, on Saturdays in August 1874, the Llandudno Promenade Band was collecting amounts between £25 and £27 a day.<sup>115</sup>

Apart from the cost of the upkeep of instruments and uniforms, and necessities such as heating, lighting, and sometimes hiring rehearsal rooms, the other regular items of expenditure were the fees to conductors. These often came to about 5s. a week; the top conductors may well have cost considerably more. Journal music was another regular expense. Journals varied in price, but bands spent between 1s. and 2s. per issue per month. In the 1880s, *Wright & Round's Journal* cost between 19s. and £1. 9s. 6d. a year.

Another important source of income for the major bands was prize money from contests. The more successful of them, such as Besses o' th' Barn and Black Dyke, measured their winnings in pounds, shillings, and pence. In the first thirty years of its contesting career, Besses o' th' Barn had won prizes to the total value of £3,359. 17s.<sup>116</sup> Prize money varied according to the status of the contest. Small contests, like the ones at Clitheroe, Middleton, and Rochdale, were worth between £5 and £7; larger ones were worth a lot more. Belle Vue paid about £35 plus benefits to the winners in the 1870s. For winning the 1887 contest, Kingston Mills Band received a cash prize of £30, and an euphonium valued at £30 [*sic*], and the individual band members won gold medals to the total value of £78. 15s.<sup>117</sup> Many bandmen received fees for playing in concerts and contests. Even the smaller bands in the south-east of England charged 2s. or 3s. per player, plus a free dinner for their services.<sup>118</sup> There is little doubt that many brass band players supplemented their regular income by playing, and for larger contesting bands, winning contests brought income and an additional *gravitas* which secured further fees from concert engagements. It is likely that the unsavoury scenes that followed disputed results at contests in the latter part of the century were caused as much by injuries that the bandmen felt to their wallets as to their pride.

<sup>114</sup> 'The Treasurer's Book for Members of the St. George's Works' Brass Band, Lancaster 1885–1886', Morecambe Library, Lancashire.

<sup>115</sup> Gwynedd Archive Service XM/3121/791 (private papers of Thomas Hughes).

<sup>116</sup> J. N. Hampson, *Besses o' th' Barn Band: Its Origin, History and Achievements* (Northampton: Jos. Rogers, c.1893), 70.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* 72 ff.

<sup>118</sup> See Alberry, 'Old Sussex Amateur Bands'.

## RUNNING A BAND

Mid- and late Victorian bands were able to exercise strict and successful control of their finances, because most were constituted on fairly democratic lines and adhered to lucidly expressed sets of rules and regulations. Most of the surviving band constitutions exhibit prominent concern for the proper handling of money. Subscription rates were fixed and outgoings carefully policed. One senses a certain pride in the authorship of such documents; they are often self-consciously detailed, with little left to doubt or chance. Many bands engaged solicitors to draw up their deeds and constitutions. Even small enterprises such as the Maelor Brass Band League near Wrexham, whose sole purpose seems to have been to run an annual contest with a cup as a prize—a contest deemed to be properly constituted if just two bands entered—went to the trouble of engaging a leading local solicitor to draw up a lengthy trust deed which was attested by all of the proper deed and stamp duties.<sup>119</sup>

The most remarkably forward-looking and entrepreneurial band of the nineteenth century was the Besses o' th' Barn Band from Whitefield, Lancashire, which, in 1887, with all the necessary legal properties, formed itself into a limited company. It is generally assumed that the band had started as Clegg's Reed Band in or by 1818. John Clegg was a local cotton manufacturer and keyed bugle player. Privately owned documents relating to Besses o' th' Barn include a set of 'Articles' of the 'Stand Band', dated 1828. The leader is named as Thomas Lee, who is known from other sources to have been associated with the early years of the Besses o' th' Barn Band. The instrumentation of the Stand Band is not revealed in the Articles, but James Melling is named as a committee member—probably the same man who wrote *Orynthia* and who collaborated with Jennison on the first Belle Vue contest. The remarkable thing about these Articles is their rigorous attention to detail, matching most documents of this type composed later in the century. Assuming that the Stand Band was Besses under an earlier name, it indicates a long history of self-government, discipline, and careful administration. The Band had been extremely successful, and 1887, the year of Victoria's Golden Jubilee, brought a flood of engagements and contest successes which gave it sufficient faith in its musical and entrepreneurial abilities to engage the Manchester solicitors, Alfred Grund and Son, to draw up and prove the necessary documentation. The company was called the 'Besses o' th' Barn Old Band Union Limited'. It had already bought a 'club' building which was the registered office. The object of the company was 'to establish and maintain a brass band . . . and to sell, improve, manage, develop and maintain the property of the band . . . to invest the monies of the band . . . and to do what else was required to further the objects'. The fourth article of the company concerned the income from contests and concerts:

<sup>119</sup> Clwyd Archive Service DD/WL/251.

‘To enter and play at Brass Band Contests in Great Britain and Ireland; to acquire money by playing for remuneration in any other manner and to get up, conduct, and carry out any concert or other entertainment, or to join any other company, society or person in carrying out the aforesaid objects.’<sup>120</sup>

Because bands were fastidious over record-keeping, the sources that have survived and are available show that the practice of paying players was common. Band account books often record the distribution between members of takings from contests and engagements. The records of W. L. Marriner’s Band leave little doubt that players were being paid at a time when they were taking part in contests (contests usually outlawed professionalism), and a written agreement drawn up between the Idle and Thackley Band in 1898 and the trombonist Willie Hawker is entirely explicit: ‘Willie Hawker does herby [*sic*] agree to give the whole of his services as solo Trombonist to the above band for 12 Calendar months at a sum of £5. 0. 0. And that he receives all engagement moneys when other members do . . .’<sup>121</sup> It is important to stress, however, that band rule-books also show evidence of concerns which are wider than those pertaining to finances. They are laced with phrases that safeguard democratic processes, but at the same time, most delegate musical and disciplinary authority to the bandmaster or conductor. St George’s Works Band delegated ‘All power . . . to the bandmaster during practice’,<sup>122</sup> and the Idle and Thackley Band allowed ‘the Bandmaster for the time being . . . [to] have full control over all the members of the band and if any member or members disobey him, or otherwise misbehave himself shall be fined’.<sup>123</sup> Musical and social indiscipline was treated seriously. Idle and Thackley Band would ‘expel any member for misconduct or for not being musically gifted enough to become a good player in the band’. Bands also legislated to promote the ethos of social harmony and cooperation that the rational recreationists held in such high regard. The rules of W. L. Marriner’s Caminando Band, perhaps not surprisingly, provide a good example of this: ‘As this brass band is formed for mutual amusement and instruction in music, and, as peace and harmony are essential to its welfare, it is highly requisite that no dispute or angry feeling should arise among its members, therefore for the prevention of any such occurrence [*sic*], the following rules and regulations have been adopted.’<sup>124</sup> This sentiment was enforced by Rule 7 of the Band’s regulations which threatened to impose upon its members ‘for every oath or angry expression, [a] penalty of 3/-’.

Such bureaucracies and administrative structures were not, of course, uncommon among organized working-class groups. Trade unions, mechanics institutes, and even churches, provide abundant evidence of committees,

<sup>120</sup> Hampson, *Besses o’ th’ Barn Band*, 42–3.

<sup>121</sup> Bradford District Archives 54D80/1/6.

<sup>122</sup> Morecambe Library, ‘Treasurer’s Book’.

<sup>123</sup> Bradford District Archives 54D80/1/5, 2.

<sup>124</sup> University of Leeds Brotherton Library, W. L. Marriner’s Caminando Band Minute Book.

rule-books, and schemes for democratic organization. But the primary reason why nineteenth-century bands were so well organized is that they had to be, in order to survive. From the moment a band entered into a hire-purchase agreement, it was bound to a debt that could only be repaid if it was organizationally and musically successful. Such pressures were intensified if the guarantor of the loan was the employer of most or all of the band's members.

Another factor which encouraged the formality of the business organization of bands was the rules and regulations that surrounded contests (see, for example, Fig. 1.6 and Appendix 3). Leaving aside the embryonic brass band contests which took place before about 1850, the earliest contests were entrepreneurial and primarily aimed at entertainment. The influence of Enderby Jackson was especially important in the birth and development of the brass band contest. Jackson was a brilliant businessman, with real entrepreneurial flair and not a hint of modesty. He claimed to have invented the brass band contest in its 'modern' form, and it is likely that he was right. He also claimed to have invented the idea of the cheap day railway excursion, in order to enable bands and their supporters to travel to his contests. Notwithstanding the fact that such excursions were in place in order to allow people to travel to the 1851 Crystal Palace exhibition, it is likely that he was right in this respect too, for the correspondence between him and the railway companies, in which he proposed such an arrangement, shows them to have treated the proposal as novel.

Jackson claimed to have been inspired with the idea of brass band contests as a leisure spectacle (see Fig. 1.7) when he noticed the success of agricultural shows in which pigs and sheep were matched against each other, with every spectator trying to second-guess the judge. He organized contests in several parts of the country, but the most important were the Belle Vue contests which he ran from 1853, and the short-lived but influential National Contest at the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, which he presented for three years from 1860.

Jackson's contests became important and drew wide popular support. Soon the idea was imitated by others, and as the brass band movement gathered pace, the seriousness and fervour of the contestants had to be accommodated by careful regulations. It soon became necessary for each band to submit a detailed application form indicating the instruments that would be used, the uniform worn, and the occupations of the players (to guard against professionalism). For the 1860 Crystal Palace Contest, bands were also required to give the pitch for each instrument (so that a massed band concert could be organized), as well as to indicate the railway company they would use and the station at which they would board (so that Jackson could make the necessary arrangements for excursions) (see Fig. 1.8). Eventually, the now-familiar practice of bands drawing for the order in which they are to perform, and the system of encasing adjudicators in tents or 'boxes' to ensure the anonymity of competing bands were instigated. As more rules and regulations were added,

so more controversies arose, and later in the century band associations were formed, primarily to regulate contests.

Controversies concerning musical matters were sometimes eclipsed by financial arguments, and there was tension between those who wished to develop genuine amateurism and the well-established contesting bands, whose members had grown used to having their incomes supplemented by share-outs or contest prizes. In 1893, Thomas Valentine, representing Besses o' th' Barn, Wyke Temperance, and Kingston Mills, three bands which had a lot to lose from the imposition of pure amateurism, wrote to the *Cornet* in response to 'The Proposed National Amateur Brass Band Association': 'It has been mentioned to me that several Contests are intended to be held next year on still stricter rules than at the recent Blackpool contest—that is to say, no paid players of any kind to compete, and as this affects more or less every band of note I HEREBY CALL A MEETING . . . [to take steps] to protect such bands.'<sup>125</sup>

In 1903, the issue of payment to contesting bandsmen was still prominent. The organizers of a new contest at Huddersfield felt that it was a matter that had to be settled before any progress could be made. The contest secretary frankly admitted: 'We cannot get a really big entry with the present system of shut playing bands (and their conductors) look upon it as an engagement & so it is, without any pay [*sic*]. They don't like the principle of it, this is what they kick against. I believe if we only gave 6*d.* to each bandsman we should have a bigger entry.'<sup>126</sup>

Contests offered material rewards and acted as focuses for the entire brass band movement. This was particularly important before the advent of specialist magazines, which, when they were introduced during the 1880s, served to intensify the interest in contests, underline their importance, and galvanize the orthodoxy which was to typify the movement as a whole. It would be grotesquely unfair, though, to characterize the significance of contests as uniquely or even primarily financial. The most important aspects of contesting were musical, and these matters are discussed below. At a more general level, contests engendered feelings of pride, not just among the members of bands, but among the people of the communities in which the bands resided. The most enduring impression of contesting bands in the late nineteenth century is of their earnestness and seriousness of resolve. The hackneyed image of a red-faced bandsman contentedly puffing at a B♭ bass in the upstairs room of a pub, while a pint of beer waits under his chair, is a hopeless misrepresentation of the truth. Contesting bands were single-minded and determined in their pursuit of excellence.

<sup>125</sup> *Cornet* (15 Nov. 1893).

<sup>126</sup> Huddersfield Public Library S/HT.1 (Brass Band Minute Book, Huddersfield Band of Hope Union).

## REPERTOIRE

There are three types of source that cast light upon brass band repertoire in the nineteenth century: the printed sources, the surviving manuscript music, and other, miscellaneous documentary sources, such as concert programmes. Examples of each of these types of source survive in archives and private collections throughout Britain, and it is likely that those which have been analysed by historians are but a small proportion of those which actually exist. The printed repertoire includes solos, quartets, brass and military band journals, and the printed so-called 'standard instrumentation' repertoire which appeared later in the century. These are important because they represent examples of the relationship between publishers and a wide social audience. The bands were no more than executants of this type of repertoire. Published music for early brass bands started to appear in the 1830s. MacFarlane's *Eight Popular Airs for Brass Band* was published in 1836. In 1837, D'Almaine published *The Brass Band*, a set of popular pieces arranged by J. Parry, a former militia bandmaster and music critic of the *Morning Post*.<sup>127</sup> Parry's *Brass Band* was the mainstay of the W. L. Marriner's Band in the early 1840s. From about 1840, publishers started producing brass band journals. The first regular subscription journal for brass band is probably the one published by Wessel & Co.<sup>128</sup> Brass band journals were musical publications; they contained little text other than musical text. Bands subscribed to them and received up to twelve publications each year. The instrumentation was flexible; alternative parts were provided for different instruments. Wessel's journals in the 1840s were for solo cornet-à-pistons, first and second cornet-à-pistons, two horns, three trombones, and ophicleide, with *ad libitum* parts for D $\flat$  cornet-à-pistons or bugle, two horns, three trumpets, and kettle drums. The arrangements were workmanlike and functional. Brass bands were not the only ensembles to be served by journal music; concertina bands, military bands, string bands, and a plethora of other instrumental combinations were also catered for. The journals contained a mixture of light pieces and arrangements of art music. Several publishers brought out band journals. Smith's *Champion Brass Band Journal* was published in Hull from 1857; Chappell, Distin, Jullien, and Boosey all published journals. *Distin's Journal*, which was published by Boosey from 1869, was:

FOR A BAND OF TEN.—1st Cornet in B flat; 2nd ditto; 1st Cornet in E flat; 1st and 2nd Tenors in E flat; Euphonion; Bombardon; Side and Bass Drums. The Euphonion and Bombardon parts may be had in either the Treble or Bass Clef.

<sup>127</sup> Scott, 'Evolution of the Brass Band', 194.

<sup>128</sup> There is some doubt as to when *Wessel's Brass Band Journal* was first published. Scott has dated it 1837. The British Library gives the date 1845 for books 10–14. This suggests that the first was issued in the early 1840s.

Subscription: Ten shillings and Sixpence per Annum for Ten Performers (Postage Free in the United Kingdom), payable in advance. Price to Non-Subscribers: One Shilling each Number.

This Journal is arranged to suit a Band of any size, and extra Parts may be had for the following Instruments: Repiano Cornet in B flat; Cornets, 3rd and 4th, in B flat; Solo Tenor in E flat; 2nd Baritone in B flat; 1st and 2nd Trombones in B flat (either in the Treble or Bass Clef); Bass Trombone; and Contra-Bass in B flat. Price of extra or duplicate Parts Twopence each, or to Subscribers Three Halfpence.<sup>129</sup>

There was also a considerable trade in the publication of solo and smaller ensemble pieces. In the mid-1840s, Boosey started publishing its *Repertory for Cornet and Piano*. These publications were mainly arrangements of operatic arias; they cost 3s. each. In 1847, Distin published a *Selection of the most Favourite Swedish melodies as sung by Md. Jenny Lind* for cornet-à-pistons, saxhorn, or tuba with pianoforte accompaniment *ad lib*. Koenig's *Journal for Cornet-à-piston and Piano*, which was published by Chappell, eventually contained 140 items. Wessell also published *The Amateurs' Brass Band Quartets* (1852) for three cornet-à-pistons and ophicleide or valve trombone, and from about 1860, Robert Cocks & Co. started publishing their *Brass Band Magazine*, costing 2s. per arrangement, and apparently aimed at smaller bands of modest means and ability. By the early 1860s, journals were mainly devoted to arrangements of Italian opera. In 1875, Thomas Wright and Henry Round started publishing a brass band journal in Liverpool. Later publications by this firm were to be very influential.

Of the non-printed sources, manuscript part books are crucially important to understanding the musical identity of bands. Whereas printed music indicates what a publisher saw fit to purvey, handwritten part books indicate what bands were actually playing. Among the major sources known to have survived are the Goose Eye band books at Keighley in Yorkshire, the Black Dyke Mills band books at Queensbury in Yorkshire, and—by far the most comprehensive and earliest complete run—the set at the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.<sup>130</sup> The Black Dyke band books are incomplete—only eight books survive, dating from not long after the band was formed in 1855. They contain forty-three pieces. There is a mixture of dances (quadrilles, polkas, and waltzes), but also a significant proportion of pieces drawn from the art-music repertoire—especially opera transcriptions. The Goose Eye band music, dating from 1852, contains more than thirty pieces. The repertoire here is of an entirely different order: almost the entire collection is devoted to light music: dances and song arrangements, with a few arias and chorus arrangements. Five of the pieces—*Morning Star Polka*,

<sup>129</sup> *Distin's Journal* (London: Boosey, 1869–?).

<sup>130</sup> See Ch. 8 for more detail on the handwritten part books of bands such as the Cyfarthfa Band.



*Bonnets of Blue, Rock Villa Polka, Lily Bell, and The Light Horseman*—are attributed to the Hull composer, arranger, and publisher, Richard Smith.<sup>131</sup>

Manuscript band parts dating from later in the century survive in band libraries and other private collections. Some sources are particularly interesting, because they contain the original interpretative annotations, and appear to survive with the entire set intact. Full scores are sometimes encountered, but such scores were not routinely written out. The Cyfarthfa conductor, for example, conducted from an annotated ‘primo cornet’ part-book.

Although there are clear differences, there are also a number of similarities between the repertoires of major bands. Most collections contain art music, popular pieces, and what can be loosely described as functional tunes such as national anthems, Christmas carols, and works which are idiosyncratic to particular localities. Original compositions for brass band constitute a tiny proportion of the repertoire. One is bound to ask what forces were at work to create such concordances. This question is best answered by looking not just at the manuscript music and printed parts, but also at the sources from which arrangements were made. I have already pointed to the increased availability of published music of all types from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. Art music—particularly pot-pourris of foreign works—was popular among the middle-class consumers. Choral music such as oratorio, and major orchestral works, were also available at comparatively modest prices. Novello’s publications, for example, were widely distributed. There was also a market for quadrilles, polkas, and waltzes in short score form produced for domestic pianists. Another type of music aimed, initially at least, at the middle-class market, was piano arrangements of opera extracts—Italian opera was the favourite. British publishers lost no time in making such extracts available to the wider public. Verdi’s *Il Trovatore* was first performed in Rome on 13 January 1853. In February 1853, the *Music Publishers’ Circular*, No. 2, carried a ‘Musical Announcement’ from Boosey & Sons: ‘Verdi’s new opera *Il Trovatore*. This opera has just been produced in Rome, with the most extraordinary success, the composer having been called before the curtain fifteen times during the performance—seven pieces now ready. The remainder of the opera is now in press.’ It was probably from sources such as these that bandmasters and journal editors made their arrangements. James Smyth’s brass band arrangement of the overture to Verdi’s *La Forza del Destino*<sup>132</sup> was in circulation within a few months of the opera’s first performance in St Petersburg in 1862.

Brass band journals, which also emphasized operatic transcriptions, were, ironically enough, the source for further arrangements and transcriptions. It

<sup>131</sup> See Scott, ‘Evolution of the Brass Band’, 215.

<sup>132</sup> Ainscoe Collection, shown at the 1989–90 *Brass Roots: 150 Years of Brass Bands* exhibition, University of Edinburgh Collection of Historic Musical Instruments.

is known that some bands had copies of journals, and also had manuscript arrangements of the pieces contained in those journals.<sup>133</sup> So it is likely that some band arrangements were fourth-hand, via the composer's original, the short score, the journal arrangement, and then the rearrangement by the bandmaster.

Although there is a great deal of similarity between the brass band repertoire and the middle-class musical tastes that ran parallel to it—art music, quadrilles, waltzes, and so on—there are certain types of popular Victorian music that seldom appear as arrangements for brass band. There were few arrangements of music hall songs, with the exception of minstrelsy tunes, and one seldom encounters arrangements of domestic song, even though this repertoire was hugely popular and widely available through the same distribution networks as operatic repertoire. However, some English music which had its origins as solo song did give rise to transcriptions; songs by Sir Henry Bishop seem to have been particularly popular, and Sullivan's 'The Lost Chord' is often found in sensitive arrangements for brass band.

There are obvious reasons why contests contributed to the standardization of the brass band repertoire. The cross-fertilization of ideas brought about by the congregation of many brass bands also had other effects. Such occasions provided opportunities for the creation of a common understanding of the musical idiom of the brass band, and of the instruments in it. Many of the brass band contest pieces that survive from the nineteenth century make extensive demands on players, not just in requiring technical agility and a command of wide dynamic and pitch ranges, but because they also assume that brass band musicians had considerable stamina. The players in the Cyfarthfa Band were required to play *complete* symphonies (all four movements) by Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn. Besses o' th' Barn Band, under Alexander Owen, were tested with opera selections which lasted for thirty-five or forty minutes at a time.

In the last two decades of the century, the standard instrumentation that is still used for contests and by publishers of brass band music today—a mixture of cornets, saxhorn-type tenor and bass instruments, and trombones—was formulated. Publishers, perhaps most influentially the Liverpool-based Wright and Round, following the practices of some of the major northern bands—especially those which were conducted by the three greatest conductors of the period, John Gladney, Edwin Swift, and Alexander Owen—moved towards, and then established, a common system of instrumentation. Confirmation of the widespread acceptance by contesting bands of this standard ensemble is found in publications later in the century such as Lodge's *The Brass Band at a Glance*, which not only lists the instruments used, but

<sup>133</sup> The Cyfarthfa Band, for example, won a set of journals in 1860, but continued to play from manuscript part books which contained many of the titles included in the journals.

also its clefs (treble for all instruments except trombones), transpositions, and ranges.<sup>134</sup>

It would be wholly misleading, however, to give the impression that brass bands became comprehensively uniform at this time. J. Ord Hume wrote in 1900 of ‘the remote village band which is generally composed of an unlimited number, from ten upwards’. Such bands probably outnumbered the contesting bands which used the ‘standard instrumentation’. ‘Contesting’, said Ord Hume, ‘is in my opinion, the only way in which to raise the standard of moderate bands.’ But many, even most, of these bands may never have competed. Their instrumentation varied as players left or joined. These bands were still playing from ‘their favourite journals’, and had enough of them to ‘paper the walls of their band rooms with music’.<sup>135</sup> The Cyfarthfa Band was still playing and adding to its manuscript band books in 1908, though it was not routinely entering contests. The music it added was as demanding as much of the rest of the repertoire, showing that, in some cases at least, contest success was not the only indicator of technical ability.

The mediators of musical tastes among brass band people by the late 1840s were the middle classes—as purveyors of printed music, or, in the case of private bands, as patrons. The repertoire played by the Distins and by Jullien’s soloists usually, but not always, centred on dance music, particularly quadrilles, waltzes, and polkas, which were the most popular dances of the period. Pieces such as these were turned out in numbers by a buoyant music industry. Hundreds of institutions and topical events were honoured by having a polka or quadrille named after them, the Great Exhibition of 1851, and the Crystal Palace itself, proving to be popular sources of inspiration for works such as the *Quadrille of All Nations* (?c.1851) by W. Wilson, and *The Great International Exhibition Quadrille* (published in 1862) by J. Pridham. Another popular practice was to use operatic themes as the basis for dance music. Thus titles like *Lucrezia Quadrille* (based on a theme from *Lucrezia Borgia*) and *Lucia Polka* (based on a theme from *Lucia di Lammermoor*) abound.

Dance music found in brass band repertoires can be taken as having had two distinct functions, both of which reflect their origins in middle-class practices. First, the music was quite literally danced to. In Merthyr in the mid-nineteenth century, the wagon sheds of the Crawshay’s ironworks were regularly decorated with flowers and transformed into sumptuous ballrooms where the dignitaries of South Wales and the West Country danced to the most popular music of the day, played by the Cyfarthfa Band.<sup>136</sup> It is likely that many of the very early ‘brass’ bands were, in effect, dance bands dedicated to this sort of purpose. However, some dance music was used in a non-functional way as

<sup>134</sup> E. A. Lodge, *The Brass Band at a Glance* (Huddersfield, 1895).

<sup>135</sup> J. Ord Hume, *Chats on Amateur Bands* (London, 1900), ch. 1.

<sup>136</sup> These events are depicted in water-colours at the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum.

instrumental music. Quadrilles, and more particularly, polkas, also formed the basis of instrumental virtuoso solos. In the same way that dance music metamorphosed into the first independent ‘absolute’ wind instrument music in the sixteenth century, by being subjected to decoration, embellishment, division, and other (initially) extemporized conventions, so polkas formed one of the first vehicles for cornet virtuosity through the application of the long-established but spectacular brass techniques of double and triple tonguing. It was to middle-class audiences, and anyone else lucky enough to be in earshot, that Koenig and the Distins performed such pieces, and, though they set a standard that amateur players could not at first match, they established an impression of what constituted virtuosity on brass instruments, and what type of technique was associated with it. It is probably a coincidence that the polka was introduced into London in 1844, the same year as Adolphe Sax’s instruments, but it is less likely that the involvement of Jullien in the popularity of both the instrument and the dance had much to do with chance.

From the 1850s, when bands became much more prolific, the repertoire and musical tastes tended to be shaped by three main forces: the bandmasters, the music publishers, and, to a lesser extent, the organizers of contests. Because the only people who bought brass band music were the bands, there is little direct evidence for the popularity of particular pieces or types of music among audiences. Concert programmes provide some hints, but they do not help very much. Some pieces may have been performed frequently because bands liked playing them rather than because audiences liked hearing them, and few brass band concerts were reviewed by newspapers. Music which was fun to play may not have been such fun to listen to. However, the frequency with which certain types of music—Italian opera, for example—and particular works, such as selections from *Lucrezia Borgia*, occur in printed and manuscript sources makes it difficult to draw any other conclusion than that such pieces were well received by the people who heard them. Contest promoters influenced the music and even the techniques of brass bands, because they were the organizers of the events that gave bands their most conspicuous exposure. The music played at contests had to entertain and exhibit a particular *type* of virtuosity. Any brass player knows that one of the most difficult types of music to play is that which requires very slow movement across wide pitch intervals at a very quiet dynamic, but this type of virtuosity does not draw gasps of admiration. Spectacular runs over scalic passages are much more immediately impressive.

From the time that brass bands became a common and widespread movement, their membership was largely made up of people from the skilled working classes. From about the same time, these same classes produced their own musical leaders. Conductors at the Crystal Palace Contest of 1860 had to indicate their occupation on the contest forms. They included thirteen who entered their occupation variously as innkeeper, lead-ore smelter, warp

dresser, heald knitter, woollen spinner, publican, manufacturer, tailor, schoolmaster, miner, cloth percher, blacksmith, carpet department [worker], joiner, cloth operative, and spade finisher.<sup>137</sup>

A number of highly distinguished and very influential brass band conductors emerged. Of the earlier conductors, James Melling, a Manchester-based 'music professor', enjoyed some prominence. He worked closely with the contest promoter, Enderby Jackson, on a number of projects. Melling was conductor of Stalybridge Old Band. He was reputed to be one of the main suppliers of manuscript music to Yorkshire bands in the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>138</sup> He was also a composer: his *Orynthia* was the test piece for the 1855 Belle Vue contest. This was the first time that a common test piece was set, although no copy of it is known to have survived.

The movement also produced composers and arrangers who came from a lower-class background. Enderby Jackson, who was the son of a candle maker, is best remembered as a promoter, but he was also a composer whose *Yorkshire Waltzes*, *Bristol Waltzes*, *Venetian Waltzes*, and *Volunteer Quadrilles* were specifically aimed at brass bands. A composer called J. Perry wrote marches for many Scottish contests in the nineteenth century, and in the Yorkshire textile district there were a number of prolific working-class composers of brass band music. These included Edward Newton, a textile worker who wrote and published over 300 marches; George Wadsworth, a monumental mason, whose works made up a large part of the catalogue of the Rochdale publisher, J. Frost & Son; and William Hesling, a weaver.<sup>139</sup> Joseph Parry, very much an establishment figure by the time he composed *The Tydfil Overture* for the Cyfarthfa Band in the late 1870s, was the son of an illiterate coal miner, and became the first Professor of Music at the University College of Wales.

Richard Smith, the publisher of the *Champion Brass Band Journal*, was a noted conductor. He was engaged by Titus Salt to train his Saltaire Band. By 1861, Smith was enough of a celebrity to earn a major profile in the *Illustrated News of the World*.<sup>140</sup> Another conductor who seems to have been particularly respected was George Ellis, who was associated with a number of bands, but particularly with Bacup Band between 1869 and 1871, when it won thirteen consecutive contests.<sup>141</sup>

However, the three most influential northern brass band conductors in the last quarter of the century were Alexander Owen, Edwin Swift, and John Gladney; between them they dominated contests for decades. Gladney was the only one of the three—as far as we know—who came from a musical family.

<sup>137</sup> Ainscoe Collection, kindly conveyed by Arnold Myers. The surviving entrance forms for the 1861, 1862, and 1863 contests show a similar picture. The conductor of the 20th Shropshire Rifle Volunteer Corps Band, George Hudson, was a 'shoddy dealer'.

<sup>138</sup> Scott, 'Evolution of the Brass Band', 214. <sup>139</sup> Russell, 'Popular Music Societies', 347 ff.

<sup>140</sup> Marr, *Music for the People*, 128. <sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

He was born in 1839, the son of the bandmaster of the 30th East Lancashire Regiment. He started playing the flute at 8, and the violin at 9, saw a great deal of service abroad, and travelled with opera companies as a clarinet player. For some time he was the clarinet player and conductor of the Scarborough Spa Band.<sup>142</sup> He played the clarinet with the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, and this was his professional base until the end of the century. He was associated with many of the top bands, and at the time of his death in 1911 was widely referred to as ‘the father of brass band movement’.

The other two men had more humble origins. Alexander Owen was brought up in an orphanage in Swinton, and was taught to play the cornet at an early age by a military bandmaster.<sup>143</sup> Edwin Swift was born in Linthwaite in 1843. He left school at the age of 9 to become a shuttler, and he continued to work in mills until he was 32 years old. His first musical experience was in a drum and fife band; he then learnt the cornet. He played for the Linthwaite Band, and was principal cornet and bandmaster at the age of 14. He led Linthwaite to victory over Gladney’s Meltham Mills Band in 1874.<sup>144</sup>

Gladney, Swift, and Owen conducted and trained several bands. Other conductors spent their entire careers with just one. George Livesey, for example, conducted no band other than Cyfarthfa in the fifty years following his first association with it. Throughout the country, there were distinguished musicians of working-class origins who exercised great influence on the musical life of the communities in which they worked.

#### MANUFACTURERS AND MILITARY BANDMASTERS

Although local band trainers and conductors contributed significantly to the fashioning of the brass band movement, there were other influences which were less direct but equally potent. In the second half of the nineteenth century, music publishers exercised a defining influence on musical taste. Most were based in London, which was also the centre for almost all brass instrument manufacture. There were firms in the north of England, but the most successful had London attachments. Richard Smith, whose Hull-based *Champion Journal* was so successful, was himself resident in London from 1878,<sup>145</sup> and Joseph Higham, who had traded since the 1840s from Victoria Bridge, Manchester, eventually had a London address. The most important exception to the metropolitan strangle-hold on banding was the Liverpool firm of Wright and Round.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> D. J. Lamora, ‘Alexander Owen 1851–1920’, typescript copy at Manchester City Library (F781 685 Owl). There is some doubt over the details of the early life of Owen.

<sup>144</sup> Anon., *Life and Career of the Late Mr Edwin Swift* (Milnsbridge, 1904).

<sup>145</sup> Russell and Elliot, *The Brass Band Movement*, 143.

It has been argued that brass instrument manufacturing was based in London because London was the port of entry for raw materials. This argument is not convincing. Several manufacturing industries in the north of England relied on raw materials that had to be transported across country from distant ports of entry, a problem which, in any case, became considerably diminished with the development of the railway network. An alternative explanation as to why so much of the production of music and instruments for brass bands was based in London, when so many of the bands were in the north and west, is simply that the established London firms were successful in holding the market. A great deal of that success can be attributed to the close and not entirely ethical relationship between the publishing and manufacturing companies and the bandmasters of the regular army. Many of the regular army bandmasters were themselves involved in an uneasy relationship with their military employers. This unease emanated from two factors: first, there was concern over the number of foreign musicians who controlled army bands; and secondly there was significant disquiet about the extent to which the (civilian) army bandmasters were using their association with the military in order to earn commissions from instrument manufacturers. The initiators of this corruption were the instrument manufacturers, who influenced the army appointment mechanisms by acting as agents between regiments and foreign bandmasters. The *Musical Times* was advertising Boosey's 'Register of Bandmasters' in 1854. Charles Boosey was prominent in these dealings. His position was made perfectly plain to a prospective bandmaster:

We have but one stipulation to make with you if you accept a situation through our influence. We do not ask for any remuneration but we do expect you to support our Firm exclusively, that is to say you will send us all orders for any instruments etc. that you require, for we need not remind you that Bandmasters have considerable influence with officers.<sup>146</sup>

It was eventually clear to the office of 'HRH, the Commander in Chief', that the high cost of maintaining bands was due to commanding officers leaving 'their dealings with the instrument makers chiefly in the hands of bandmasters', and a letter from the Adjutant General to Commanding Officers dated 24 February 1858 recommended that, in future, any bandmaster who, under any pretence whatever, received discount, fee, remuneration, or reward, should be subject to instant dismissal. The same letter suggested that instead of using instrument manufacturers as their agents for the hiring of bandmasters, 'they would do better by advertising in the public papers'.<sup>147</sup>

The foundation of what eventually became the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall was stimulated by this need to train more native-born

<sup>146</sup> Quoted in Binns, *A Hundred Years*, 27, 28. The letter is not dated.

<sup>147</sup> University of Glasgow, Farmer Papers, MS 115, 13-14.

bandmasters, but these, too, were active and influential in the brass band movement. From its first issue in 1887, the *British Bandsman* pointed to army bands as the standard to which amateur bands should aspire. Many of the full-time army band conductors also received fees for being the conductors of volunteer bands. Others adjudicated at band contests or arranged music for brass band test pieces. Regular army men had intimate links with publishers. The majority of the London-based band publications were edited by them. Chappell's *Brass Band Journal* was arranged by W. Winterbottom of the Royal Marines; Fred Godfrey of the Coldstream Guards was also involved with Chappell's; Wessell's had J. R. Tutton of the Royal Horse Guards on its staff; D'Almaine used J. G. Jones of the 16th Lancers; and James Smyth of the Royal Artillery also put out arrangements. The Godfrey family was particularly prodigious. Charles Godfrey of the Royal Horse Guards Band was responsible for arranging the test pieces for the Belle Vue contests every year for more than twenty years. Bandmasters occupied musical and social positions which were considerably higher than those occupied by musicians in the north of England and in other parts of the country distant from London. They were familiar with styles, repertoires, and tastes recently imported from abroad and fashionable in London.

#### CLASS AND TASTE

Throughout this chapter, I have highlighted what I see as critically important influences on the brass band movement. Many of these influences originated with or were inspired by the middle classes. It is difficult to imagine how brass bands could have existed at all without the essentially capitalist-inspired motives of inventors, instrument manufacturers, and publishers. It is equally true that the music that was played by brass bands in Victorian Britain to a large extent mirrored middle-class tastes. Even the relationship between bands and the volunteer movement, a brief but important phase in band history, was primarily inspired by middle-class notions of patriotism.

It would be entirely wrong, though, to give the impression that the working classes were mere pawns in this story, or that individual and community working-class culture was passive. Indeed, one of the features of the brass band movement in Victorian Britain, a feature that makes it similar to other working-class leisure and cultural practices, was the extent to which it received this 'downward flow' of cultural products and made them its own, investing them with a new and lasting identity.

It is worth recalling that the brass band movement stimulated the first mass involvement by the working classes in performances of instrumental art music. This achievement (at least to this extent) was probably unequalled in any country where Western art culture had a stronghold. Brass bands had inspired the composition of no 'great' original works, but the fact that they



played art music in transcription should not detract from, or devalue, this extraordinary accomplishment. In open-air concerts and contests, tens of thousands of working-class people had their first experience of 'serious' instrumental music through brass bands. The estimates given by newspapers for the number of people attending such contests need cautious treatment, but *The Times* estimated admissions of more than 22,000 for the second day of the 1860 Crystal Palace contest.<sup>148</sup> The 1864 Belle Vue contest is reported to have drawn an audience of 25,000.<sup>149</sup> The prices for such events were relatively low, certainly in the range common for other forms of popular mass entertainment.<sup>150</sup> Overwhelmingly, the repertoire consisted of arrangements of classical music. Audiences, irrespective of their individual wealth, sex, or literacy, had unequivocal access to high art music in this way.

There were additional and more subtle relationships between brass bands and their audiences. Virtuoso performers were of the same social class, and often the same community, as their audiences. There emerged from the players in brass bands a number who possessed a special virtuosity. These players became musical heroes; they were often the focus of community pride, and exemplified working-class achievement and potential. From the 1880s, the band press started devoting space to profiles of such players, who thus gained national celebrity among bandsmen. In due course, brass band players would enter and eventually monopolize the principal positions in the leading professional orchestras of Britain. Though they carried with them the musical style of the brass band, they were technically comparable to the best professional players. As we discuss later in this book, these players were to have a defining influence on the idiom of brass instruments in British mainstream art music.

The symbolic association of brass instruments with the male gender seems to have held strong in the Victorian period. Certainly there is no evidence of women or girls playing in brass bands in Britain, though there is abundant evidence of female brass players in the USA in the same period.<sup>151</sup> Because banding was essentially a working-class activity, these instruments never made it into the bourgeois drawing room either. One piece of evidence suggests that such an initiative was tested. In the late nineteenth century, the London publisher John Alvey Turner brought out *Turner's Cornet Journal* at a cost of 1s. 6d., a price comparable to that charged for drawing-room ballads. The works included Koenig's famous *Post Horn Gallop* and a number of lyrical

<sup>148</sup> *The Times* (12 July 1860), 9.      <sup>149</sup> Taylor, *Brass Bands*, 61.

<sup>150</sup> The admission charge for the first day of the Crystal Palace contest in 1860 was 2s. 6d. (*The Times*, 10 July 1860). The second day cost only 1s. and 6d. for children. The 1s. entrance fee, with children at half price, was then held for several years. Promoters also negotiated concessionary rail excursions with the railway companies.

<sup>151</sup> See M. H. Hazen and R. M. Hazen, *The Music Men: An Illustrated History of Brass Bands in America, 1800–1920* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987).

melodies. The distinctive feature of this publication is that it is dedicated to a female cornet player, Miss Beatrice Pettit. She is illustrated on the frontispiece as woman of beauty, grace, and taste (see Fig. 1.10). The publication is clearly aimed at a domestic rather than brass band market.<sup>152</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, brass bands had become a popular music tradition that, to a very large extent, was based on the performance of high art music. In the twentieth century, the idiomatic repertoire developed quickly, but the number of brass bands declined. One is bound to ask whether any part of the legacy of the nineteenth century contributed to this decline, and the subsequent residence of the brass band movement in a more or less self-contained cultural ghetto. A large part of this phenomenon can be attributed to the centrality of contesting in banding. Contests were the principal forum for brass bands. They raised standards of playing and contributed to the establishment of commonly held ideas about musical idioms and conventions. They were also primarily responsible for defining the purpose of bands—at least the more ambitious of them—as the pursuit of musical and technical excellence.

There were, however, negative consequences which were hinted at as early as 1859 in the title of Charles Dickens's thinly veiled satire on brass band contests, 'A Musical Prize Fight'.<sup>153</sup> Contests, while encouraging virtuosity, encouraged a particular *type* of virtuosity, leading the style of brass bands to become a stereotype. They fashioned a strict and lasting orthodoxy—musical and social—which may well have contributed to the reluctance of the major composers to develop the genre. As other authors in the book point out, a number of major composers wrote a work for brass bands—but none wrote more than one. Also the notion of contesting as a *raison d'être* for brass bands, implying as it does a set of criteria that can be weighed up, measured, and scored, is anathema to the basic aesthetics of high art.

An even darker side to band contesting was seen in the frequent outbreaks of violence that accompanied the announcement of contest results. Such scenes caused anguish to many who genuinely and accurately recognized that they would undermine what, by the late nineteenth century, was seen as a musical and organizational achievement of the working classes. Sam Cope, founder of the *British Bandsman*, and a self-made musician who advocated forward-looking, benevolent, and educational schemes for bandsmen, and who saw 'No reason why Tom who plays the cornet, should be in a lower social or musical grade than Dick, who plays a violin',<sup>154</sup> lamented the 'jealous rivalry' of contests, and published numerous articles castigating the gratuitous indiscipline that often marked their conclusion.

<sup>152</sup> *Turner's Cornet Journal* No. 1, compiled and arranged by A. Lemoine (London: John Alvey Turner, n.d.).

<sup>153</sup> 'A Musical Prize Fight', *All the Year Round* (12 Nov. 1859), 65–8. The article is usually attributed to Dickens, who was the editor of the magazine, but it is not proven that he wrote it.

<sup>154</sup> *British Bandsman* (28 Nov. 1908), 597.

While the prominence of contests may have been a self-inflicted constraint on the movement's wider development, there were other changes taking place at the end of the century which had broader class and cultural relevances. These changes were encouraged by the complex array of signals that emerged in the closing decades of the century, enabling certain types of activity to be seen as 'popular' and others as 'art'. These denominators were often synonymous with perceptions of 'working-classness' and 'middle-classness', and have been dealt with at length by cultural theorists and historians. This process of redefining the cultural status of certain activities owes much to what Eric Hobsbawm and others have called 'the invention of traditions'<sup>155</sup> that occurred from the 1870s onwards. In this process, brass bands became aligned with events such as May Day, trade-union demonstrations, and miners' galas, which epitomized working-class identity and behaviour. The categorization was further galvanized by the establishment of class-based musical developments such as subscription concerts, and a tendency of some musical institutions—the universities and some conservatories, for example—to keep brass bands at arm's length. This, in turn, gave orchestral playing a higher level of respectability than playing in a brass band. Consequently, by the turn of the century, playing in and listening to brass bands was one of the leisure pursuits that had, in a comparatively short space of time, acquired an identity sufficiently developed for it to be recognized as characteristic of the behaviour of the British working class.

<sup>155</sup> See e.g. E. Hobsbawm, 'Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe 1870–1914', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). See also Dave Harker, *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British Folksong 1700 to the Present Day* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985).