

THE YANKEE BRASS BAND
Music from Mid-Nineteenth Century America

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The American Brass Band Movement

by Jon Newsom

(The following notes are excerpted from an essay by Jon Newsom entitled "The American Brass Band Movement," which appeared in the spring 1979 edition of The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress.)

By the 1850s music in America was becoming big business. Both amateur and professional musical organizations were thriving. And the eminent Boston music journalist, John Sullivan Dwight, together with numerous colleagues, was promoting, guiding, and frequently condemning popular music fashions in the course of reporting and polemicizing on the brass band movement in America before, during, and after the Civil War.

"When shall we have music for the People?" asks Dwight in 1852. "Music that all who will may hear, without money and without price; free to all ears, as the sparkling fountain on the [Boston] Common is, to all eyes."¹ But by the following year he reports with a sense of growing horror on the development of a new kind of popular music-making that threatens to fulfill his dream with a vengeance nearly as cruel, one is led to suppose, as the curse on the sorcerer's apprentice. "All at once," he writes, "the idea of a Brass Band shot forth: and from this prolific germ sprang up a multitude of its kind in every part of the land, like the crop of iron men from the infernal seed of the dragon's teeth. And, as if the invention of new and deadlier implements of war, which came out about the same time, had hardened men's hearts, all the softer companions of the savage science [the woodwinds] were banished."² And later in the same issue he asks rhetorically: "Are the business and politics of the day so harsh, that the tones of our street music must, in correspondence, renounce all their sincerity and gentleness, and become mere bluster?"³ Indeed they must have, for three months later he reports on the summer concerts on the common, with some chagrin: "The experiment succeeds beyond doubt or cavil," adding that "the music might be better, with larger and more especial organization, but under the circumstances it has been very good, and has been drunk in with every sign of attention and delight by a continually increasing crowd of listeners. There could not have been fewer than ten thousand persons, of all ages and classes, on the common the two last times."⁴ By the summer of 1857 Dwight is nearly beside himself. "How can we continue the discussion of Brass Bands," he complains, melting, we imagine, in the mid-August heat, "in such intensity of dog-days! It is aggravating to think of them. But the Promenade Concerts at the Music Hall go on, with more and more success, and prove what fine thing might be done."⁵ The next week he adds: "We want volumes of sound, but not folio volumes."⁶

Nothing, however, offends Dwight's sensibilities so much as the introduction of brass bands at serious occasions such as this one sponsored by his Alma Mater: "Last week we had commencement--commencement at old Harvard--and as usual, a Boston band assisted at the exercises. But--Ichabod!--the glory has departed. Brass, brass, brass,--nothing but brass."⁷

The bands that Dwight sought so consistently to reform or to have relegated to what he considered their proper place--the street--were what he called military as opposed to civil. And he ascribes to them not only a penchant for music of a warlike nature but dependence on the support of the military.

"It is the military employment," he writes in 1856, "which creates and supports all our bands."⁸ In assessing Dwight's statement we must remember that bands, whether made up of full-time professional musicians or amateurs, were not part of the U.S. militia before the Civil War, the years during which Dwight wrote, and that they could be and indeed were supported in many ways other than by military officers. Band concerts were supported by private subscription, public funds administered by local elected officials, and, even during the Civil War, by private industry. In 1862 band concerts in New York's Central Park were paid for by the railroads to increase fare income by transporting out-of-town concertgoers.⁹

Band Instruments

The phenomenal rise of the brass band in mid-nineteenth-century America can be better understood if we trace its antecedents and some of the technical developments that produced the type of brasswind family from soprano to bass that was the staple of our bands in the Civil War era.

The aristocracy of colonial America supported the kind of ensemble for which Mozart and Haydn wrote their [...] open-air music under royal patronage. Thomas Jefferson, for example, wished to establish such an ensemble at Monticello for the entertainment of his household and suggested instrumentation to improve the U.S. Marine Band. Clarinets and oboes carried the melodic line; natural horns and bassoons gave harmonic support. The same kind of band provided military music during the American Revolution and for at least three decades afterward. Thus in one sense the wind band, once the privilege of the European aristocracy, was gradually acquired, unceremoniously but intact and in an orderly fashion, by the American people for whom it became a symbol of their newly acquired social and political status as well as a source of entertainment. A reminiscence of one of the last vestiges of this tradition in America appears in an anonymous article entitled "The Boston Band" in the *Boston Musical Gazette* of July 25, 1838:

Full well do I remember when I first heard the sound of a Clarinet, French Horn and Bassoon: it was at a regimental muster, where I went with my father, as a spectator. It was reported all around the country for weeks beforehand, that the Boston Band was to be at muster, being hired at great expense by Capt. Taylor, the liberal and noble-spirited commander of the new troop of Cavalry. This band was all the topic of conversation among the boys, and many a luckless urchin had to do penance for listening to the wonderful stories of its performances, instead of attending to his task.

At length the wished-for day arrived, and a glorious day it was, most clear and bright...we saw a brilliant company of high-horse prancing over the plain. When they had arrived within half a mile of the parade ground, they slackened pace, and the music struck up Washington's March....The march was continued until the company came in front of the public house, when it halted, and Capt. Taylor gave orders for Yankee Doodle. This fairly bewitched the crowd, and they rent the air with huzzas....¹⁰

The melodic dependency of the band on the reed instruments was gradually undermined after 1810 when a Dubliner named Joseph Halliday introduced his keyed bugle. Like the earlier development of the chromatic woodwinds, in which the length of the bore, and hence the fundamental with its possible harmonics, could be instantly changed by opening or closing one or more keys, Halliday's

invention was nothing new in principle. The keyed trumpet, for example, was already known. Halliday simply cut holes in the side of a bugle¹¹ and provided lever-operated padded keys for opening and closing them to get a full chromatic scale. Without having any special claims to originality, he had produced a good instrument at the right time which found an immediate market. It was only a matter of time before a full family of such instruments was developed: the ophicleides.¹²

In America the chromatic horns had gained at least an equal footing with the woodwinds as principal instruments as far as bands were concerned by 1835; we now generally consider that year, in which the first all-brass bands are known to have been established, as the beginning of the so-called brass band era.

Of course, not everyone greeted this development with enthusiasm. As the brasswinds became more homogeneous in sound, the loss of a band with highly individualized members was, as we have learned from reading Dwight, lamented by some. This is made more evident in the following excerpt from an 1893 article by William R. Bayley in the Philadelphia Evening Star. Bayley, who was an active bandsman from 1833 to the 1890s, recalls:

The average bands [during the 1840s] consisted of fifteen pieces--two E-flats bugles, 1st and 2nd French horns (without valves), the post horn, and E-flat trumpet. We had the brilliant tone of the slide B-flat trombone and F-bass trombone for bass, ophicleide [sic] (brass), and the serpent (a wooden instrument with keys), cymbals, snare and bass drums.

At the risk of being considered old fashioned I have protested against the summary banishment of many of these instruments. I have contended that all change is not improvement. These instruments, differing in the principle of their construction, had a different quality of tone, and therein is the strength of my plea. Band instruments of today are much better made and easier to learn, but from the E-flat cornet to the E-flat bass they are all constructed on the same principle, and have therefore the same kind of tone, only deeper, of course, as they descent.¹³

The fact that Bayley, writing in 1893, speaks of the homogeneous brasswind instrumentation indicates that the brass band was still predominant, at least in his mind.

In the 1840s a Frenchman, Adolphe Sax, inventor of the familiar saxophone, was one of several makers who developed a family of chromatic valved bugles--eventually called saxhorns--that combined the qualities of even timbre throughout their range, accurate intonation, effectiveness as ensemble instruments, and a degree of facility that made them playable without extraordinary technical ability while, at the same time, having the capability of satisfying the demands of a virtuoso. Sax was by no means the first to work on a chromatic horn. Inventors in Europe and the British Isles had been working with varying degrees of success in key-and valve-system chromatic brasswinds before the beginning of the nineteenth century. But Sax's success was remarkably complete, owing in no small part to the fact that he produced a good set of instruments at just the right time.

There were other factors as well that favored the acceptance of the new chromatic brasswinds. For one, there was already a demand for them not so much among orchestral musicians as among military bandsmen and a large number of aspiring amateurs. Valve horns in the soprano register--the French

cornet a pistons and the German soprano Flugelhorn--had already found a secure place in the bands of Europe, and an outstanding quintet of Englishmen, the Distins, was to publicize Sax's new family of horns through their widely successful public performances on the instruments. Thus, although families of saxhorns--and their German counterparts the Flugelhorns--were not destined to find a place in the orchestra¹⁴ they were to become standard band instruments for years to come, and not least of all in Great Britain and America, where [...] interest in the formation of amateur brass bands was growing at such a rate that by the mid-1850s it had reached the proportions of a significant popular movement.

Band Music

That there was a proliferation of brass bands with all the necessary hardware in mid-nineteenth-century America there is no doubt. But what of the hundreds of thousands of pages of music composed, arranged, published, or otherwise distributed from which the bands learned and played their parts? We regret to say, without unduly disparaging those who provide the present writer with a most worthy excuse for his profession, that paper, the fragile substance to which we commit many valuable records of our civilization, did not often survive the handling of practical musicians.

Faced with a paucity of documents, we offer a brief account of some of the most notable remnants in the collections of the Music Division [of the Library of Congress] which document that part of our musical past which is under consideration here.

In 1844 Elias Howe published in Boston his *First Part of the Musician's Companion*. It contained a number of "new and popular pieces in 6 and 8 parts, for a brass band, viz.: E-flat bugle, B-flat bugle, B-flat post horn, B-flat corneopon, tenor trombone, bass trombone, first ophicleide [sic], second ophicleide, & c."¹⁵ These are printed in full score with movable type in the oblong format common for collections of sacred and some secular vocal music of the time.

Two years later, E.K. Eaton published, in elegantly engraved parts, *Twelve Pieces of Harmony for Military Brass Bands*. The instrumentation is larger than Howe's, calling for "E-flat bugle, 2 B-flat bugles, 1 corneopon [sic] or post horn, 2 E-flat trumpets, 2 French horns, 2 alto ophicleides [sic], 3 trombones, 2 bass ophicleides, and side drums."¹⁶ The pieces are rather difficult and demand equally high standards of musicianship from the entire ensemble.

By 1849, Allen Dodworth was instructing readers of the New York music journal *Message Bird* on the formation of brass bands.¹⁷ In 1853 Dodworth published his *Brass Band School*, complete with scores for a number of pieces calling for the same instrumentation advocated in the *Message Bird*. Although he takes into account the variety of brasswinds available, including the keyed bugles and ophicleides, it is the saxhorns that get the highest recommendation. "I have always, in my own mind," he writes, "classed Trumpets, Post Horns, Trombones and French Horns, as supernumeraries; for, since the introduction of [keyed] Bugles, Cornets, Ebor Cornos and Sax Horns, they are no longer depended on for the principal parts." In forming a band of up to fourteen players, he advises: "Let nothing but Sax Horns, Ebor Cornos and Cornets, or instruments of like character be used, that is, valve instruments of large calibre."¹⁸

Here, he also mentions the special invention of the over-the-shoulder style horn. "In selecting the instruments, attention should be paid to the use intended; if for military purposes only, those with bells

behind, over the shoulder, are preferable, as they throw all the tone to those who are marching to it, but for any other purpose are not so good. These were first introduced by the Dodworth family in the year 1838." The application of this style probably was restricted to the trombones at first, but its popularity continued through the 1880s, for we find such instruments advertised in dealers' catalogs, along with the bell upright and bell front models, as late as 1888.¹⁹

In 1853 Firth, Pond and Company of New York began the publication of its Brass Band Journal, probably the first American publication of saxhorn pieces. The longevity of these attractive compositions and arrangements by G.W.W. Friederich is attested to by the fact that they were still being offered for sale in the 1870s.

A similar publication appeared in Cincinnati in 1859. It consisted, for the most part, of popular dances and quicksteps arranged from piano pieces for a band of from six to twelve players and was published by W.C. Peters & Sons as Peters' Sax-Horn Journal.

Yet, the most challenging band music of this period is found not in published form but in manuscript part books.

The Civil War Bands

If ever there was a hope or danger of the demise of brass bands, the outbreak of war decisively cancelled or at least postponed the possibility. Throughout the long period of hostilities--both musical and otherwise--Dwight, our well-bred Yankee critic, maintained an attitude of gentlemanly stoicism. And so, for further news of development in the brass band world we must turn to accounts, usually fleeting references, in regimental histories. Many are anecdotal and told, often for mere comic relief, years after the event. Those drawn from letters and diaries have the better claim to reliability as well as to that spontaneity that brings us closer to the participants in the events recalled. In drawing from these sources it is our intention to have the words of eyewitnesses convey a sense of how bands functioned during the Civil War at home, in camp, and in battle.

According to the recollections of a musician printed in the Boston Transcript (August 9, 1890), "inducements were held out to quicken the enlistment of recruits by publicly announcing that a famous band would be attached to some particular regiment," as if such inducements were necessary. Edward Everett, observing the excitement in Boston, guessed that Lincoln's call might bring half a million volunteers. It is more likely that the employment of bands, like the wearing of flamboyant costumes that passed for military uniforms early in the war, was regarded by many as an appropriately festive gesture in the face of preparations for what was assumed would be a glorious and speedy victory.

But, unlike the bright costumes which, in most cases, gave way to regulation uniforms, bands and their music became a more sought after commodity as the hostilities wore on. Dwight's Journal, in one of its few references to bands in the war, notes on September 28, 1861, that

Gilmore's²⁰ celebrated band has been engaged to accompany Col. Stephenson's Regiment to the war. The band will consist of sixty-eight pieces, including twenty drummers and twelve buglers. Such a band was never enjoyed by a regiment before, and it will probably incite the men to heroic deeds if loyal men can need any new stimulus in such a time as this. The band

will appear three times more before the Boston public at the Promenade Concerts.²¹

Gilmore's contract was with the 24th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry and seems to have involved enlistment and, hence, the duty not only of playing in camp but of following the regiment into the field--and even the heat of battle, where he and his men were put to work, as most bandsmen were, as hospital corpsmen.²² On his return, a year later, Gilmore advertised a concert in which his band--less one member, presumably lost in action--would perform

the gems of such music as have floated over the wild waves and mingled with the howling winds of Hatteras; such patriotic airs as fell upon the ears of three thousand rebel prisoners, and echoed through the dense woods of Roanoke; such strains as followed our victorious arms at Newbern, and vibrated through the deserted streets of that once fair city; and, more than all, such music as has revived the drooping spirits of many a weary soldier, or soothed the pain of many a wounded patriot.²³

Another way in which regimental bands were formed, by far the cheapest, was by drawing upon the resources available from among the men in each company. With ten companies to a regiment and two musicians allowed to each company--that is to say the fifers, buglers, and drummers--one could put together some kind of band of twenty men or more, if the officers agreed to detail to the regimental band musically qualified men who had not enlisted as musicians.

This practice became especially popular after the passage in Congress of a bill on July 17, 1862, sections of which ordered the mustering out of regimental bands. The bill was approved by the president and announced in the War Department's General Order 91 of July 29, 1862. Rauscher's observation is interesting, although his band was mustered in after the order of July 29:

At the beginning of the war every regiment...had full brass bands, some of them numbering as high as fifty pieces. When it is considered that in every brigade there were from four to five regiments, three brigades in one division and three divisions in each corps, an aggregate of from thirty-six to forty bands is shown for every corps. When a division was encamped in a small space, which was frequently the case when on the march, and the band of each regiment performing at the same time at Regimental Headquarters, the effect of the confusion of sounds produced can hardly be imagined. Whilst this was an unnecessary arrangement and very expensive to the government, it kept a host of non-combatants in the rear of the army. Congress, however, at an early day passed an act abolishing all regimental bands in the volunteer service, with the provision that each brigade should be entitled to a band at the headquarters. It so happened that when the order of disbandment reached the Army [of the Potomac], the bands had seen considerable and hard service on the Peninsula, under General McClellan, and therefore the men gladly accepted their discharges and almost to a man went home. As a consequence the army was left with scarcely any music.²⁴

A band of the size described by Rauscher would have been double the number of twenty-four musicians authorized by General Order 49 of the War Department, August 3, 1861. By October of the same year, the War Department had already begun to trim the number of regimental bands by forbidding their further enlistment.²⁵ Quite possibly, the order was in response to actual abuses of General Order 49 resulting not only in a proliferation of bands but in monster bands full of deadbeats

or nonessential personnel. In any case, by 1862, as the Union faced its greatest crisis from Lee's imminent invasion of the North, the more drastic measure of dropping regimental bands became necessary. Before the order of July 29, there were an estimated 28,428 enlisted musicians in the North. Of these, 14,832 were bandsmen.²⁶ Thereafter, such men, if they were to continue with the regiments, had either to be supported entirely by the members of the regiment or drawn from the musicians authorized as company fifers, buglers, and drummers. Undoubtedly, many compromises were reached in order to maintain regimental bands. Notwithstanding Rauscher's comment that the disbanded musicians "almost to a man went home," bands proliferated and, throughout the war, were heard on all manner of occasions, even during the heat of battle. For example, we read of bands performing service in the trenches. Lieutenant Thompson of the 13th New Hampshire describes an incident occurring just after the battle of Cold Harbor, June 8, 1864:

This evening the Band of the Thirteenth goes into the trenches at the front, and indulges in a "competition concert" with a band that is playing over across in the enemy's trenches. The enemy's Band renders Dixie, Bonnie Blue Flag, My Maryland, and other airs dear to the Southerner's heart. Our Band replies with America, Star Spangled Banner, Old John Brown, etc. After a little time, the enemy's band introduces another class of music; only to be joined almost instantly by our Band with the same tune. All at once the band over there stops, and a rebel battery opens with grape. Very few of our men are exposed, so the enemy wastes his ammunition; while our band continues its playing, all the more earnestly until all their shelling is over.²⁷

Post Civil War Bands

At the close of the war many of the Yankee bands went home, perhaps to regroup as "civic" bands, as brassy as ever (much to the annoyance of John Sullivan Dwight, who resumed his antibrass campaign with his customary vigor), some to participate in a final victory celebration by marching in Washington or some hometown, or joining in the playing of the Star Spangled Banner for the flag raising ceremony at Fort Sumter on April 14, 1865, hours before Lincoln's assassination.

During the war, the quality of military (brass) bands had improved, as Dwight himself acknowledged. "Everyone who walks our Boston streets," he wrote in 1862, "or who attends the war meetings, must have been struck with the great improvement in some of our Military Bands of late...The wonder is where so many musicians come from in these war times, and that while so many go off to the war, more than ever before seem to have sprung up at home."²⁸ Moreover, with the end of the war there was for Patrick Gilmore, once Dwight's fair-haired boy, a golden opportunity to put his promotional genius to work. The specter of monster concerts, consisting of massed bands or instrumental forces impressive for their sheer number, had only peeked over the horizon when the war temporarily arrested its progress in the direction of full-scale looming. In Gilmore's famous "Peace Jubilee" concerts, where thousands of performers entertained simultaneously in a display of acoustic brute force before an audience almost as large as the legion of orchestral and choral talent that confronted it, Dwight found a newer and better target for his arsenal of invective.

On this note, we might end the story of the heyday of the brass band movement in America--or begin any number of others. However, we feel that Dwight, who posthumously has been our virtual coauthor, should be given this opportunity to express the generous side of his nature more fairly:

It is easy to sneer at popular music, and to exalt the education of the ear to be derived from listening to classical or intricate compositions. But while the common people are the listeners to the concerts on the Common, and the class who patronize the great organ, the opera and the oratorio are away at Swampscott and Mount Washington, the preferences of the popular heart have a right to be consulted.²⁹

Notes

1. Dwight's Journal of Music (May 29, 1852): 63.
2. Ibid. (April 16, 1853): 9.
3. Ibid., p. 13.
4. Ibid. (July 16, 1853) 119.
5. Ibid. (August 15, 1857): 159.
6. Ibid. (August 22, 1857): 166.
7. Ibid. (August 2, 1856): 141.
8. Ibid. (June 21, 1856): 93-94
9. Ibid. (July 5, 1862): 111.
10. "The Boston Band," Boston Musical Gazette (July 25, 1838): 51-52.
11. Specifically, he used a model that most closely resembled the French military bugle of the time, a wide conical bore instrument. It should not be confused with the modern American military instrument commonly called a bugle, more properly called a "field trumpet," which is, in fact, a trumpet without valves.
12. The technical disadvantage of this construction (notwithstanding the charming sound produced by the instruments) is that, except when all holes are closed, much of the sound comes not from the bell of the horn but from the open hole. Since it is the bell of the horn and the shape of the last one-third of the bore that most influences its tone, it is easy to see why the valve system has been ultimately preferred for brasswinds. The long established acceptability of the open-hole system for woodwinds may have given Sax the idea of recycling, if not saving, the keyed bugles and ophicleides--a species he helped endanger--by substituting for the brasswind mouthpiece a single reed, as is used on clarinets. Thus, he "invented" the saxophone.
13. Quoted by William Carpenter White in *A History of Military Music in America* (New York: Exposition Press, 1944), p. 63.
14. Only the bass, or tuba, of the kind first developed and introduced in Berlin in 1838 by Wilhelm Wieprecht, is now consistently used in orchestras (the baritone is occasionally used). His tuba was a contrabass Flugelhorn. Orchestral use of the saxhorn ensemble is found in quite special cases: e.g., Berlioz's *Troyens* and Respighi's *The Pines of Rome*.
15. Elias Howe, Jr., *First Part of the Musician's Companion* (Boston: Elias Howe, Jr., 1844), title page.
16. E.K. Eaton, *Twelve Pieces of Harmony for Military Brass Bands* (New York: Firth and Hall, 1846), title page.
17. Allen Dodworth (1822-1896) was the most prominent member of a family that contributed significantly to a musical life in New York. He and his father, Thomas, became managers of a band in 1838 and succeeded in developing their business to include providing bands and orchestras, establishing a dancing school, composing and arranging music, publishing, and sell, as well as developing, musical instruments.
18. Allen Dodworth, *Brass Band School* (New York: H.B. Dodworth, 1853), pp. 11-12.
19. J. Howard Foote, *Catalogue of Musical Instruments* (New York: J. Howard Foote, 1888), p.36.

20. Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore, who was born in Ireland, was to prove himself a true innovator in band instrumentation. He made the most important contribution to the concert band in America before John Philip Sousa by eventually developing an instrumentation that enabled a large wind ensemble to produce effects comparable to a full orchestra at a time when American orchestras of high quality were scarce.
21. Dwight's Journal of Music (September 28, 1861): 207.
22. See Alfred S. Roe, *The Twenty-fourth Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers, 1861-1866* (Worcester, Mass.: Twenty-fourth Veteran Association, 1907), pp. 124 and 417.
23. Dwight's Journal of Music (September 13, 1862): 191.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.
25. See Daniel Eldredge, *The Third New Hampshire and All About It* (Boston: E.B. Stillings and Co., 1893), p. 993.
26. Mann, *History of the Forty-fifth Regiment*, p. 195.
27. S. Millett Thompson, *Thirteenth Regiment of New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellions, 1861-1865: A Diary Covering Three Years and a Day* (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1888), p. 369.
28. Dwight's Journal of Music (September 6, 1862): 183.
29. *Ibid.* (August 28, 1868): 301.

In addition to his studies on the history of band music, Jon Newsom, assistant chief of the Music Division, has published numerous articles on musical subjects ranging from improvisational jazz to the songs of Stephen Foster and Henry Clay Work. His liner notes also appear on New World Records NW 251 Where Home Is.

Working with Period Instruments

by Robert Sheldon

Attempts at music-making with more or less period instruments often describe the outcome as having utilized "original instruments." It is probably a little misleading to use that overworked term since it may infer a degree of authenticity that's not possible or necessary as a goal in itself. If the "original instruments" and consequent performance do, indeed, offer accurate information, then the performance serves in part as an educational statement. But if one assumes that music-making has always been primarily to entertain and move the emotions of the listener, then any attempt at reconstructing typical performances by means of period instruments and playing techniques should mainly serve to entertain.

For this recording the American Brass Quintet Brass Band made use of nineteenth century instruments in the performance of this music. The use of such instruments helps approach a sort of timbre and aesthetic that suits the music and aids the performer. But musicians playing these instruments today bring to the performance an experience based on a century's worth of changing musical styles, study in conservatory situations unknown to the old bandsmen, and repertoire including jazz, early music, and avant-garde. Therefore, our musical results from using nineteenth century brass are bound to be different from those achieved by nineteenth century bandsmen whose musical experience was likely to have been limited to the period itself.

While almost any sort of brass ensemble of adequate size, such as a symphony orchestra brass section, could in fact play this music, it is safe to conclude that it will sound most in character if the parts are

covered by some form of the instruments specified. Carrying that a step further, using instruments like those of the period might then lend still more to the character.

Such projects are never without problems, and foremost is the fact that the quality of instruments varied much more than during the present. The collections of the Smithsonian Institution Division of Musical Instruments, for example, contain a large number of instruments obtained new in 1882 from the New York firm of J. Howard Foote, and the 28 brass band instruments in the assortment appear to have come from the John Stratton factory. The playing qualities of this group vary rather amazingly and if used to form a band of that size would not yield an ensemble of 28 satisfied players.

Certainly the few great American brass bands of the period were fine, enjoyable, likely virtuoso ensembles. Better quality playing was achieved then as now in that conscientious players select the instrumental equipment that works best for them, and the collected results then develop the ensemble. The main problem is that good but diverse instruments made in different locations do not necessarily reflect the pitch preference of the area where the ensemble is located. In the American Brass Quintet Brass Band, the flattest instrument of the assortment was the Selmann E-flat tuba, and the entire band tuned down slightly to the pitch of one instrument. Similarly, the first B-flat cornet, the B-flat bass, and the second E-flat tenorhorn (altohorn) has very flat second partials; and while that was a common tuning problem for many instruments of the period, the notes sounded by that partial were used very liberally by the arrangers of the time. This was especially true of the B bass (or upper octave bass line) in which the second partials of the instrument sounded the frequently used B flat and A flat in the great octave (a major ninth and tenth below middle C respectively).

The selection of instruments for this recording was made from several collections and sources that were readily available to us at the time. Historically, it was not uncommon for a band to order a set of instruments all made in one factory. An interesting example would be the municipal band of Staunton, Virginia (known as the Stonewall Brigade Band ever since its duty with the local militia during the Civil War). In the late 1850s it purchased a set of eleven nickel silver, over-the-shoulder band instruments from the Philadelphia firm of Klemm & Brothers, which was said to have imported the instruments from the Antoine Sax Factory in Paris. To acquire a set of instruments in this manner would offer a group all at one pitch, but the varying quality aspect was likely to be a problem.

Besides tuning, other matters of technique and choice of mouthpieces had to be made. Compromise was least possible in the case of the three E-flat altos, which were here played by musicians who are principally horn (French horn) players. Though the horn mouthpiece might at first feel most comfortable to a hornist, it does not work very well, acoustically, on the alto horn. Consequently, our alto trio made use of alto mouthpieces.

The four cornetists and four of the five lower instruments used a selection of modern, period-like mouthpieces requiring whatever tapered shanks were necessary for proper fit or tuning. In the case of the B-flat bass, a very small tuba mouthpiece was used. Although the mouthpiece used in the recording was larger than those that had been used for such instruments, the resulting bass sound was richer, which offered an appropriate amount of bass line from only two players. Period photographs and surviving instruments reveal that the mid-nineteenth century bands often appeared to have more tuba players than necessary.

The earlier music on this recording dates from a period when the American soprano brass players and makers seemed to favor the treble saxhorns (the upper instruments from the flugelhorn-tuba group) over the cornets, although often the band parts for all of these instruments were marked "cornet." In America, that term referred to any or all of the valve soprano brass instruments that were available. By the 1870s, there was a trend to more cornet-like treble brass, or musically speaking, timbres more brilliant than the high saxhorns. The American Brass Quintet Brass Band here reconstructs an ensemble using only cornets.

The selection of percussion instruments proves to have many similar considerations. Although there are styles and sizes of bass and field drums that one might associate with typical American mid-nineteenth century bands, it was often a practical routine to recycle older drums, sometimes altering their sizes or other aspects to fit the most current need. This is especially true in the case of the bass drum. In making our selection, the most important factor to consider was the conditions of the skin heads on the existing drums. Skin heads are greatly affected by atmospheric conditions, and during the second day of recording, changes in humidity made it necessary to keep an electric fan aimed at the bass drum between takes.

The American mid-nineteenth century brass band scene was a rather developed and very popular form of entertainment, but the period seems to have left very little written word regarding details that would now be helpful for current performance. For example, an 1853 band training tutor by Allen Dodsworth, "The Brass Band School," provides fingering charts, ranges, and amusing suggestions about set-up and rehearsal decorum for beginning bands, etc., but it offers practically nothing about stylistic preferences regarding loudness, vibrato, and tempos for the dance music frequently played in the period. Some critics of the brass band movement, however, did seem to feel that the more amateur bands played too loudly.

Because of this dearth of information on performance practices, questions of tempo choices naturally arise in a recording project such as this. Since period bands played not only park concerts but dance music for pure entertainment as well, we have offered the polkas and several of the quicksteps at fairly "up" tempos. Diary accounts from bandsmen of the period also offer little of musicological value regarding details about tempo, etc., but they certainly indicate that the brass bands were driven by much attention-loving zeal. To put on a really good show and send 'em home happy was what it was all about, and it is tempting to think that a spritely tempo was often heard just for the mere fun of it.

Robert Sheldon is museum specialist in the Division of Musical Instruments of the Smithsonian Institution. He performs frequently on horn as well as early instruments and is leader of the Washington Saxhorn Ensemble. On this recording he played third altohorn.

For over twenty years, The American Brass Quintet has been one of this country's leading chamber ensembles. With a repertoire spanning five centuries, the Quintet frequently programs its own editions of works from the fifteenth century to the present and has commissioned and premiered over one hundred compositions. The Quintet offers an annual New York concert series, regular tours throughout the United States and Europe, and has recorded for the Columbia, Titanic, and Delos labels. Its members are Raymond Mase and John Aley, trumpets; David Wakefield, horn; Ronald Borrer, trombone; and Robert Biddlecome, bass trombone.

The American Brass Quintet Brass Band is an ensemble organized by the members of the American Brass Quintet to present this country's nineteenth century brass band literature in its authentic performing complement of 14 players (12 on brass and 2 on percussion) and on period instruments. The Band gave its debut performance in November 1981 in New York, and this disc marks its premier recording.

Our thanks to Elizabeth Lessard at the Manchester New Hampshire Historical Association, to Richard Jackson at the New York Public Library, and to Jon Newsom at the Library of Congress for their assistance in obtaining scores for the music performed on this recording; to Laurence Libin at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Dr. Robert Rosenbaum for their assistance in obtaining a number of the instruments used on this recording; to Donald Hunsberger at the Eastman School of Music and Frank Cipolla at SUNY-Buffalo for their valuable information.

1st Eb cornet and leader: Raymond Mase
2nd Eb cornet: Robert Lang
2nd Bb cornet: Lee Soper
solo Eb tenorhorn/altohorn: David Wakefield
2nd Eb tenorhorn/altohorn: Randal Ulmer
3rd Eb tenorhorn/altohorn: Robert Sheldon
1st Bb tenorhorn: Ronald Borrer
2nd Bb tenorhorn: Benjamin Peck
Bb baritone: Robert Biddlecome
Bb bass: Toby Hanks
Eb bass: John Stevens
drums & percussion: Benjamin Herman and Daniel Druckman

The Yankee Brass Band
Music from Mid-Nineteenth Century America
Presenting The American Brass Quintet Brass Band
Performed on Nineteenth-Century Instruments in the Collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dorothy and Robert Rosenbaum, and Others

- 1- Arizona Quickstep.....2:44
(John F. Stratton scores, Library of Congress)
- 2- Bond's Serenade.....2:13
(Hosea Ripley manuscripts collection, New York Public Library)
- 3- No One to Love.....2:14
(Walter Dignam Manuscript Score Book, Manchester Historical Association)
- 4- Blondinette Polka.....1:49
(Ripley)
- 5- Mabel Waltz.....4:55
(Stratton)
- 6- Helene Schottisch.....2:09
(Dignam)
- 7- American Hymn.....1:59

- (Ripley)
 8- Red Stocking Quickstep.....2:56
 (Ripley)
 9- Mockingbird Quickstep.....3:46
 (Ripley)
 10- "Memories of Home" Waltz.....3:41
 (Stratton)
 11- Schottische.....1:30
 (Ripley)
 12 The Moon is Above Us.....2:16
 (Stratton)
 13- Brin d'Amour Polka.....2:43
 (Stratton)
 14- Goodnight My Angel.....2:22
 (Stratton)
 15- Fireman's Polka.....3:32
 (Ripley)

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Producer: Elizabeth Ostrow
 Project Coordinator: Raymond Mase
 Recording Engineers: John Kilgore, Tom Lazarus, Randy Brown
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 The Edward W.C. Arnold Collection of New York Prints,
 Maps and Pictures, bequest of Edward W.C. Arnold, 1954
 Photograph: courtesy of Robert M. Hazen

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NEW WORLD RECORDS
16 Penn Plaza #835
NEW YORK, NY 10001-1820
TEL 212.290-1680 FAX 212.290-1685
Website: www.newworldrecords.org
email: info@newworldrecords.org

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