

# WINDS Magazine

## Spring 2016



**BASBWE** |

- British Association of Symphonic Bands
- & Wind ensembles





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**Editor:** Bruce Hicks,  
Archbishop Beck Catholic Sports College,  
Liverpool, England

# Thoughts from the Chair

*“The object of BASBWE shall be to advance the status of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles in the United Kingdom, and the education of the general public”.*



Simply put (and none of this is simple) BASBWE is a support hub to the world of Wind Bands and all it represents. For the music, the bands, the participants, the communities within which that music and those bands exist, breathe and grow. BASBWE is run by a group of volunteers all of whom happen to be professional musicians of various persuasions all of us wishing to apply time to the promotion and sustenance of Wind ensembles and the music they engage with, promote and perform for the public at large, or small depending on the nature and strength of your powers of public persuasion and instrumental prowess.

**... 'tis truly a Time, Space and Wind Odyssey ...**

The crucial operative follow on question is **“HOW”** do we achieve that?! Remember 1981, no internet, no mobile phones, (first mobile phone call April 1973, first mobile phones for sale in the USA in 1983; thank you wikipedia) no computers that were commercially viable. Today, Our World has greatly changed since the innocence of an internet-free world and the establishment of a working association set up for the promotion and nurturing of wind bands, commissioning of new materials to service those bands, enhance and expand the collective experience, technical abilities and musicality of players, practitioners and the educating of a largely ignorant populous as to their existence and purpose. All efforts to establish and expand a standard repertoire of materials written specifically for the instrumentation on the ground is continuing. So too the celebration of the gifted and the virtuosic in creativity and re-creativity from composer to performer, conductor to players, players to younger players, teachers to students, students to society, public to publishers, publishers to composers and so the cycle turns but through time and technology, the manner of turning ever changes.

As the years have progressed aims and objectives have expanded and diversified as social, musical and educational criteria, aspirations and expectations have also turned, changed and diversified. There are, out there on the internet, many sites where information about the windy world can be accessed and enjoyed. Organisations to support specific instruments and their players i.e. CASS (Clarinet and Saxophone society) BDRS (British Double Reed Society) BFS (British Flute Society) BHS (The British Horn Society) and many others and also the recipients of all those instruments; the bands and band organisations where great things are happening and being shared via social media with the world outside and within their immediate communities performing a communal service via a huge range of established and new materials.

**So why do we need us ... BASBWE?**

We are an Association of and for Symphonic Wind Ensembles; a cornucopia of human and musical experiences to be shared and expanded upon. That's the point, a conduit, a sharing of knowledge, experience, skills, and knowledge is currency and shared knowledge greater currency and experience. Particular focus for me is in education/creative music making/social awareness and, as well as all the motivating factors of the original vision, securing BASBWE as a support mechanism, an information interface, addressing the human aspects of banding and community music, encouraging bands, composers, conductors, clinicians, teachers etc to connect with their immediate communities. Our Bands are in a prime position for the promotion of music as a catalyst to communication, self-esteem, cognitive and tactile skills, development of mutual empathy, listening, responding, sharing, motivation, imagination and much else besides. Every aspect of human activity requires imagination and the arts and especially music develop those exclusively human attributes. We can help put you in touch with composers, clinicians, workshop leaders, soloists who can help you deliver those enhanced experiences that stay with us for a lifetime and effect and solidify skills and perceptions and raise our levels of understanding and awareness.

Much focus and lauding is placed at the feet of our composers, conductors, soloists, clinicians all of whom are multifariously skilled and gifted and integral to the core of our wind band world but no more nor less than the general membership; the rank and file, the stoic members, the kids (our future) who turn up week after week for musical and social enterprise. Without them the great and the good are neither great nor good but redundant.

We should not forget how we all started and became absorbed into this musical enterprise.

We would like to hear from you. Your stories, your wish lists, anecdotes, everyone has a story so please share them with us so we can learn from your experiences and pass them on.

We are your Tardis, might look small and insignificant on the outside but open the door and walk in and all else is possible, aid in any way we can; from the smallest request for information to the largest planning and running of a week-end or festival, playday, composer workshop and conference. We might not be able to fully fund such events but we can certainly aid you in how to accomplish such events, point you in the right direction and can people them with specialists for you.

Much talk still abounds around the issue of Endangered species; The tubas, trombones, horns, bassoons, oboes, contras of various ethnicity, ... all the “expensive”, difficult to carry, initially difficult to produce controlled sounds on; these instruments need our continuing focus and support too. Would you like a focus day on a particular instrument or family of instruments? WE can help arrange those days, help put together your band with a specialist or two and a plan to deliver an exciting Endangered day!

Wind bands within their communities (all of whom are feeling the fiscal pinch and reducing audiences in our ex-factorised world) might look at who, what, why, they are. Might consider the connective collaboration with other community groups; choirs, theatre groups, dance groups, string groups (yes strings!), folk groups etc all of whom dig into the same stretched communal pocket. Shared events and shared creative projects are a way to make others aware of your existence and artistic possibilities which in turn could increase your general audience numbers but would definitely enhance experiences that give back to what you do on a weekly basis. Maybe tap into secondary and tertiary education, your local schools and colleges for students who are studying creative skills, orchestration, sound design, music preparation, arts management etc.

The collective misconceptions and wrongly assumed complications of intellectual ownership; copyright; the buying, hiring, using, acquiring of scores and parts, our obligations, legal and moral appear to continue. Especially those who feel their computers should give them access to the downloading of audio and/or graphic PDF files to aid in the enjoyment and performance of someone's music for no cost to themselves. Google continues to direct subscribers to sites where music can be downloaded “freely”, at no apparent cost without explaining that it is statutorily illegal and also if this practice continues there will be no revenue so no money put into the future production of said materials so said materials will cease to be available. We must put a value on what we have and celebrate our musical legacy that started way back when Ug scraped the fat of an animal skin, snagged the flint and twanged a sinew then did it again for the pleasure of the experience and Thug blew down a hollow twig to get a juicy grub and was delighted to have been rewarded with a tasty morsel and a surprising sound ... so he did it again and smacked his thigh and stamped his foot in delight ... see; pitch and rhythm; a composition and sustenance all at the same time ... the wonders of the human world ...

Be proud of who we are and what we do. We are not symphony orchestras but we do have a musical legacy, neither are we “also rans” we are unique and special and deserve to be seen to be, as we are, out in the world with value and purpose. We have the opportunity to nurture and grow, cherish and disseminate our “product” and process for the benefit of all. I wonder just how many bands are out there. To this end I wonder if those of you who read this might let us know the names and contact information of the bands in your area. We can then contact those bands and then dig further to find other bands and so on.

Our former chairman and fellow composer, Pete Meechan urged me to phone round, talk to people, get a feel for how people thought so over the past year or so I did. I didn’t get what I thought I would. Here’s a few rapidly annotated responses that show there is a great deal for us to do in the education of not only those out in the ex-factorised world but those of us here in the windy world too . . . (Pete hates that nomenclature “Windy World” I rather like it) and for those of you who recognise your voice please get back to me, put me right if I have misrepresented or misunderstood you. Criticism is never negative if we all learn from the process and listen to another point of view.

## Here are some responses to my unsolicited calls

We can’t seem to increase our audiences..... we’re playing to the same people all the time and those are mostly parents and family members.... we’re trying to get to the kids but they only want what’s on u-tube...how do we do that?...schools are just not interested...costs too much and the local music services have been shut down....it’ll all implode eventually....such a shame.....

Wind bands?...Brass Bands?...all that dressing up and marching stuff...not for me mate I want something that engages the head and the heart....why d’ya think it’s not on Radio 3?...it’s for amateur anoraks not real musicians...there’s just no interest in it out there.....oompah oompahh...stick it oop yer.... you know...just joking, but seriously though, there’s nothing serious in it.

All that modern stuff; squeaky gate rubbish is poofey nonsense, our audiences want tunes, pieces they know, not experimentation. They want to be entertained for the evening with live sounds and fun, go home with a smile on their faces and more than a good tune in their heads.

We focus on the competitions...we have to be the best...if we’re the best we increase our audiences because they know they’re listening to the best....what?, play set competition pieces in concerts?...not really...those scores are for competition only, not really the kind of thing we’d want to play to a paying audience.

We’re not getting any better...I try to improve our tuning and ensemble but the players complain and say let’s just play stuff, that’s what we’re here for...so I count them in and from then on I may as well wave in the wind.... it’s so disheartening....

....A new piece?...what....commission something?...you must be joking!..God there’s more music out there already than we could ever play. Besides that our lot would laugh at me and the committee wouldn’t be pleased. Costs enough for photocopying as we are now and don’t go mithering me about illegal copying; what else can we do if we had to pay for every damn piece of paper on the stands we wouldn’t be able to go anywhere, hire halls, publicity, all of that. Look you do the commissioning then give us the parts and we’ll give ‘em a go...maybe once..... Why can’t the publishers let us just download the parts then we wouldn’t have to pay them for printing and postage. They must be making a mint out of us lot!...What do you mean “Intellectual copyright”?...you take me for a fool?...look I’m sorry but I’ve got better things to do than listen to this nonsense!!.....click...

The wind band is my world...it’s my whole life...I can’t function without thinking about the glorious legacy of master works left us by some fabulous composers. We have to continue with the ethos of commissioning and performing new works but what does worry me is the difficulty of establishing core repertoire in an art form that has come from a military outdoor background. Where are the Beethovens, Mozarts and Mahlers of the wind Band world. We can’t compete with the orchestral world so why try to? I personally hate the arranging of standard orchestral repertoire for Band consumption because in other people’s eyes it looks like we have nothing of our own! I want pieces written specifically for the medium by people who really understand how to write for us. Would you go to an orchestral concert that has an arrangement of one movement of a Mozart concerto followed by an uninspiring and bland arrangement of a pop tune and so on?...no..neither would I..

I was at a concert a few weeks ago and what they played was staggering! Never heard anything like it. Those players, male and female were from the services don’t remember which but they could play brilliantly and the sort of pieces you would not associate with a services Wind Band, you know, a marching band. Brilliant, but they’re not on radio or television and that in itself speaks volumes politically, socially, nationally. You wouldn’t get Simon Cowell signing ‘em up....not that any of us would wish that on our worst enemy....that’s a joke by the way...ha!

. . . food for thought . . . and hopefully; discussion via multi-media . . . yey!  
And on a final positive note, in conversation with conductor Mark Heron at Jonathan Crowhurst’s National Wind Band Symposium; ***“let’s be positive here, there’s some fabulous things going on in the country, great pieces being written and wonderful musicians performing those pieces . . .”*** you’re quite right . . . thank you Mark!

**Happy blowing . . . enjoy WINDS . . . see you in the Summer edition and on the website . . .**

Many best wishes BC (Bill Connor chair)

# EYNSFORD CONCERT BAND

Eynsford Concert Band is a symphonic wind ensemble that has been based in the small Kentish village of Eynsford since 1972.

The band has 50 playing members from all over the South East of England that aspire to attain the highest standards of musicianship within a social and friendly environment. Eynsford Concert Band has gained an international reputation having toured Austria, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ireland, Netherlands, Malta, Spain and Belgium as well as playing aboard cruise ships in the Fjords of Norway and the Mediterranean, providing on-board entertainment.



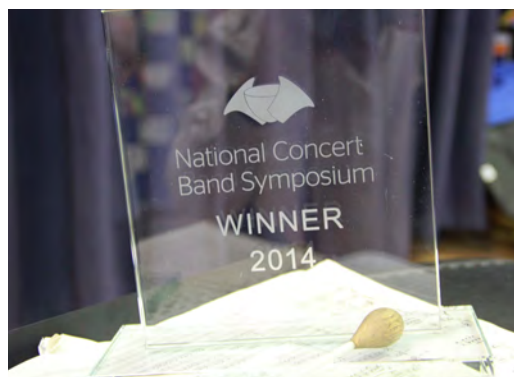
The band enjoys performing a wide range of concert band repertoire from popular music arrangements and orchestral transcriptions to classic and modern wind band works. They have recorded three CDs, releasing *Heritage* in January 2010 that featured a Suite by Nigel Clarke written especially for the band. The band is firmly rooted in its local community, supporting local events and raises substantial amounts for local charities.



Michael Smith BA(Mus) LRSM, took up the Musical Directorship of Eynsford Concert Band in 2012, their 40th Anniversary year. Mike was born in Warwickshire and joined the Army as a clarinettist, serving in England, Northern Ireland and Cyprus before being selected to attend the three year Bandmaster Course at The Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall. He graduated in 1996 winning the Commandant's Prize and the coveted Worshipful Company of Musicians Medal for best all-round Student Bandmaster of the year whilst completing his Bachelor of Arts Degree and gaining his Licentiate of the Royal School of Music in Conducting. In October 2010 he was appointed Director of Music The Band of the Corps of Royal Engineers in Chatham, Kent. After just 8 months with the Engineers Band he was asked to take up the much coveted appointment of Director of Music the Band of the Grenadier Guards in June 2011. In July 2013 Michael left the Band of the Grenadier Guards to return to Headquarters Corps of Army Music in a staff officer post and also taking on the role of Corps Secretary, Corps of Army Music.



In April 2015 he was appointed Chief Instructor at The Royal Military School of Music where he is responsible for the training of Army Bandmasters and Musicians. In July 2014, Eynsford Concert Band was crowned National Champion Concert Band following their performance at the National Concert Band Symposium (NCBS) held in Canterbury. This was followed by accepting an invitation to host the 2015 NCBS Gala Concert. In May 2016, the band will represent the UK in the first European Championship for Wind Orchestras, to be held in the Tivoli Vredenburg concert hall, Utrecht.



To provide some insight to

## 'life with Eynsford Concert Band',

we interviewed a number of members of the band to get their thoughts on to what being a member means to them.

Those interviewed were:

**Paul Gould (PG):** *Founding member, Trombonist and former long-standing Chairman of the band*

**Wendy Eaton (WE):** *A teaching assistant from Tonbridge, Kent. A member for 39 years playing Clarinet*

**Graham Bell (GB):** *An Investment Business Director and founding member from Crowborough, Kent, playing Saxophone*

**Nigel Keen (NK):** *A Flute and Piccolo player and founding member now based in Bristol*

**Pete Ringrose (PR):** *A BBC Sound Engineering semi-professional jazz double-bass player who also plays trumpet for Eynsford Concert Band, joining in 2012 with his wife Sue who plays Flute*

**Alicia Newitt (AN):** *A French Horn player from Sidcup, Kent, who has been with the band for nearly three years and is a student currently undergoing teacher training*

**Alan Simpson (AS):** *The band's most local member and principle Oboist for the past 8 years, working as a music tutor in local schools*

**What are your earliest memories of the band, and how did you get involved to start with?**

**PG:** I started playing the trombone when I moved to secondary school. I had intended taking up the cornet, but none were available, so I ended up with a trombone that was virtually as tall as me. I enjoyed playing it straight away and practised every night (not something I can say I do now), but had to limit the music I played since I could not reach far enough to get 6th/7th position (I always seemed out of tune on those notes, but I guess nothing's changed there!) A couple of years later, I joined Kent Brass Band where I met another trombonist...Robin O'Connell, the band's founder.

**WE:** I can't remember the day I joined, but I do remember how much I relied on my parents to ferry me to our rehearsals, competitions and Sunday afternoon bandstand concerts. I also remember us squeezing onto the stage in the Eynsford Village Hall and I still don't know how we did it!

**GB:** I joined the band shortly after it was formed and remember because I had applied to join the Dartford Youth Orchestra and was put on the waiting list. In the meantime, the conductor of DYOB had heard of a new wind band in Eynsford and suggested I go along...and here I am, 40 years later!

**PR:** Looking for a new musical challenge, I started playing the trumpet eight years ago and before I realised what a difficult instrument it is. With perseverance I reached a suitable standard to consider joining a band. I joined Eynsford Concert Band in 2012 for a probationary period, sitting on the end playing 6th trumpet, trying to keep my nose clean and not play in the gaps. After the three months had expired I received a welcome letter disguised as a demand for subs, so I knew I was in!

**AN:** I first got involved with the band through Carol, our principal horn player. One of my earliest memories with the band was my first ever concert with them – a Christmas concert at St Nicholas Church in Sevenoaks.

**AS:** I first encountered the band during a visit to Farningham; I was visiting my now partner, who was familiar with the band, and suggested I went along to check it out. I remember being very impressed by the standard, and from that meeting I decided I would join as soon as I moved down to Kent. I believe I played clarinet on that occasion, and I'm not even sure it was mine!

**How have you seen the band change since you have been involved with it?**

**GB:** Invariably, as everyone has got older with work and family commitments, keeping the social connection with all of the band's members is difficult, which is why our band tours are so important. We used to take on many smaller events - school fêtes; park concerts; performing at the Cutty Sark; and even the odd wedding, but now as we have other commitments we now tend to focus on a smaller number of larger events.

**WE:** Over the years, as the Musical Directors have changed, so has the selection, and standard of music, which in turn has developed the musicality of the members of the band to where we are today.

**PG:** The dynamics of the band changing due to none of us being as young as we used to be.

**AN:** Some new faces and a wider variety in the music we play and perform

**AS:** I'm not sure how much the band has changed. I think we still play at a high standard when we are on show, and the audience reaction backs that up.

**What was the hardest piece you have personally had to play?**

**NK:** What, other than "Short Ride in a Fast Machine"??

**WE:** The Clarinet part to "Bach's Toccata and Fugue". More recently, "Captain Marco"

**PG:** There're all getting pretty hard now days, but probably the most difficult to date was Looking -In By Tom Davoren

**GB:** Difficult one. I would have to say "The Cowboys", and "Peterloo"

**AN:** La Mezquita De Cordoba by Julie Giroux – it is a fantastic piece of music although it does have some tricky passages.

**AS:** I think one of the more difficult pieces to play, in recent memory, has been Captain Marco. There was a lot of time spent rehearsing it, and some hairy moments while we rehearsed, but the end result spoke for it's self as it won us the National Championship

**There must have been some very funny moments over the years, especially on tour - what has made you laugh the most?**

**PG:** Over the years there have been many memorable and funny occasions, performing to a packed audience at a festival in Valencia at 2.00am is always one that sticks in my mind. But there is a strict rule of „what goes away on tour, stays away on tour". Many other events that come to mind are not in the public domain and shall stay that way...but rest assured, they were fun all the way!

**GB:** There have been so many...playing a concert on a football field in a small village in the Catalan mountains, with a bonfire as light and being attacked by thousands of flying ants; arriving at Malta airport and not being able to get the Timpani through the doors in the arrival lounge; walking through the villages in Malta on an Easter parade for seven hours and being given a fried egg sandwich at the end of it; or arriving back to Roedean Girls Schools from a night out in Brighton to realise the next morning that someone had parked my car on the front lawn!

**PR:** Two years in came my first tour, and I managed to smuggle my wife Sue into the band on flute, making us one of three married couples in the band. Eynsford Concert Band is the only band in the world with a pair of identical twin tuba players, and before we could tell them apart Sue and I would while away many a happy hour playing the party game 'Brian or Steve?' The band is a wonderful mix of musical discipline and social lack of it. Nowadays some of the funniest moments happen on the members' social media pages.

**AN:** My first ever band tour was to Malta back in 2014 and there were so many fantastic memories. But having childish and silly pranks played on me by my fellow French Horn section seems to be the memory that sticks and makes me laugh the most.

**AS:** I have only been on one tour with the whole band; to Malta two years ago. It was a great experience, made even better, by a performance of "It's raining Men", by the brass players of the band in a restaurant, as I celebrated my 50th birthday. Absolutely brilliant and totally unexpected.

**What has the band done that you are most proud of?**

**GB:** The recording of our CDs and the support for charities, servicemen and the local community is certainly something I think we should all be proud of. I also will never forget the performance we gave in Valencia, Spain, at 2,00 am in the morning.

**PG:** We had a number of high profile concerts, including several returns to the Queen Elizabeth Hall, but for me none more so than performing at the Royal Albert Hall in 1984. Who would have thought that a village concert band would have a chance to play with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at such a prestigious venue?

**WE:** The competitions which we often took part in, the excitement and pride in the band when we did well - which I remember was also quite often. One other memorable band trip for me was to Cyprus playing on BFBS radio on the British Air Base open day where the Red Arrows also provided a fabulous air demonstration.

**PG:** Another memorable moment was our "Grade-1-Athon" when the whole band took up different instruments to pass a Grade 1 exam for charity. We raised nearly £15,000 for ChildLine with that one event: what an achievement! I even learnt to play the Alto Sax....but I won't be giving up the day job!!

**NK:** The Royal Albert Hall concerts in 1984 – the highlight of my playing career. Two full-on Friday nights in the popular NatWest Bank Classics for Pleasure concerts in the run up to Christmas, co-starring with the London Philharmonic Orchestra – some memorable moments and some scary moments too!

**AN:** Winning the National Concert Band Symposium of course!

**AS:** I think the charity work, the band undertakes is a thing that we should all be very proud of, as well as the £18,000 it has raised with the Grenadier Guards band for SSAFA. I think if it is a musical context; winning the championship is an obvious choice, and being asked back to play the gala concert.

**What does being a member of the band mean to you?**

**PG:** The band has been a major part of my life, even changing what college course I attended during my training so I could be free on a Tuesday night for rehearsals... and I would not have changed it for the world. To be part of an organisation which has achieved so much and still has further to go... and to make so many friends has been priceless.

**GB:** Having been in the band for 40 years now, it has been and continues to be an important part of my life. I have been in the band for longer than I have done anything else (work, education, etc.) Like other dedicated people in the band I have worked for long periods both in the UK and abroad. It would have been simple to leave due to other commitments, but although I have always enjoyed music, enjoying music in ECB is the most important thing. It's not a hobby or interest to me, it's quite simply a way of life.

**PR:** The recent success of the band is down to our brilliant musical director Mike Smith. He is the clearest conductor I've ever seen, and he inspires the sections to compete for those elusive compliments. My proudest moment was winning at the National Concert Band Symposium in 2014, and I believe this was down to Mike's choice of programme and the fired up way he conducted us. But I'm also proud of the large amounts the band raises for charities each year.

**AN:** It means a lot. Although I haven't been in the band for a huge amount of time, I have thoroughly enjoyed my time so far.

**AS:** Being a member of the band gives me an opportunity to perform at a high level, and to play challenging music in a variety of genres. It also means performing at prestigious events and providing entertainment for our audiences. I enjoy the camaraderie in the band and the knowledge that there is always support within for those who may need it.

**What does being asked to represent the UK at the European Championships mean to you?**

**PG:** Coming from a Brass Band world I thrive on festivals/competitions and was please to take part in the national Concert Band Symposium last year and best of all to win. To take this further to the European Championship is exciting and I hope we are able to achieve the same result....World Championships here we come !!!

**GB:** To represent one's country internationally is an honour not many people are fortunate enough to experience. So I feel very privileged to have this opportunity in 2016.

**WE:** From humble beginnings joining a little village band as a child 40 years ago, I consider it quite an achievement to progress to representing my country doing something I enjoy.

**PR:** The prospect of the European Championships is both exciting and daunting too. For a band from a tiny Kentish village, I fear we will feel like a small fish in a very big sea!

**AN:** Another chance to go away with some great people to play some fantastic music, and bragging rights of course.

**AS:** Being asked to represent the UK at the European Championships is a high honour, indeed, and I look forward to hearing the band rise to this even greater challenge, and possibly even return victorious. If not; the experience of the event will be another fantastic musical memory, that will stay with me forever.

**Mike Smith – MD**



### How did you get involved with ECB?

I was attending a BASBWE Festival in Bromley in late 2011. ECB were performing at the event and had placed an advertisement in the programme for a new Musical Director as their MD John Hutchins was moving on. Nigel Clarke, who I had met through my work at The Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall, had links with the band having written his piece Heritage Suite for them so I asked him a few questions and he introduced me to the chairman, Brian Bennett. Following a brief chat he invited me to audition for the post, which I did, and was delighted to be asked to take on the role in May 2012.

### How have you seen the band change since you have been involved with it?

Under John's guidance ECB was already a very capable band so there was little need for me to make any major changes. Probably the most noticeable change over the last couple of years has been the band members own analysis of the band's performance and their expectation of what it should be producing musically.

### What has been the most difficult piece you have conducted?

The first run through of any new major work for the band is usually a test for all. If I was to mention a specific piece, strangely I'm currently finding conducting the coda of the transcription of Tchaikovsky's Waltz from Sleeping Beauty a challenge.

### What has the band done that you are most proud of?

Winning the National Concert Band Symposium in 2014 was a very enjoyable experience but I have got the most satisfaction from the way the band performs in a concert. They have come up with superb performances on every occasion, in particular their performances in the 3 combined concerts we have done with the Grenadier Guards Band are something I can look back on with a sense of pride. The fact that the concerts have helped raise £18,000 for SSAFA has been an added bonus.

### What does being asked to represent the UK at the European Championships mean to you?

It's a great honour and a challenge both I and the band are looking forward to taking on.

### What do you enjoy about the band?

The weekly banter in rehearsals is excellent. There are some great characters in ECB which makes Tuesday evening rehearsals for me a very pleasurable experience.

### Why did you take on the role?

I had recently returned to mainland UK from an assignment to Northern Ireland where I had been involved with a couple of civilian bands in addition to my military role. I was missing 'banding', or the 'craik' as they call it in Northern Ireland, and was on the look out for any suitable opportunities close to home. Something that would challenge me and help develop my own musical and leadership skills. ECB fit the bill on all fronts and I was very pleased to be invited to take on the role.

### What was your first impression of the band?

Very good. Their performance at the BASBWE Festival was confident and polished so I was very keen to become involved with them.

### What has been the biggest challenge?

Getting the band to change key! I'm still working on that one.

### What has been your greatest achievement?

I hope it will be doing well in the European Championships for Wind Bands in 2016. Getting the opportunity to share the stage with some of Europe's finest wind orchestras is a great achievement for a small band from a small North Kent village.

### What are you most nervous about?

Forgetting what I am going to say to introduce the next item in a concert. Remembering the names of band members is not one of my fortes which can be a little embarrassing if they are a soloist and you're giving them a big introduction.

### What is your weekly routine/preparation before each rehearsal?

Score preparation for me is the key to a successful rehearsal. If I know what I am doing and where the difficulties within a piece are for the players I can prepare a rehearsal schedule of main aims I want to achieve during a rehearsal.

### Where does your inspiration for concert programmes come from?

Most of my concert ideas come whilst out walking my dogs. I make a note of pieces that could work together, sometimes I will have a particular piece in mind for a finale item and base the programme around that one piece. This was the case for the bands latest concert with the Grenadier Guards called 'For Queen & Country' where I wanted to use Jupiter from The Planets and specifically the 'I Vow to Thee My Country' section. Other times I will think about pieces that fit a particular theme such as our Americana and Inventions concert. I have been known to use some tenuous links for justifying a pieces inclusion but to ensure you have a balanced programme you sometimes need to push the boundaries.

### What is your ambition for the band?

For us all to keep enjoying making music and entertaining our audiences.

### What are the main differences between working with ECB and the Grenadiers Guards Band?

The Grenadiers are a professional, full-time band so planning a programme of music and rehearsals can generally be left until a little closer to an event. With ECB, because we only get together for a couple of hours a week, planning for concerts, especially if you want to feature any major new wind band works, takes much more time and forethought.

Mike Smith

Major M E Smith CAMUS | Chief Instructor | The Royal Military School of Music | Kneller Hall | Twickenham | TW2 7DU

# RAF Music Services Part 1 – Joining Up

Jonathan Pippen

For the last 7 and a half years it is my privilege to have been a member of the Central Band of the Royal Air Force. My last day of service was the 20th of January 2015.

The Central Band is based at RAF Northolt, and since the Second World War, when many of the finest classical, jazz and session musicians in the UK volunteered for the band to avoid general conscription, the RAF have managed to maintain a standard of music making that is the envy of the other two services in the UK. The Philharmonia Orchestra was actually formed from musicians who were members of RAF Music services during the Second World War. Similarly the RAFs swing band the Squadronaires was also formed at that time and was continued as a civilian ensemble in the 50's making the name famous. The band is manned by musicians who are fully deployable troops trained and employed on the same terms as every other member of the UK Armed Forces. Admission to RAF Music Services is by audition, but there are a plethora of other medical, fitness, security and general criteria that must be met in order to become a member of the service.

Unfortunately it's painfully apparent that even within the Royal Air Force, RAF Music Services is not understood or even in some cases recognised at all. When on a recent promotion course my colleagues from other trades in the RAF were completely unaware that there were full time musicians in the RAF at all. It was quite a challenge to explain that being a musician could be a full



time occupation within the Royal Air Force, and that in some cases we get paid a higher rate because of technical ability. Likewise, very few potential recruits in schools, universities and music colleges around the UK actually have a clear idea of how the RAF recruitment process works, the pitfalls and criteria required to join, or what the life of a military musician is like. My wife spent four years at The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and didn't have any idea of how to apply for, explore or research a potential career in the RAF. Only because I was a member and she spent time actually in the RAF band room did she realise how it could be a career she would be interested in.

This article isn't designed as any kind of recruitment device, but rather, I have invited three people, two of them recently passed out and now posted to bands and the other a potential recruit in the process of application to give, in their own words, their impression and experiences of the application process, training and eventual posting into RAF music services. Hopefully this will give a clear indication of what happens from an insider point of view, showing some of the positive and negative aspects that an applicant can expect to encounter. After this, I will mention some technical aspects that people should be aware of before applying including rates of pay, contracts and pension scheme.

Age 19

Grimethorpe Band  
Cornet

Age 22

Royal College of Music  
Trombone

It was during the later years of my school life when I became aware of a music career in the Royal Air Force, and began to research the application process on the RAF careers website. I wanted to pursue music as a career, and it was whilst I was applying for universities and music conservatoires that my application for the RAF Music Services began.

From researching the job on the RAF website it seemed a very exciting career. As well as online research I also discussed the prospect with some of my colleagues in my previous band, Grimethorpe Colliery.

The first step of the application process was through the Headquarters Music Services, who invited me to attend a familiarisation day. I visited the Regiment Band at RAF in Cranwell which was an opportunity for me to experience a normal working day, and also to meet the members and talk to them about the job. I also received a small presentation on RAF Music Services which was informative. I found this motivational and I left determined to carry on with the application. Following the familiarisation day, the application process began, and throughout contact with HQMS remained close.

After my visit, I was assigned a local Armed Forces Career Office (AFCO). The AFCO was the venue for my initial interview, in which I discussed my background such as family life and personal interests, and I was also questioned on my knowledge regarding the modern RAF, such as ongoing operations, rank and the role I had applied for. On completion of the initial interview, I then received various emails regarding the next steps of the process. The next step for me was a medical examination, which when successfully passed leads to an invitation for an RAF Fitness Test. All the information on requirements for both the medical and the fitness test are available on line and I had prepared myself. The AFCO will found the closest place for both assessments to take place.

Following success at these assessments, I was then invited to audition, referred to as a Specialist Interview. It is an all day interview which first includes a solo performance in front of a panel of 4; in which you are required to perform 2 accompanied pieces of your choice to a required standard, also sight reading, scales and an oral examination. Following that I then sat in on a full band rehearsal which gave me the opportunity to play in the section and perform some of the band's repertoire. In the afternoon I played with a brass quintet which was then followed by an interview with the Head Quarters Music Services Director of Music. The day is a very thorough assessment and you are observed in all three situations. It found it enjoyable and I had the opportunity to talk with many of the band members who were really welcoming and informative. I would encourage everyone that you make the most out of the experience and really get as much information as you can.

On passing the Specialist Interview I was then invited to attend the Pre Recruit Training Course at RAF Halton. This is a 4 day insight into what to expect at your Basic Training. You undertake functional skills tests in Maths and English and also do an RAF fitness test, of which all these aspects have to be passed. During your 4 days at RAF Halton you receive various presentations from the staff there about what to expect. I would recommend getting to know some of the people on the course with you as many of the recruits on my PRTC were on the same intake during my Basic Training. Following that you then are invited to your Final Interview which is your Offer of Service Interview. This is very similar to your initial interview and it just confirms that you have maintained your knowledge about the RAF and your specific role.

On completion of the interview you then will receive a date for your Basic Training at RAF Halton. Basic Training is a very intense 10 weeks of military training which I found very hard at times. Its robust training and I would stress to anyone to never give up and always give 100%. I personally used the music career that I was going into after the 10 weeks as motivation to keep going when the times got really tough. I think its worth noting that in phase 1 training I did not have time to play my instrument at all.

After graduating Phase 1 training at RAF Halton, which was one of the proudest days of my life, I arrived at RAF Northolt to begin my phase 2 Familiarisation Training. For fully qualified entrants you are in training for 4 weeks and for part qualified entrants you receive 3 months of training. Personally I was going in as a part-qualified entrant. This phase is really exciting, because first and foremost, you are a musician again! You get lots of time to practice as well as the opportunity to sit in rehearsals with the band and have drill lessons in preparation for parades. As a part qualified entrant, there is academic work to complete and you have 3 appraisals during your time in the school to monitor your performance progress. You receive constant feedback to help ensure progression and you are assigned a mentor from the band who is there to guide you during your training.

After passing the final appraisal you are then posted to 1 of the 3 bands. I was posted to the Central Band of the Royal Air Force on the 9th of February 2015.

I first considered applying for one of the Forces bands at the age of 16 however at the time was convinced into furthering my education - a good decision in hindsight. Fast forward to being half way through the final year of my degree at the Royal College of Music and I was exploring the options for after I finished, in particular Army music. I went on a couple of familiarisation days and was ready to apply before someone recommended I looked into the RAF bands too. I got in contact with the recruiting Sergeant at the Central Band and went on a familiarisation day. Needless to say I was really impressed with the standard of the playing and facilities so soon put an application in.

My application got as far as the selection interview where it ended abruptly. My Interviewer could not accept music as a serious team work exercise, unlike football which apparently would have done wonders for my communicational skills with in a team compared to music. Nor could she accept that whilst at a Music School I had little time or opportunity to participate in anything other than music. To add insult to injury my fitness was questioned and I was accused of being arrogant by some one who appeared over weight and spoke to me condescendingly throughout. My knowledge on current affairs of the RAF was brought up in the debrief and I feel that was completely fair. It seems that Head Quarters Music Services have absolutely no control or influence over the AFCO process.

My advice on the interview is to approach it with music as a back up to other arguments why you may be capable at aspects of general life in the Forces. Or don't mention it at all!

Undeterred I reapplied 3 months later to the day and flew through (excuse the subject related pun) my interview by re thinking how to portray my abilities best and reading up a little more about current general RAF affairs and affiliations. I didn't however change my demeanor and my interviewer stated that I didn't come across as arrogant at all, interesting to plainly see the consistency of the interviewing evaluations.

My next stumbling block was and is the medical. I was required after my medical to et various things checked by my GP before continuing in the application process. I had slight asthma as a child and a very faint heart murmur was detected in my medical. This has been dismissed as non existent by no less than three GPs afterwards but still I am in lingo due this.

The private company whom the RAF contract to perform the medicals took two months to sort my file out and book me a follow up medical, a wait that seemed a little unreasonable. Come the follow up medical and the doctor could still hear something in my heart and I was required to go back to my GP and get an Echocardiogram on my heart. This is not a quick test to have booked in and done. Why the private health company were unable to say they required this form and test after my first medical is a mystery to me as it has added another two months onto the process, somewhat unnecessarily. This is where I am in the process as of February 2015.

I strongly recommend anyone applying to the RAF tries to check their medical records are at their surgery if they've moved around (my surgery couldn't find mine which was another month to wait) and also to check out any medical conditions no matter how small as thoroughly as possible. The RAF medical will root it out and I could have made my process quicker by requesting my GP investigated my suspected heart murmur thoroughly even though he said couldn't hear it. The military stethoscopes are super sensitive! I'm currently waiting for my medical to go through, or not go through, but in the mean time I just have to accept that I've been one of the unlucky ones to suffer such inefficiency and incompetence in the process.



# Jono Read ATCL, BA, MMus

## Senior Air Craftsman

Age 25

University of Nottingham (U-grad) University of Sheffield (P-grad)

Clarinet

I had always known that you could be a musician in the RAF but I wouldn't have realised it was for me if I hadn't come to know people that were already in the band and then lived through my fiancé applying and going through basic training into the job. I have always pursued music quite seriously and was completing a masters in music research when I came to know about the job properly. I had always been realistic about opportunities as a performer and always knew I had a long way to go despite being a proven soloist and busy ensemble player. This job requires me to continue to develop as a player and allows me to travel, compose and pursue other enjoyments such as sport. There is also a whole other half to being in the RAF which I don't mind although it's much easier to say having come through some bits of it!

My first point of contact regarding the job was the RAF website and I spent a lot of time coming to understand the application process and what would be required of me. Soon after completing the online application I heard from Head Quarters Music Services (HQMS) who invited me to a familiarisation visit when I got to play with the band and to sit down with various people, including a very free and honest Q & A session about some of the more military aspects of the job. Once I had decided to go ahead with the application I had a lot of support from the Flight Sergeant at HQMS who I think appreciated better than I how long the following process was going to be.

My local Armed Forces Careers Office (AFCO) was my next port of call. I had an initial interview which required a bit of research although I had been well prepped with what to expect and it was fine. Then I had a medical assessment for which again I had no issues although I noted that it is a time when the assessor might find something that will either delay or finish your application as perhaps one or two applicants didn't make it to the next stage. I did however fail my fitness test the first time which meant a delay of ten weeks before I could retake it, although I was grateful for the time and I felt it showed my serious intent on getting the job and this seemed to be recognised by the AFCO staff.

I was invited for a formal audition which is a pre-requisite before being offered a post as a musician and I really enjoyed it. I was given a room in the junior ranks block the night before my audition and turned up on the day ready for a morning's rehearsal with the Central Band – during which a number of my peers were asked to comment on how I did. The formal audition is similar to an ABRSM examination, 2 accompanied pieces at an appropriate level, sight reading, scales and a brief oral examination whilst being watched by a panel of four one of whom was, in my case, a clarinetist. I don't remember there being any part of the audition I didn't expect. In the afternoon I played with a wind quintet and finally had a formal conversation with the Director of Music of HQMS which again emphasized certain aspects of band life that made it different to a civilian job. Whilst it is true that part of my job is more than just a bandsman, and I felt a good number of people wanted me to appreciate this on my audition day, I have not found myself doing anything I didn't feel I signed up for, or prepared for by either HQMS or the AFCO. Beyond that however band life seemed very exciting and the camaraderie had been very apparent from only two visits with the band.

The next step was a Pre-Recruit Training Course (PRTC) which takes place at RAF Halton (the venue for the 10 week basic training also). I found this course helpful as it allowed me to put a picture to the place everyone at the AFCO and HQMS was talking about. It was three nights and four days and it was obvious that as far as possible we, as civilians, were being exposed to what the lifestyle was going to be like. Our accommodation was the same (16 people to a room) and the early mornings etc were the same. I would say the biggest difference was that the staff in charge of us were more friendly but also honest about what to expect.

Having traversed that I had a final "offer-of-service" interview. This required some preparation but I imagine anyone who puts in the work would find it fine. Then there's a wait of about ten weeks for Basic Training to begin. I would imagine that most people would be encouraged to take more time, as I was with my fitness, during the application process in order to be as prepared as possible for Basic Training and so perhaps 6 to 9 months is how long an application might take.

Basic Training is a tough ten weeks and there are times when it can seem overwhelming. I found it helped to remember people I had met or already knew that had already passed out (graduated) and the fact that they had managed it. Also it helps knowing that you are going on to an exciting job and this was an advantage I felt I had over some of the recruits. There are so many aspects of Basic Training that I didn't appreciate until afterwards and that is very frustrating at the time. So many things seemed unreasonable and there was definitely a "ploy" to tell recruits as little as possible so that often you didn't realise the worst had passed until much later. That said I heard many stories of what basic training was like before going and my expectations were a lot worse than my memories of it but perhaps that is just the way it goes. I did have hard times and work with many people going through the same but I can't say I experienced people being unfairly treated. Whilst the flight staff in charge of us didn't make it easy they were very helpful and it was obvious that their intent was to get us through the course and if need be they were easily approachable. Passing out was a very proud day.

Phase Two training at RAF Northolt was great. I learnt a lot and really valued my mentors for the three months I was in the school. (I was a part qualified entrant). Whilst I enjoyed a significant development in my technique and performance style I saw others that benefitted from Drill practice and just the time to get back into playing their instruments and adjust to military life. It still felt like I was a step away from integrating properly into a band but I sat in on rehearsals and was used for some of the concerts during my time at the school. Everyone was friendly and willing to help.

Since then, and my posting to Central Band, I have had to get used to the pressure of ensuring that I, personally, am ready with everything required of me when it comes to rehearsals, concerts and parades etc. Having kit ready and becoming acquainted with the music before rehearsals are a must and whilst being unprepared for one rehearsal might get overlooked they certainly expect an improvement in the next. I still have lessons with other clarinetists in the band and I am taking on more responsibility as I become comfortable with what I am doing. I am involved in station sport and have been involved, with members of the band, in both walking and skiing expeditions. I feel like all the hard work and the time that was put in during the application process is coming to fruition.

## RAF Application

So, as you can see, the recruitment process for a career in RAF music services is complex and lengthy. That's said with the Army and Marines courses involving 12 - 36 months of musical training at their respective schools, and 12 - 14 week initial basic training periods, the RAF process is positively spritely at a mere 9 - 12 months from start to finish.

However, It's not to be taken lightly and requires significant preparation, both physically and mentally. Patience is also important as things don't always progress as swiftly as they perhaps could and military personal don't like being told to do anything by anyone without the right stripes.

The basic elements of an RAF application are:

**Initial Contact**  
**Familiarisation / Band visit day**  
**AFCO Application**  
**AFCO initial interview**  
**Medical**  
**Pre joining Fitness test**  
**Audition**  
**Final Interview**  
**Offer of Service**  
**PRTC 4 day course**  
**Phase 1 training (10 weeks at RAF Halton)**  
**Phase 2 training ( 4 - 12 weeks)**



It should also be noted that during the first 6 months of service a recruit can leave the RAF with two weeks notice, but after this period a total of 3 years service must be completed before you can leave. The days of buying yourself out are gone, so short of a catastrophic family or personal change resulting in a compassionate discharge or a dishonourable discharge you will be tied into a 3 year return of service after the first 6 months.

RANK	RANGE 5	ANNUAL HIGHER SPINE	ANNUAL LOWER SPINE
Warrant Officer	Level 7	£47,902	£45,204
	Level 6	£47,180	£43,962
	Level 5	£46,353	£42,762
	Level 4	£45,539	£41,994
	Level 3	£44,717	£41,130
	Level 2	£43,962	£40,316
	Level 1	£43,114	£39,548
	RANGE 4		
Flight Sergeant Levels 5 - 9 Chief Technician Levels 1 - 7	Level 9	£44,314	£40,601
	Level 8	£43,689	£39,703
	Level 7	£43,076	£39,195
	Level 6	£42,464	£38,604
	Level 5	£41,545	£36,934
	Level 4	£40,622	£36,43
	Level 3	£39,703	£35,604
	Level 2	£38,776	£34,484
	Level 1	£37,861	£34,039
	RANGE 3		
Sergeant	Level 7	£37,836	£34,950
	Level 6	£37,140	£34,685
	Level 5	£36,443	£33,527
	Level 4	£35,747	£32,675
	Level 3	£35,302	£32,348
	Level 2	£34,429	£31,555
	Level 1	£33,561	£30,750
	RANGE 2		
Corporal	Level 7	£33,997	£30,573
	Level 6	£33,271	£30,351
	Level 5	£32,596	£30,112
	Level 4	£31,828	£29,877
	Level 3	£31,102	£29,650
	Level 2	£29,650	£28,270
	Level 1	£28,270	£27,053
	RANGE 1		
Junior Tech/Senior Aircraftsmen (T) Levels 5 - 9	Level 9	£29,650	£24,825
	Level 8	£28,270	£23,957
	Level 7	£27,053	£22,908
Senior Aircraftsmen Levels 2 - 5	Level 6	£25,866	£21,968
	Level 5	£24,666	£21,599
Aircraftsmen/Ldg Aircraftsmen Level 1	Level 4	£22,308	£20,521
	Level 3	£21,259	£18,910
	Level 2	£19,304	£18,427
	Level 1	£17,945	£17,945
New Entrant Rate			£14,492

While on basic training (called phase 1) there is no guarantee that it will only take 10 weeks. At any stage, and for just about any reason, a recruit may be "back flighted" and placed in a flight of troops further back on the course. They run at 2 week intervals. This can be as a result of a failure in certain element of training that there is no time to address, or as a punishment, which does not have to be justified in any way by the course management, or as a result of an injury incurred on training. Recently a music recruit broke her ankle while on training and spent more than 12 months on the training flight. She did have the option to leave of course, but decided to stay as she was of course getting paid for the entire period of her recovery.

It is also worth noting that once over the initial 6 month period of two weeks notice a member of music services has to give 12 months notice to leave the service. So if wishing to leave at the three year point notice would have to be given at the 2 year point. This notice period was recently changed from 6 months in an attempt to improve retention of members. The fact is most employers will not accept 12 months as a reasonable notice period for changing jobs, so you really have to accept that unlike most other forms of employment, RAF Music Services expect you to resign before finding gainful employment elsewhere. Of course this is intentional to retain members. That said, the support for military personnel leaving is second to none and will be covered extensively In the third part of this article.

A very important aspect of military service, that is not part of the joining process but should receive considerable thought on considering joining up is war fighting. As a member of the armed forces you are trained to bare arms and if necessary to use them. In the crudest terms that means to kill someone. The RAF's primary role is to put bombs on targets and every member of the force has to be willing to expedite that in whatever way is appropriate at whatever time. Although this is of course not the everyday life or situation of a musician in the RAF (in fact it would be extreme), it should be carefully and thoughtfully considered as it could happen. It's the reason the rank structure and it's very clear lines of command and respect are maintained at all times. The band is no exception. Once you're a member and someone orders you to do something you don't want to do, its too late.

A musician in the RAF signs out of any fair working practise legislation and is contracted from 00:00hrs until 11:59hrs 7 days a week. A standard military contract. There is no overtime as may be expected, and there are no real rules governing when and where you may have to work. This is of course because the contract has to be designed to move people to a war zone and fight without legal restriction. It is illegal under military law to be a member of a trade union, so musicians union members should consider that. You will never be found out of course, and many members do use the union to protect themselves when working outside.

The RAF are part of the Military Pension scheme 15. This is a non contributory scheme but it is vastly different to any that has gone before, and from anything you may have heard about "uncle Bob's" military pension. It is worth studying so you understand the potential benefits you will be entitled to at age 60. There is no longer any benefit available below the pensionable age without special arrangements, but it is still planned that members will have to retire at age 55, with some higher ranks being allowed to continue to 60. Worth considering. A quick google search for AFPS15 will bring this up. Members of the service are on pensions from 1975, 2005 and from April this year all will be on the 15 pension. The blunt truth about this pension change is no one really knows exactly what they will be entitled to when they leave, so its best to seek professional advise, or read for yourself the paperwork. Don't take anyone's word for anything unless they are a financial adviser.

Rates of pay for musicians remain on the higher pay band up to the rank of Corporal. Sergeants and Chief Technicians are lower pay band and Flight Sergeants and Warrant Officers are high pay band. As a musician you will start on higher pay band level 5. If you come into the service as fully qualified (decided at the audition) you will receive back pay from the second day of phase 1 training at that pay level when you are posted to a band after phase 2 training. You will be paid on the basic amount while actually on training. A reasonable rate of promotion is 5-7 years to the next rank, but this is far from guaranteed and depends completely on a complex report system that is not under the direct control of music services. It is possible to achieve promotion to the next rank more or less quickly depending of many varying factors. I've known the quickest members manage it in 3 years and the slowest 16. I was about average at 6.

The initial contract offered to musicians is 12 years, with a further offer of 22 years made after promotion to Corporal and completion of the appropriate course. You may leave after 3 years with 12 months notice, but if you have not been promoted at the 12 year point the RAF can decide not to extend you're contract. This is influenced by Music Services, but is not under their direct control.

This first part of the article was intended to give a true and honest reflection of the process of applying to, auditioning for and joining RAF Music Services through the eyes of recent recruits and applicants. I hope this has been an interesting read and hopefully it will prove a valuable resource to those thinking about embarking on the application process, and no less importantly for those who may be in a position to advise young people on the possibility of a military career.

When I was joining 8 years ago I truly wish that a document like this had been available to me. So much of what we base our decisions on is hearsay and rumour. The military have such complex systems of pay, pension, contract and general requirements that it is absolutely worth asking every difficult question you can think of straight away. If the person you're asking doesn't know the answer they should go away and find it for you. Keep asking until you are satisfied.

In part two we will discover what everyday life is like for a member of RAF Music Services.

# Bassooning around... Britain!



When Laurence Perkins heard about the current shortage of young bassoon players in the UK, he was inspired to create a project very close to his lifetime aims and hopes for the bassoon. It was towards the end of 2014 that I started to hear about how bad the situation was - there were simply not enough young bassoon players of the right standard to fill all the places at music colleges and university music departments in the UK.

This struck a powerful chord with me. Ever since I was an enthusiastic student at the RNCM in Manchester in the 1970s, I have always had a great ambition - not for myself, but for the bassoon, to help give the instrument the kind of profile and recognition that it has been denied for so long. Through the years I've made solo recordings (including CDs for Hyperion), given solo recitals and appeared as soloist with countless orchestras, and almost every time someone has come up to me afterwards saying something like *"I've never seen or heard a bassoon close up before, what a pleasant surprise, is there much solo music written for it?"*

Add to this the miserable state of much of our schools music education at the moment, where fulfilling curriculum requirements is so often seen as far more important than broadening horizons, and a so-called 'marginal' instrument like the bassoon is often by-passed. The inevitable consequence: very few young bassoonists. How can a young person develop an enthusiasm for an instrument they have never heard of? The enthusiasm is certainly there - in one of my last project events, at a junior school in Southampton, more than 50 children had their first go at playing the bassoon. **The look of sheer joy and excitement on their faces said it all!**

The events that followed were as far north as Perthshire in Scotland, right down to Southampton - a lot of travelling! Yes, it was hard work, but it was real fun as well, and one of the main aspects that made it all worthwhile was the enthusiasm and appreciation from so many people of all ages - clearly the interest in the bassoon is there! Most of the events were presentations called **Bearfaced Bassoonery** - an introduction to the bassoon with lots of musical illustrations, and a content and approach that varied hugely according to the venue and those attending. The highlights were not always the big blockbuster events with large numbers involved - one session in a music hub in the London suburbs attracted just four children (plus some parents). Two were already enthusiastic players and were delighted to hear all about their beloved instrument, and the other two were really keen to start playing, and immediately signed up for lessons! **100% success rate?**

Response is of course the best measure of success, and the often long queues of children wanting to try instruments after sessions was testament to the level of interest in the bassoon. Eight of the events were concert performances of a programme which runs to a continuous video - this went down especially well, as it breaks away from the rather obscure and problematic (in marketing terms) bassoon-recital programme which as a younger player I had battled with for years trying to sell to concert promoters, usually with very little success. In fact, my programme included wonderful music by Otto Oromszegi, Reto Stadelmann, Michael Corrette, Alan Ridout, Francisco Mignone, Robin Walker and Cameron Sinclair, and because it was entitled **Bassoon Voyager - a musical journey to inspiring places**, it attracted people in an entirely different way, and those who came really enjoyed a highly varied programme of great music, alongside some inspiring projected images during the performance.

I set about contacting all the UK Music Hubs, plus music colleges, schools and those universities which have performing music departments - a daunting task in itself! I had no idea what the response (if any) would be, so I was more than delighted to receive positive replies from more than 30 organisations around the country who were interested in hosting events. A schedule spreading over three months emerged, but it all needed a high-profile launch if the project as a whole was to have any real effect - and so **International Bassoon Day (IBD)** was born! I made it "international" partly because the problem also exists in quite a few other countries, but it was also to create an event that would make the national media sit up and pay attention - and for this reason it was deliberately a bit quirky! Bassoonists all over the world, out in the streets playing Mozart - why not? Setting up the "international" part was where Facebook came in. I've always assumed that no-one - not even my friends - are really interested in a photo of what I have for breakfast or the usual moans that one tediously sees so often, so I use Facebook pretty well exclusively for musical purposes, and in particular for bassoon-related matters. It can be no accident that a high proportion of bassoonists around the world who use Facebook include the bassoon in their profile photo and mention it in their details - they are clearly pleased and proud to be associated with the instrument.



**B**assoon Voyager will be made available from 2016 onwards as a concert programme for promoters worldwide, and in these cash-strapped times, just one performer with an Apple Mac offering a highly attractive programme on a low budget seems to be just what is needed at present! I made it all possible by doing every event without fee. One or two of my colleagues have criticised me for doing the project in this way, claiming that it devalued what I am doing and would lead to a lack of appreciation.

The reality is that (a) it meant that it all actually happened (*which would have been very much more difficult any other way*), and (b) those who did provided financial support to cover essential expenses - recognising my commitment and contribution - were willing to join forces with me in a common cause.

This gave me the perfect opportunity to contact more than 1000 players around the world (*the list is still growing*), inviting them to take part in IBD, get their own players together (*friends, colleagues, students, etc*) and literally 'take to the streets', playing Mozart (*and other music, as it inevitably evolved*) to an unsuspecting public! The response to this was brilliant! Players all over the world grouped together on Sunday 11th October and did just this - in places all over the world, including Mexico, Chicago, Rotterdam, Moscow and Wellington (New Zealand), as well as many groups around the UK.

In the UK we were so lucky with the weather, which (in London) was beautifully sunny, so the gathering of around 38 bassoonists on the steps of the Royal Albert Hall at lunchtime was a very pleasant experience for all who took part. You can see the YouTube video clips by following the links on the IBD page on my website [www.laurenceperkins.com](http://www.laurenceperkins.com) Apologies for the film that was taken on my own camera - somehow it found its way onto a setting that filmed in black-and-white plus green! (*I had no idea this was possible on my camera, and to this day I still can't find that setting on it!*) In London, the rest of the day was magnificently hosted by the Royal College of Music, who included a master class with Julie Price and a student-led concert, in addition to my own project events.

I am hugely grateful to the Royal Northern College of Music, The Musicians Union, Howarth of London, Windstruments of Bingley, Windblowers of Nottingham, Wood Wind and Reed in Cambridge, Double Reed of Newport, and Dawkes of Maidenhead for their invaluable support, both financial and practical. Big thanks also to those organisations who hosted the events and co-operated in such helpful ways - I look forward to finding out from each of them about the overall response and uptake from young musicians. After all, this is what it's all about! Bear-faced Bassoonery events:

Sunday 11th October: London - Royal College of Music  
Monday 12th October: Dartford Grammar School for Girls (*for KentSoundhub*)  
Tuesday 13th October: Hornchurch - Havering Music School  
Wednesday 14th: Ealing Music Service  
Thursday 15th October: University of Huddersfield  
Friday 16th October: University of York  
Saturday 17th October: Manchester - Royal Northern College of Music  
Monday 26th October: Leeds - Yorkshire College of Music and Drama  
Tuesday 28th October: Selby High School (*North Yorkshire Music Service*)  
Thursday 19th November: Rotherham Music Hub, South Yorkshire  
Saturday 21st November: Glasgow, Royal Conservatoire  
Tuesday 24th November: South Derbyshire Music Centre  
Wednesday 25th November: Minster School, Southwell, Nottinghamshire  
Thursday 26th November: Nottingham - Trent College  
Friday 27th November: Bristol University  
Saturday 28th November: Oxford - Centre for Music  
Monday 30th November: Buckinghamshire Learning Trust Music, and Redborne Upper School  
Tuesday 1st December: Bedford School  
Thursday 3rd December: Purcell School  
Friday 4th December: Southampton Music Service plus Hampshire Music Service  
Saturday 5th December: Chiltern Music Academy, High Wycombe  
Tuesday 8th December: Sheffield Music Hub

# My Wind Music

by Michael Short

I first became aware of the world of wind music through that deceptively simple instrument, the recorder. For many years I was Composer-in-Residence at the annual Dolmetsch Summer School (although I never did discover why they needed a composer as the players were mostly keen on music written several hundred years ago!).

Anyway, this contact led me to compose several pieces for recorders, of which perhaps the most successful was the **Intrada, Song & Dance**, which I subsequently arranged for other ensembles, including wind quintet and even brass band (nicely recorded by Frank Renton conducting the Kirkintilloch band).



My first piece for wind band was the **Lyrice Suite**, which was followed by various others, some of which I just wanted to write, such as the **Derbyshire Suite** dedicated to friends in that county, and **Stonehenge** which evokes the mystery of the place, while others were written in response to commissions, such as **Caledonia** for the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders and **Making Tracks** for the 1st Royal Tank Regiment. Although I complied with these army commissions I know nothing at all about military music (*even though I was for a while Professor of Music History at Kneller Hall*) but I did once manage to write a brief march, **Short Shrift**, whose title says it all.

An unusual commission came from an unlikely source - a group of expatriates living in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. These were mostly British people working in defense, communications, medicine and the oil industry, and as they found themselves in an unfamiliar environment they were obliged to make their own music. They wanted a 'patriotic' piece for wind band, but as I'm not keen on the jingoistic 'land of hope and glory' kind of thing, I decided to set a sequence of British sea-faring folk-tunes under the title **Our Fighting Ships**. Another commission was **Kentish Fire** for the Maidstone Youth Wind Orchestra.

After a visit to Estonia where I lectured and conducted the Tallinn Wind Band, I wrote the overture *Estonia! tere hommikust* in gratitude to my generous hosts. This piece is based on an Estonian folk-song, of which I heard a recording in Tallinn. In contrast, three English folk-tunes appear in my **Old English Suite** which originated in a request from a publisher. Two larger-scale pieces are **Countdown (to Eternity?)** which deals with the perils of nuclear power, and **Seven Steps to Heaven** - a suite which may be played in full or just in steps extracted from the whole.

Besides original composition I've also made arrangements for wind band, such as **A Musical Mirror** - six dances by Erasmus Widmann (1572-1634), and the ballet music from **The Perfect Fool** by Gustav Holst.

One problem when writing for wind band is that the composer can never be sure how many players are going to be on each part, which makes the matter of balance much more difficult. The answer of course is that the exact instrumentation and number of players should be clearly defined at the outset, as in my **Water Music** for 17-piece wind ensemble and percussion, commissioned and first performed by the Zephyrian Woodwind Orchestra conducted by Richard Carder. This problem is of course less acute in the case of smaller ensembles in which it is unlikely that there would be more than one player per part. My own smaller wind pieces include **Three Pieces** and **Diversions** for wind octet, **Six Poems, Imaginations** and **A Little Light Music** for wind quintet, **Mood Music** for wind quartet, and **Four Fantasies** for saxophone quartet.

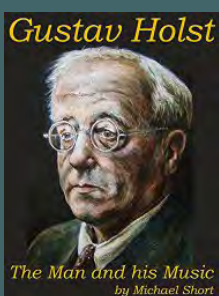
I wonder if it's permitted to mention stringed instruments in the pages of Winds magazine? It seems to me that the combination of wind and strings makes a nice expressive contrast and sometimes provides a welcome relief from continual wind sound. I've recently completed a quartet for oboe and string trio, and some years ago my friend Eric Roseberry formed the Apollo Ensemble of Bath, for which I wrote a set of six 15-minute **Apollo Concertos** for wind instruments and string orchestra, featuring flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, and trumpet as soloists. The solo parts are intended for 'average' players, drawn from the normal orchestra.

My compositional philosophy is that the music should be interesting and enjoyable for the players as well as for the audience. I've spent many years studying the music of Gustav Holst, who had the knack of getting the maximum result with the minimum of notes - I wish I could do the same!

Michael Short

was born in  
Bermuda in 1937  
and was educated  
in England at  
Gillingham  
Grammar School  
and Bristol  
University. He

then studied music at Morley College  
and London University, and won a  
Mendelssohn Scholarship to study  
composition in Italy with Goffredo Petrassi  
and in London with Sir Lennox Berkeley.  
He has written a wide range of music,  
including choral, orchestral, and chamber  
works, and has also made a special study  
of the life and work of Gustav Holst. His  
biography of Holst has recently been re-  
issued by the Circaidy Gregory Press.



## Wind music by Michael Short:-

Apollo Concertos nos.1-6 for solo wind instruments & strings (*Goodmusic*)  
Lullaby for solo flute (*Studio Music*)  
Soliloquy for solo oboe (*Studio Music*)  
Mood Music for wind quartet  
Four Fantasies for saxophone quartet (*Studio Music*)  
Impromptu for saxophone quintet (*Studio Music*)  
Imaginations: twelve one-minute pieces for wind quintet  
Intrada, Song & Dance arranged for wind quintet (*Bandleader Publications*)  
A Little Light Music for wind quintet (*Phylloscopus Publications*)  
Six Poems for wind quintet (*Studio Music*)  
Diversions for wind octet  
Three Pieces for wind octet (*Studio Music*)  
Water Music for 17-piece wind ensemble & percussion

## Publishers:-

Bandleader Publications (bandleaderpublications@hotmail.com)  
Goodmusic (sales@goodmusicpublishing.co.uk)  
Phylloscopus Publications (mail@SpartanPress.co.uk)  
Studio Music (sales@studio-music.co.uk).

For unpublished pieces, please email [mshort@dassells.free-online.co.uk](mailto:mshort@dassells.free-online.co.uk).

## Wind band:-

Caledonia: suite (*Bandleader Publications*)  
Countdown (to Eternity?) (*Studio Music*)  
A Derbyshire Suite (*Studio Music*)  
Estonia!: overture (*Bandleader*)  
Intrada, Song & Dance (*Bandleader*)  
Kentish Fire: overture (*Bandleader*)  
Lyrice Suite (*Studio Music*)  
Making Tracks: suite (*Bandleader*)  
A Musical Mirror: arrangement of six dances by Erasmus Widmann  
Old English Suite (*Studio Music*)  
Our Fighting Ships (*Bandleader*)  
The Perfect Fool ballet music by Gustav Holst, arranged (*Bandleader*)  
Seven Steps to Heaven: suite (*Bandleader*)  
Short Shrift: concert march (*Bandleader*)  
Stonehenge: overture (*Bandleader*)

## REVIEW

by Shea Lolin



## The Complete Wind Music of Gustav Theodore Holst, 1874-1934

This is a very attractive booklet which should be in the possession of every wind-band musician. It is packed with information, not only about the well-known pieces, but also others which are not often discussed, such as the Morris Dance Tunes and The Praise of King Olaf (both from 1911). There is a complete chart of Holst's wind music, giving dates and details of composition, first performance and publication for each piece, together with biographical information about Holst and his connection with Morley College where Lolin curated an exhibition.

The booklet is in oblong format (15x21 cm - small enough to fit into a large pocket) and is nicely designed, with many photographs and other illustrations which have not often been published. One very attractive feature is that there are several facsimiles of Holst's manuscript scores which give a fascinating insight into the composer at work. It's a miracle that there is so much information contained in such a booklet, and priced at only £6 it's got to be the bargain of the year.

Copies can be obtained direct from Shea Lolin at [www.shealolin.co.uk](http://www.shealolin.co.uk) or from the Holst Birthplace Museum in Cheltenham, tel: 01242 524846

Michael Short

There is no room in music for the second-rate - it might as well be the nineteenth rate.

— Gustav Holst —



## Spotlight on Huntingdonshire Concert Band

# A winning formula

Huntingdonshire Concert Band members are a lucky bunch. Playing in a well-established band with a considerable local heritage and appreciative (and growing) audiences, they meet weekly under only the 3rd Musical Director in their 23 year history.

What keeps them motivated to attend their weekly rehearsal after a long day at work and often leaving their family behind for the evening? It's a simple formula. A winning combination of hard work and energy ensures a memorable performance to an audience. ***'There's no better reward than to get a fantastic audience reaction to a new piece that we've been working on for weeks, sometimes even months. It makes all the hard work at rehearsals worth it.'*** says founder member and Committee Chairperson Catherine McClintock, who also leads the Flute section.



The Band was founded by the late Laurie Hurst in 1992, who also ran the local Youth Concert Band and wanted to offer adult musicians the opportunity to rehearse and perform for the local community. Laurie arranged much of the music himself in the early days, to tailor pieces to the instrumentation and also to keep costs down.

Sadly Laurie passed away in 1994, but he left the band in great shape for the future. Carole Lewis was the next Musical Director and during her 10 year residency, the Band grew from strength to strength, building a good reputation in the area and establishing a regular concert schedule.

David McClintock, the current Musical Director (also a Founder Member), has now been at the helm for 12 years. In this time, the band has noticeably improved in not only performance standard and quality, but also increased the number of concerts with a wider diversity of genres and recorded 2 CDs plus a live recording of a handpicked Chamber Choir and Band concert.

Band members certainly benefit from David's military music training after his years in the Horn section of the Royal Artillery Band & Orchestra. ***'David has high expectations for the band in terms of what we can achieve as a performance standard. It's very rewarding to hear audiences commenting on our improving standards.'*** says Anna Thompson who leads the Clarinet section.

Players are mainly local but many can travel up to an hour each way for rehearsals. Current members still include a handful of 'Founder Members' and also a small percentage of those who graduated from the local Youth Concert Band. They're a committed lot these HCB members.

There is sadly a lack of natural progression within the local area which does hamper recruitment for the band. The Youth Concert Band, once a very popular and reputable band within the area, is no longer running. Recruitment is largely down to new people moving into the area or 'Word of Mouth' via local instrumental teachers and local music professionals playing with other local ensembles.

The band makes efforts to be visible in the local community with their charity and other organisational support. Each year, the Band performs a Big Band Concert, alongside the Foundation Class from a local Performing Arts School to give the students a valuable platform to showcase their talent while performing with a live band.

This partnership is now in its 9th year. The band are regular performers for the RAFA Wings appeal, and for SSAFA, the UK's oldest military charity, raising thousands from each concert. Other supported charities have included East Anglian Children's Hospices, The Sick Children's Trust, Dravnet Syndrome, A-T Society.

The 50-strong band has a standard instrumentation however they do struggle to recruit percussion and 'rare breeds' such as Oboes, Bassoons and Horns.

The Musical Director has a budget of around £1,500 for new music each year but the band also benefits hugely from their own music library that has been built up over the last 15-20 years, owing to wise buying decisions made by previous Musical Directors.



On new repertoire, current Musical Director David McClintock says ***'We're always adding new repertoire and we do find our audiences particularly appreciate a 'good tune', from the likes of Nigel Hess and Philip Sparke. We're not really fans of playing the high-end Symphonic compositions just for the sake of it, mainly as our audience doesn't enjoy it and won't come back!'***



It is this combined passion and effort from the committee that helps HCB to remain creative and adventurous in terms of concert schedules, CD recordings and new repertoire.

The band is supported by a very strong committee who put a huge amount of effort into making sure the members have a say in how the band develops.

As well as fulfilling the fundamental roles of administrating the band, maintaining the music library, promoting concerts, designing and maintaining the website and managing the finances, they still have the focus and energy to ensure that members are proud to be part of the band and want to come to rehearsals each week.



**Huntingdonshire Concert Band**

[www.hcband.co.uk](http://www.hcband.co.uk)

@hcbtweets

[www.facebook.com/huntsconcertband](https://www.facebook.com/huntsconcertband)



# ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Wing Commander Duncan Stubbs was appointed the Principal Director for Music for the Royal Air Force in 2009. Commissioned as an officer in the Royal Air Force in 1990 he has had experience as a Director of Music for over 25 years working with several award winning Community and Youth Bands during that time.

## An Assessment of Wind Bands in Britain Today

Last year I conducted a concert featuring both the Central Band of the Royal Air Force and the Surrey County Youth Wind Orchestra. During the interval I was asked the question; "What is the difference between a 'wind band' a 'military band' and a 'wind orchestra'". I jokingly replied "a Wind Band can play loud and very loud; a Military Band can play fairly loud and incredibly loud; a Wind Orchestra aspires to play musically". I must immediately emphasize and acknowledge the crass banality of this statement and stress the answer was intended as a humorous one. However, I subsequently realized I may well have simply reinforced an attitude which still places Wind Bands as the poor relation to the Orchestra and, possibly the brass band, even after BASBWE's 30 years of sterling effort.

**Does this matter?** If, as performers and conductors we aim for the highest quality in our work, of course this matters.

**Can the problem be addressed?** Yes, a solid foundation has been laid but much work remains. In order to tackle the issue you first have to clearly identify the problem. If 25 years as a Royal Air Force Director of Music have taught me anything at all, it is that if you want the right answers you have to ask the right questions.

**Let's start with this one: Do you regard a wind band as a symphonic group or a chamber ensemble?** I believe this question is crucial if we are to achieve the best musical results. While the two terms have clear implications the differences between them are blurred. Simplistically, let us say: 'symphonic' - broad and big, 'chamber' - intimate and small.

**A Question of Approach** In October of last year I conducted the RAF Central Band in a recording titled "British 'Classics'" (*Chandos 10847*). From the outset I wanted to replicate the original intent and concept of the composers, building into each work its own characteristic sound. To this end I decided to use minimal forces for the Holst Suites, in effect, using a 'Chamber' approach. There is considerable delicacy and clarity of scoring in these suites. For the most part we used an individual player to each part and excluded all 'optional' instruments (see Boosey and Hawkes, edited Colin Matthews). This immediately generated a lightness of touch and clarity of texture allowing for a more meaningful musical experience for the players who then took greater musical responsibility for their individual lines. The overall aim was to generate a performance as musical as Holst's wonderful writing intended. Ernest Tomlinson's delightful 'Suite of English Folk Dances' was given similar treatment for the same reason and was equally rewarding to play. On listening to Vaughan Williams 'Folk Song Suite' in its orchestral version you can hear immediately that it was conceived with a broader character in mind. The outer movements in particular have expansive sections with 'block' scoring suggesting close affiliation with his symphonic writing. A larger wind band was used to reflect the 'fuller' sound. For Grainger's 'Lincolnshire Posy' we used a further step up in musical forces. Here we really indulged in the contrasts in textures and volume that his writing invites.

The point is, for this recording, careful consideration was given to the musical nature of the finished product as required by the score. This determined the instrumentation of each work. Simply summarized: Intimate (chamber)- Holst and Tomlinson, or Broad (symphonic)- Grainger. The Vaughan Williams fell neatly somewhere between the two.

### A Question of Intonation – (Lessons from the 'Chamber' Ensemble)

I was lucky enough to have had my tertiary musical education at The University of York, an enlightened music department where I learned a great deal regarding performance practice through the medium of Chamber music.

On joining the Royal Air Force this education continued as I often played on the Music Society 'circuit' in a wind quintet with four post graduate Royal College of Music students. The fundamentals of performance practice were thus reinforced, in particular; intonation, balance, the importance of visual communication and the ability to adjust your timbre to suit the context of the music. This latter attribute is something we work hard at in the Central Band and was particularly relevant to the Holst recording. Encouraging section principals to visually communicate also greatly improves overall ensemble cohesion. One of the hardest things for any instrumentalist to do, whether amateur or professional, is to listen properly whilst playing. In the same way a professional wine or tea taster educates his taste buds to detect things us normal folk would never sense, musicians must continue to refine their listening skills if they are to contribute to a better overall performance.

Recently, I have been working with the students of the Trinity Laban Wind Orchestra on a programme of music largely comprising RAF Music Services commissions. Throughout all of the rehearsals intonation remained a consistent issue. This is a common factor with all wind bands with which I have worked. It

always appears to be more of an issue than with any other large ensemble. **That raised the question: Is Intonation easier in a Symphony orchestra? and if so, why?** Firstly, I don't think it is any easier but I do believe the players are far better able to deal with the problem. **Again: why?** There are a number of reasons:

The orchestra has a developmental history going back hundreds of years that has established an accepted and proven balanced ensemble where each instrument has a clearly defined role.

*Because of this:*

There is an established hierarchy of section leaders and section groupings, whereby each individual player should be aware of where and to whom they should be listening at any one time.

*Furthermore:*

From the very first lesson all string players have to use their ears to pitch any note and are members of a 'unison' section playing a single line requiring both listening and visual communication with the section leader.

I believe this hierarchical framework, the bedrock of an Orchestra, has yet to become established within the Wind Band. In addition, Woodwind players (*I shall discuss brass players later*) are taught to be soloists. Even in a Symphony orchestra the four wind principles are soloists for only a small percentage of the time. Woodwind players are encouraged to develop a full and rich sound and to play with expression and feeling. This is clearly right and proper, but what preparation is that for a flautist or clarinetist when sitting among a large group of similarly trained individuals? They are not properly primed for the close ensemble disciplines that come more naturally to string players.

#### Are there any solutions? Let's consider some specifics.

The wind band has a considerable variety of tone colours. Whilst a characteristic and highly valued strength this does mean that:

- The number of upper partials (overtones) when many or all instruments are playing generate a rich texture full of potential 'clashes' particularly in the upper frequencies.
- The large number of treble instruments compound this problem.
- As the frequencies of the notes in the upper registers are 'closer together, intonation issues become even more noticeable.

I recently heard a ladies barbershop choir concert. The choir comprised 6 'low' altos, 6 'medium' altos, 4 'high' altos and only 2 sopranos. The balance was superb. In an orchestra a single piccolo player or a high trumpet can be comfortably heard over a full orchestra. The lesson is, high frequencies will carry.

**How does this inform our problem?** As they get near the top end of their compass, flutes, clarinets, oboes and trumpets should be encouraged to play quieter, whatever their individual dynamic marking. They will then be able to:

- More easily listen to the bass of any chord which should be full and secure thereby forming a solid foundation on which to build.
- Have a better chance to hear their fellow players, hear the other instruments in the same register and better appreciate their part in the musical structure.

Another often overlooked solution is simply to judiciously, sensibly and, above all musically, reduce numbers in order to better achieve the musical ends. There so often are large numbers of players in this upper realm. Fewer players will improve intonation. I am not saying turn players away (*see below*) but I am saying have the moral and musical courage, as a conductor with responsibility for the music, to strive for a more musical result. Your players will see you are sincere in your desire for musical improvement and, who knows, those players omitted might even be encouraged to practice in order to be the ones left playing.

**A Question of Attitude** For purpose of comparison I will only consider the symphony orchestra and brass band. While the big band (*and many other groups*) have links regarding instrumentation these two are more pertinent.

**Orchestral mentality** The symphony orchestra is the leading ensemble worldwide where instrumentalists have the opportunity for a full time professional playing career. The life is very demanding and the competition for salaried posts exceptionally keen. The standards required are extraordinarily high and should be the standards aspired to by any instrumental student. The strings provide the foundation across all the registers. All wind parts are specifically written for a set number of players, one to a part. Brass players are written in like fashion and more often than not they have endless bars rest. Both groups of instruments are used to add their individual quality for musical reasons either as soloist, as a section or in cooperation with other. The players listening skills and their awareness of their place in the score is highly developed. They take individual responsibility for all aspects of their playing, they know where they fit in, copious bars rests are often the norm. Collectively, nothing matches the symphonic splendor of an orchestra in full flow.

**Brass Band Mentality** I remain somewhat uncomfortable with the league tables and the competitive nature of the brass band world, but I firmly believe that the musical training required for this approach provides an excellent bedrock for large ensemble playing. Soloists are acknowledged, and indeed, specifically challenged as part of the competitive process. However, any rubato or individual license is subject to rigorous censure as they remain subservient to the goal of winning the contest. – Good! This means every individual, no matter what their rank or status must be aware of the whole. There is a set number of players for the ensemble and, usually through strong leadership (*the conductor*), the players have a collective goal to perform the piece to the band's best ability aiming to satisfying all the technical and musical elements required. Furthermore, given the uniformity of tone and note production and the established balance of the brass instruments, I might argue intonation problems are less acute.

**Wind Band Mentality** The symphony orchestra has a definite professional purpose that drives its goal for the highest of standards. The brass band has a definite competitive aim which drives its goal for performance qualities.

**What drives a wind band?** The National Concert Band Festival is making an excellent contribution in carrying forward the winds band's cause. When considering the groups taking part it is apparent that there are two common themes underlining the formation of the groups; social (*ie. the community bands*) and educational. I would suggest the main purpose of the wind band and, indeed, the drive behind its evolution to date, is primarily educational. Surely there can no finer or higher ideals as the drive to educate must also be the drive to achieve high standards. All too often non musical issues take precedence over musical ones and wind bands may lose sight of their musical goal.

**A Question of Balance** Here we come to the heart of the matter. The wind band is an open and inclusive organization. All are welcome and all the wind bands I have conducted invariably have a positive vibe and everyone is there to enjoy themselves. This is, of course, the essence of music making and always is its greatest strength. But, all too often I come up against a recurring problem. Some pieces do not have a bari sax or, perhaps an E flat clarinet part, is there an alto clarinet part? cornets or trumpets, or both? Sound familiar? What do we do? "Let the bari sax double the bass line" or "alto clarinet can play the alto sax part".

**A Question of Numbers** There is often a flock of flutes. How many clarinets should there be? Are there too many trumpets? I believe there is a simple and very straight forward answer to all of these questions but it requires courage on the part of the conductor and a willingness on the part of the players to put music first. In short, adjust the numbers playing (*ie the balance*) as the music dictates, varying the numbers of players within the piece if need be. If the composer didn't write for bari sax, then don't use a bari sax, maybe the composer didn't want one. If the flute parts require light, piano playing, reduce the numbers for that passage. These are musical considerations and, if players are then left counting bars, they must accept that is what the music requires.

**So What?** So what does all this mean? Where does it leave us? Should we seek for the wind band to be on a par with orchestra? Yes, we must always strive to improve. Improvement brings the highest rewards and can only increase our musical satisfaction, why else do we take an instrument out of its box? The wind band is still a comparatively young ensemble and continues to develop. Composers are writing more and more for a set instrumentation which eases the problems outlined above and helps the conductor significantly. The National Concert Band Festival is providing a vehicle to drive standards. Military Bands, as the only full time professional outlet for wind band musicians, must strive to set the standards for all to aspire to. This is my challenge.

**Approach and Attitude** The wind band is a collection of a wide variety of instruments offering a wealth of tone colours with the potential to create a huge breadth of style and emotion. This is its strength which I believe has yet to be fully utilized. This variety of instrumentation is also its potential weakness as players lack that firm identity (*as in the symphony orchestra and brass band*) of exactly where they fit and what musical part they contribute to the whole.

I firmly believe a chamber ensemble approach is essential. The wind band is a conglomeration of several different chamber groups – it is not, inherently, a coherent symphonic whole. However, herein lies its strength. Conductors should work closely with section leaders to encourage them to lead more and, in turn, link each section through the band, thereby generating closer lines of communication throughout the ensemble. In this way, developing musicality and laying fundamentals of musical performance can progress. Furthermore, musical courage and responsibility is essential in a director to make those musical decisions to employ chamber size forces as dictated by the music to provide the full range of musical contrast that embrace and enhances the symphonic ideal. If we are to 'compete' with the Symphony orchestra and not be second fiddle (*no pun intended*) then we must continue to persevere. The challenge is to utilize a chamber approach in order to embrace the potential versatility of the wind band and thus produce a coherent symphonic performance. Continue to build the quality repertoire, continue to champion the best works, but above all, (*and I here refer you back to the opening question of this article*):

**"What is the difference between a 'wind band' a 'military band' and a 'symphonic wind orchestra'".**

**ANSWER**

***It doesn't matter, so long as they all aspire to be as musical as possible.***

# BLOOMSBURY BAND

## Composers Workshop



Woodwind Ensemble composers workshop

December 1st 2015

Conductor Shea Lolin

The participants were  
(in alphabetical order):

Patrick Miles  
Nicholas Preston  
John Smith  
Carl Upsall  
Nigel Wood

**The Bloomsbury Wind Ensemble/BASBWE composers workshop was set-up by Shea Lolin and the Bloomsbury Wind Ensemble and supported by BASBWE with yours truly (chair BC) in attendance to respond, with Shea and the players to the compositions submitted; 5 composers and 5 very different pieces all with scores and parts prepared via Sibelius software.**

Shea had provided a short guide for the composers listing available instruments and some do's and don'ts. It was not the purpose of the evening to give detailed descriptions of instrument ranges, character, playing techniques etc, this was an opportunity for the writers and players to get together and go through the scores as they stood, [ fragments/unfinished/completed ] and share reflections, comments, responses.

The players were sight-reading which added to the fun and challenge of the process. Also some time was lost when fumble-fingered Connor mislaid parts during handout.....doh!

It's not easy for any of us to present half-finished ideas of any kind for others to scrutinise, listen to, look at and comment on when we know there's still work to do so hats off to all five participants who opened themselves up and accepted the responses in the spirit that they were given; supportive but to the point and sometimes very blunt!

In most cases it became clear that composers were reliant on the audio playback of their computer systems via Sibelius to help them decide whether their ideas were working or not. Several pieces had very little or no articulations, dynamics, expression markings, all the information that brings the character of the pieces alive. Like having a script without punctuation or direction. Pitches and rhythms do not make a piece of music. We are not communicating via an audio file so we must not rely on audio playback to decide the efficacy, or not, of our ideas. The score is a guide to performance so all information the composer wishes the player to have must be on the part and the part must be clear and uncluttered and look like it'll play itself with logical bar layouts and cues and bar numbering/rehearsal figures or letters at points that make sense and clarifies what the player is reading, hearing and counting. Parts should not be stapled or loose leafed but collated with practical page turns leaving the player to concentrate on the job in hand; playing not part juggling. There's no way round this, the score and parts must represent exactly what the composer wishes to hear and the player to understand. It was a constructive and entertaining evening with very spirited but always supportive and courteous responses from the players, composers and conductor.

This was a starting point and a learning curve for future such workshops. Shea, composers and players agreed it was a worthwhile evening.

Next time we'll first set up an evening with composers to go over scores and parts then pass those parts on to the players once any amendments have been made. Then we get everybody together to play through and comment on materials that have been presented and addressed in the best possible way. We will also have various Sibelius play back set-ups so the virtual can be compared to the actual at the same time yahoo!

Many many thanks to Shea Lolin and the Bloomsbury Wind Ensemble for their time, enthusiasm and care in setting this up, taking it on and making everyone feel comfortable and valued!

*Bravo folks....see you next time....*

Anyone who has compositions and/or half-finished pieces/ideas they would like to try out please get in touch via the BASBWE website or via Shea....watch this space!

**P.S.** Anyone wanting a contraptionless software playback system that embeds itself in Sib and plays the articulations and dynamics accurately (*especially on sustained pitches!*) go to Noteperformer developed by Wallander instruments in the US.

**[www.noteperformer.com](http://www.noteperformer.com)**

Noteperformer for orchestral playback it's brill!

Best wishes  
Bill Connor (Chair)



# Composers' Workshop

**BLOOMSBURY**  
WOODWIND  
ENSEMBLE



Band Room, Coram's Field's  
93 Guilford Street, London WC1N 1DN

## The Woodwind Orchestra – a short history

Civic wind groups in the United Kingdom can be traced back to medieval times. Early music only existed in the church or the royal court. As wind music was not religious, it began mostly in the court. Henry VIII celebrated his coronation in 1509, which included three days of entertainment, with performances from several wind groups. In 1749 Handel's Music for the Music for the Royal Fireworks was performed as a piece for winds after King George II ordered Handel to remove the string parts. Harmoniemusik (music exclusively for wind instruments) was important in the eighteenth century for open-air and important social occasions. Harmoniemusik helped to development of the symphony orchestra: Mozart and Beethoven became more daring in the way they wrote for the wind sections in their symphonic works. Anton Reicha and Franz Danzi were two pioneering composers of the wind quintet but by the end of the nineteenth century, interest in this ensemble began to fade. Military bands were formed in the nineteenth century (wind, brass and percussion). Famous composers such as Rossini, Liszt and Wagner had their works arranged for bands to be played in open air events to advertise their music. Holst, Vaughan Williams and Grainger began writing original works for the wind orchestra in response to these arrangements. As the wind orchestra developed, sectionals needed something interesting – and the woodwind orchestra as a medium was born!

## Writing for woodwind orchestra

The sound of the woodwind orchestra is a real mix – it can be subtle and gentle yet strong and penetrating. In conducting this ensemble for about ten years now, I am reminded time and time again that the sounds are very similar to a pipe organ. The flutes/piccolos can be the 4ft and 2ft stops, the clarinets the 8ft and bass clarinets, bassoons and baritone saxophones the 16ft stops. But amongst the 'pitches' – i.e. the range they play in, there are many colours. A saxophone can be a 'reed' stop on an organ – a bold sound that mixed with others, can add great depth and power. But of course it helps that I am an organist! With all composing and arranging it is all about knowing your instruments – know what they can (or can't!) do. It's a good idea to find out what amateur players can or can't do too – the score writing programme Sibelius may tell you it is ok – but it can be different in practice.

## Dynamics – volume

Dynamics make for a colorful score both collectively and in the singular. A good composer can bring out instruments from the page. This allows for musicians to get on with playing rather than asking lots of questions about how it should be done. Also bear in mind the instruments you are writing for; asking an oboe to play their bottom notes ppp would be almost impossible – even with a professional player. Similarly asking a flute to play fff at the bottom of their range is difficult. This is what composers spend years getting right.

## Articulation – how the note is played

In my estimation, articulation is the single most important instruction to a woodwind player. Knowing when to tongue a note and when not to (slur) can make such a difference in sound. It is also practically impossible to articulate very quickly (i.e. fast running notes with no slurs) – especially for amateurs. Imagen Barber's Adagio for Strings without slurs – it would take away the single most important feeling from the piece.

## Instruments and range – what they are and what they can do

Get to know your instruments and what they can do. Learn their compass (i.e. how many notes and in what range) and learn how easy/difficult it is to achieve the extremes – flute players don't mind going very high but they often complain about going too low! Don't always use all the instruments all the time. The woodwind orchestra is made up of choirs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, saxophones and bassoons – all of varying sizes.

### Here is a complete list of possible instruments that could be used in the woodwind orchestra:

- |   |   |                        |
|---|---|------------------------|
| 1. Piccolo  | 6. Clarinet ( <i>Most common is the Bb instrument</i> ) | 11. Alto Saxophone     |
| 2. Flute  | 7. Alto Clarinet  | 12. Tenor Saxophone    |
| 3. Oboe   | 8. Bass Clarinet  | 13. Baritone Saxophone |
| 4. Cor Anglais  | 9. Contrabass Clarinet                                  | 14. Bassoon            |
| 5. Eb Clarinet ( <i>high pitched like the piccolo</i> ) | 10. Soprano Saxophone                                   | 15. Contrabassoon      |

PICCOLO	FLUTE	OBOE	COR ANGLAIS	ED CLARINET
CLARINET	ALTO CLARINET	BASS CLARINET	CONTRABASS CLARINET	SOPRANO SAXOPHONE
ALTO SAXOPHONE	TENOR SAXOPHONE	BARITONE SAXOPHONE	BASSOON	CONTRA BASSOON

There are some very specialist instruments that could be used such as alto flute, bass flute, contra alto clarinet, bass saxophone etc but the list is the most common instruments you will come across. The sound palate is endless when you look at the vast and unique range of instruments there are in the woodwind family.

## Summary

Always when you are writing for any instruments – the more you know about the instrument the better. Be detailed with your instructions – the more you put on the page the less questions you will get in rehearsal. Notation after all was designed as a memory aid to recapture the art of music – not as an art within itself. Talk to people who play specific instruments – ask them if passages are playable – some of the very best composers did this so there is no shame in it. Finally, try to put yourself in the performers shoes – how would YOU like to play the music you have just written. Perfecting this art takes years of study and practice – just like learning an instrument. In the same way you would practice your instrument each day then being able to compose and arrange needs consistency and dedication.

Shea Lolin  
Music Director, Bloomsbury Woodwind Ensemble

Home telephone: 020 8553 4973 | Mobile: 07730 581 864 | E-mail: mail@shealolin.co.uk Bloomsbury

# Twisted Skyscape

## Review - John Holland

Reading the list of composers involved with the 'Twisted Skyscape' project, you think that you'd expect to be listening to a brand new CD of 'band' music; Sparke and Gorb are doyens of concert band literature, of course, but this is something else entirely, and very, very refreshing...

To my mind, the thing that defines the 'woodwind orchestra' sound above the concert band is clarity; the multitude textures of brass and percussion can sometimes hinder, rather than help, and so Shea and Christopher, through this album (*and hopefully beyond, in time*) are almost starting a new renaissance in woodwind repertoire (*one hopes*).

I've mentioned Sparke, and his 'Overture' is probably the best way to open the album (*any album, quite honestly*). The spotless tuning and almost military precision of the Czech PWE under Shea's baton is an absolute wonder – just over six minutes of trademark melodies and flourishes, indicative of his maturing compositional style, but still resolutely Sparkeian. (*I'm going to be honest and say that I miss the percussion towards the end*).

A note about the Czech involvement – why record over there when there are so many talented players in the UK? Probably too expensive here – I don't know, but the Prague acoustic allows the talents of the ensemble to shine through, so there must have been some benefit to completing this very British project overseas. I'll get this out the way now: it's perhaps slightly irksome to me, being a completist, that not all potential woodwind instruments are represented in the orchestra (*no alto/bass flute, no cor anglais, no e flat or alto clarinet, no soprano or bass sax*) but as this is the start of something new, perhaps the instrumentation could be played with and developed further as other composers begin to start writing for it (*including me, perhaps*)...

Gary Carpenter's 'Pantomime' is next up and in contrast, this seems to work much better for the ensemble than the Sparke – can't put my finger on why – the swirliness of the 'Prologue' gives each section a moment in the sun, followed by a 'Cavatina', featuring the most gorgeous tunes for the double reeds – this could almost be a good subject for a longer symphonic movement; I'm not sure why the 'Polka' makes an appearance in this movement, it seems a bit out of place, but the material is excellent, nevertheless. The 'Dream Calypso' is a bit muddy for my liking, but the 'love duet' that closes it is lovely, however the button ending is a bit of a wrench. I love the 'Grand March' that follows – it's deliciously mad and twisting, as is the 'Waltz-Finale', giving the saxes plenty of work (*oh, the tonguing!*), including a rather fab, lyrical baritone solo – I could imagine this movement being a standalone piece, really, it's very strong.

Now to the first of two Hussey pieces, 'Dreamtide'. (*Chris, with Shea, has been an integral part of this project and it is right that his work should feature so prominently – he knows exactly how to bring out the best in players and create fantastic soundscapes – more on that later*). Opening with the sound of sharply-drawn breath from the ensemble (*and throughout in various other places, 'Twilight's Haze'*), the piece is an other-worldly evocation of dream, originally adapted from his choral work of the same name (*I'll drop the W bomb now – it's a little bit Whitacre-ish, but more English – does that make sense?*). The programme notes suggest a 'motor rhythm' for the second movement ('Wild Reality') and here the accuracy of the ensemble shines through – goodness knows how long it must have taken to get all that together in the studio (*the whole album took just two days, but it doesn't feel rushed in any way – all credit to the production team*). Some of the same dreamy, 1950's-style harmonies from movement one return to round out the 'Dream Within a Dream' – lots of solid playing here (*perhaps the saxes could have been less aggressive, though, a touch on the hard side at times*).

### A worthy adaptation and deserves to be heard by a wider audience.

I have to mention this, as it bugs me a little – there are no women involved, at all, in the creative process of this project; all male composers, all male musicians, all male studio team – where were all the women?! I urge any female composers, in particular, reading this, to consider writing for the woodwind orchestra – being a patron of this project, I certainly wouldn't want the continued legacy of this project to remain exclusively white male... Rant over.

Onto Adam Gorb's fantastic 'Battle Symphony', a self-confessed 'pastiche', it certainly begins with a very 'school band' simplicity, soon escalating to something more Gorbian, particularly the mashed up harmonies that conclude movement 5 ('Soldier's drunken panic'), ending up in a stupefied heap on the floor as if all the notes had fallen off the page. The work, like Sparke's 'Overture' was written for talented young musicians in Berkshire – is this the new breeding ground for top notch wind talent in the country, perhaps? This piece, along with the Carpenter and Sparke, were all written prior to the millennium and adapted slightly for the purposes of this project – I would be interested to hear brand new pieces from them for the same line-up, eventually, if only to hear how their compositional voices have changed over the last 20 years or so.

The whole project could not have happened without the generous support of numerous individuals and organisations, all listed in the booklet – it is heartening to know that, although not all the money was found via crowdfunding, it certainly showed that the desired result could be achieved – I mentioned the lack of women in the creative process, but there is certainly no shortage of women willing to show their financial support, which is nevertheless encouraging.

It remains for me to spend a few lines on the piece that started this all, Hussey's eponymous 'Twisted Skyscape', a maelstrom of energy originally written for amateur musicians to accompany Matthew Kemp's short film 'Flux' and premiered in London in 2008, both music and images the result of national arts funding – again, money makes things happen (*I often wish it wasn't like that*). The growling, snarling, sinewy textures of this work are manifest brilliantly by the professional ensemble (*I don't want to be drawn into an argument about amateur vs. professional, thanks*) and kept in control by Shea throughout. In a way, as absolute music, it's a bit repetitive, but there is much for an audience to latch on to, particularly a handful of really infectious rhythms that pervade the second movement ('The Human Footprint') – I can almost imagine this piece working well for dance and having even further interpretations in the future (*a new 'Rite of Spring', perhaps?*)

Driven by the combined energies of Shea and Chris, they have heralded the arrival of the woodwind orchestra and it is now up to us to embrace it, compose for it, perform it, publicise it and get people talking about it – there are instrumental ensembles that exist independently of each other (*choirs of clarinet, saxophone, etc.*) but, please, now it's arrived, let's do what we can to keep things together; programme creatively, experiment and give things a twist.

John Holland





Tom Davoren

## Amelia Earhart Release

**Amelia Earhart's pioneering spirit lives on in an exciting transatlantic project**

A year long collaborative project based on the story of Amelia Earhart's first transatlantic voyage is taking flight this week for Welsh composer Tom Davoren. The first in a string of international premieres of *Stillness*, a new large scale work drawing on the story Earhart's surprise landing in the West Wales town of Burry Port during her 1928 expedition, will be given by the University of Saskatchewan Wind Orchestra, in Saskatoon, Canada, on Friday 21st November.



Taking off from Newfoundland in Canada, Earhart and her crew (comprising of fellow pilot for the journey Wilmer Stultz and engineer Louis Gordon) intended to finish their journey at the English port of Southampton. Burry Port Harbour would prove to become a safe haven for the daring female aviator, from Kansas USA, when late in the expedition visibility and weather proved too poor to reach the final target, even resulting in missing an emergency stopping point of Valentia in Ireland along the way.

*Stillness*, a title taken from a quote in the Llanelli Star newspaper printed on Earhart's arrival, draws together ensembles from locations and organisations with key connections to the Earhart story for performances throughout 2015 and 2016 in North America and at home in the United Kingdom. The world premiere will be given by this week the University of Saskatchewan Wind Orchestra; where Tom will attend rehearsals, deliver a talk in the department of music and visit the burgeoning brass band scene in the city headed by former Grimethorpe percussionist Will Martin.

2016 will then see the United States premiere given in Earhart's home town of Kansas, by the University of Kansas Wind Ensemble, followed by performances in the United Kingdom (at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama) by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force and in New York by the Montclair State University Wind Symphony.

The project will conclude in September 2016 where Burry Port Town Band, conducted by Dr. Darrin Oehlerking from the University of Saskatchewan, will give a performance (supported by Ty Cerdd) of the piece at the very location where Earhart made her landing, alongside the culmination of a primary schools project with composer and Chair of BASBWE Bill Connor, exploring 'first time' music making with local young people through the Amelia Earhart story.

### Quotes

#### Dr. Darrin Oehlerking - University of Saskatchewan

*'The University of Saskatchewan Wind Orchestra is thrilled to be involved with this musical project involving Tom and his musical description of Amelia Earhart. The ensemble is committed to performing not only standard wind band repertoire, but also new and innovative compositions. To be a part of such a unique international collaboration is a true honour.'*

#### Tom Davoren

*'This project has been a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with the local history of Burry Port, the place where I first encountered a brass instrument through the local town band. I'm also very grateful that we are able to physically touch so much of the Earhart story through the generous support of Dr. Darrin Oehlerking (University of Saskatchewan), who will visit us in Wales in 2016, Dr. Paul Popiel (University of Kansas), Dr. Thomas McCauley (Montclair State University), Wind Commander Duncan Stubbs (Central Band of the Royal Air Force) and Graham Howe, and all at Burry Port Town Band.'*

#### Wing Commander Duncan Stubbs - Central Band of the Royal Air Force

*'Royal Air Force Music prides itself on it's quality and innovation. Involvement with this international commission, particularly from such a composer as Tom Davoren with whom we have have a fruitful association, is an occasion we relish. The links with other countries and the overall aeronautical theme also provide us with exciting new opportunities for musical development into the future.'*

#### Dr. Paul Popiel - University of Kansas

*'The University of Kansas Bands are thrilled to be part of this international consortium celebrating the great Kansan, Amelia Earhart. Throughout its 100+ year history, the band program has shared Amelia's pioneering spirit through its support of new music. Tom Davoren is a great composer who will undoubtedly be superb at telling Ms. Earhart's story through music.'*

#### Gwyn L. Williams - Director, Ty Cerdd (Music Centre Wales)

*'Ty Cerdd are delighted to support Burry Port Town Band in their Amelia Earhart project with composer Tom Davoren. It's an exciting commemorative project which fulfils our core objective of commissioning new music from Welsh composers for performance by community groups in Wales, whilst promoting the music of Wales on an international stage.'*

#### Dr. Tom McCauley - Montclair State University Wind Symphony

*'When approached by Tom to participate in this exciting new project, I immediately agreed to be a part of it. Having had the privilege to work with him previously, I was certain that participation in the "Amelia" project would be something my students and I would relish. Tom Davoren is musically wise beyond his years, and the Montclair State University Wind Symphony and I are honoured to be a part of making "Amelia" come to life.'*

### Performance Timeline:

Canadian Premiere: University of Saskatchewan Wind Orchestra, conducted by Dr. Darrin Oehlerking, November 2015.

British Premiere: Central Band of the Royal Air Force, conducted by Wing Commander Duncan Stubbs, February 2016.

American Premiere: University of Kansas Wind Ensemble, conducted by Dr. Paul Popiel, TBC 2016.

New York Performance: Montclair State University Wind Symphony, conducted by Dr. Thomas McCauley, TBC 2016.

Welsh Premiere and Primary Schools Project: Burry Port Town Band and local primary schools, conducted by Dr. Darrin Oehlerking with Bill Connor.



# Hope University Wind BandFest

(part Liverpool University Cornerstones Festival)

**A large number of enthusiastic musicians from across Merseyside took part in a special wind band event on Saturday 28th November at Hope University Liverpool.**

**The event was a joint collaboration between the University and the British Association of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles. (BASBWE)**

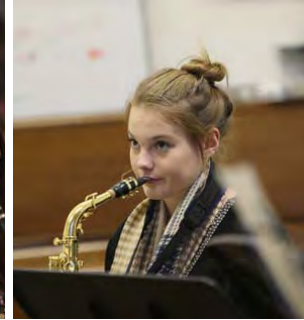
The ensembles sessions were led by Professor Craig Hamilton, Director of Bands, at Ouachita Baptist University, Arkansas, USA. For Professor Hamilton this was his second visit to Liverpool to undertake work with Merseyside musicians. As well during the day there were a number of special Master classes on instrumental technique.

The musicians thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of the day, took part with great enthusiasm and were able to really further develop their skills, both as ensembles and players. Professor Hamilton shared many wise words of wisdom with those that attended, some catch phrases throughout the day were, ***"Music comes from the heart, sit as you stand, Air as against use of the tongue", but above all listen.*** Professor Hamilton gave each group taking part, (Archbishop Beck Catholic College Concert Band, Magull Concert Band, Sefton Schools Wind Ensemble, and Hope University Wind Band) an hour's session on ensemble playing. The remarkable difference make to each group was an amazing experience for both players and conductors.

A very special part of the day was the culmination of a project run by Bill Connor (Chair of BASBWE) working with the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School yr 4/5 students and the Archbishop Beck Catholic College Band in performance of "It's raining Cats and Dogs", a commissioned piece specially devised with and performed by the primary school pupils and the Archbishop Beck college Band with audience participation. Adam Roberts, Hope University Graduate composer assisted in the workshops and performances.

*The project was designed to work over four Friday afternoon workshops with the primary pupils that led up to the Saturday Festival performance. The workshops focused on communal pulse, rhythm and vocal improvisations and word associations looking at how you get an idea, what you can do with those ideas and how a composer might shape those ideas into a fully fleshed out piece for performance with other reading musicians. These pupils will be joining the instrumental tuition service from next September and this project is part of a series of similar projects run by BASBWE to work alongside schools and music hubs throughout the country giving participants and teaching staff the experience of creative activities alongside the development of musical literacy and instrumental performance skills.*

Course tutors were, Chis Tratt and Chris Burridge (Flutes) Andrew Roberts (Clarinets) John Padfield (Saxes) Sean Chandler (Upper brass) Jonathan Phippen (Lower Brass) Matthew Whitfield (perc) Per Nielsen Jazz Workshop and Anne James (Samba). The Event was devised, organised and run by Anne James of Hope University. Many thanks to Bruce Hicks and Chris Tratt from Archbishop Beck College and a big thank you to Blessed Sacrament staff and pupils and their very supportive parents! **Watch this space.....more next year!**



Following a full programme of master classes the event closed with an evening concert given to an appreciative audience. The concert featured the Hope University Band the Magull Community Band. Anne James from the University speaking after the event said

***"This has been a most remarkable, high achieving and musical experience! Where performers as young as 8 to 88 took part, yes music does come from heart."***

## The Sherborne Summer School of Music

The Sherborne Summer School of Music was something beyond what I would have imagined. As a participant of the Wind Conductor's Course, and a student of Wind Conducting back in Canada, I was blown away by the week of intensive conducting that we accomplished in a short 7 days' time.

To start off though, the school itself is something remarkable. Located in a small town and run out of a boy's private school, the Sherborne Summer School of Music was above and beyond what I would have imagined for a week long workshop. The evening events scheduled, such as a Wednesday night formal dinner with live dinner orchestra and cabaret show, to the final night where a quiz game is held with great comedic value and great hosts. In addition to all of the evenings, there are concerts held every single day, whether they are solo mini-recitals or large ensemble short concerts. There's so much to do and see throughout the entire week that it's practically impossible to experience everything in one week; which makes you want to go back for another week just to see the rest of what you missed.

The accommodations themselves were fantastic as well. Great food the entire time and a great pub and café located on the school's premises. I was personally quite impressed at the options available for people with food restrictions. For me personally, I'm a vegetarian and was in awe at the effort put into the meals that I would get to enjoy thoroughly for the entire week.



Now for my favourite part of the entire experience, the conducting course itself. Mark Heron, Cynthia Johnston Turner, and Bjørn Sagstad, the three clinicians running the course, were absolutely fantastic. Each of them had a wealth of knowledge that all of the participants who were taking the course were able to learn from. Each with their own styles, tricks, and approach to the music allowed us, as students, to really get different perspectives of how we as the conductor could show and embody the music. I really found it valuable to have three clinicians who were willing to work so closely with each and every one of us students and who didn't all agree on every aspect of conducting; it allowed for us to grow as conductors in the direction we felt most natural.

Overall, I cannot express in words just how valuable this workshop was to me personally as I am still trying to process exactly what I learnt during my time at the school. What I can attest to though is the fact that the Sherborne Summer School of Music is definitely worth the experience of being surrounded and engulfed in an intensive week of musical training. It was a real pleasure and complete honour for me to be able to attend the school and learn all that I did.

**Andrew Kieran Young**  
4th Year Music Student  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

# Sherborne

## *Summer School of Music*

*31 July - 7 August*

### **BASBWE Wind Conducting Course & Wind Ensemble**

Mark Heron, Bjørn Sagstad

Cynthia Johnston Turner

*composer in residence* Martin Ellerby

### **Composers' Workshop**

Malcolm Singer

### **Chamber Orchestra**

John Georgiadis

### **Mixed Chamber Music**

Delme String Quartet, Sarah Francis,

Ian Mitchel and Wendy Philips

*7 August - 14 August*

### **A Journey Through Jazz**

Mike Hall

### **Symphony Orchestra**

Christopher Seaman

*other courses running concurrently include four choirs, orchestral  
and choral conducting courses, piano and vocal masterclasses*

**Sherborne** *Summer School of Music*

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www.maecenasmusic.co.uk



# 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

## December 14 - 17 2016



The “Midwest Clinic International Band Orchestra and Music Conference” will take place in Chicago USA in December 2016.

Bruce Hicks will be leading a party from the UK, and will give a full report on the BASBWE website on his return.

[www.basbwe.net](http://www.basbwe.net)

McCormick Place West  
2301 S. Indiana Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois 60616