The Beginnings of Wind Music, Renaissance and Baroque

by Timothy Reynish

The fifth in an occasional series of historical surveys of wind music by Tim Reynish written especially for *Winds*, which appeared as follows:

One hundred and forty years of Music at Kneller Hall (Winter 1996/1997)
British Wind Music 1922-1982 (Spring 1997)
British Wind Music Renaissance 1982-1991 (Autumn 1997)
British Wind Music Renaissance 1991-1997 in (Winter 1997)

Music on the Battlefield

Gordon Turner's excellent book on the history of Kneller Hall, The Trumpets will Sound, (published Parapress 1996), reminds us of the vital part played by musicians in war throughout the ages, and the subsequent role of military music in the development of the wind of both band and symphony orchestra. He charts the early days from the Battle of Halidon Hill in 1333, the first time that drums were recorded as part of the army. As the ballad ran:

This was do with mery sownde,
With pipes, trompes and tabers therto,
And loud clarionnes thei blew also.

Music in Court, Church and Civic Life

The Middle Ages is one of the richest periods in the development of the arts, but whereas the architects, painters and a handful of poets and writers left us great examples of their industry, musical traditions were largely lost. Until the invention of printing in the 16th century, music was largely improvised, passed down through generations in the same way as the great epic poems and songs. Key figures in the Middle Ages were the minstrels and jongleurs, forming themselves into unions or guilds as early as 1288, when the Nicolai-Brüderschaft was founded in Vienna. They were versatile: "I am a fiddler, I play the bagpipe and flute, harp, chifonie and giga, psaltery and rote, and I can sing a song as well" boasts one.

The First Musicians Union

Gradually these itinerant musicians became an important part of community life; in England groups of civic minstrels were called 'waits', the equivalent of the Italian pipers and German Stadtpfeifer or town musicians. Gradually too, musicians gained respectability and employment in the church, while naturally at court, pomp and circumstance was enhanced by the deployment of musicians. There is a great deal of pictorial evidence of the use of wind, brass and percussion, perhaps best shown in the magnificent woodcuts of 1512, *The Triumph of Maximilian*.

Performance of renaissance and much Baroque music languished until the latter half of the twentieth century, when investigations led to the professional development of authentic performance of 'Early Music'. The late David Munrow led the field, and his book and set of records, Instruments of the Middle Ages published by OUP in 1976, reads like a detective story, piecing together the musical practice of four centuries from contemporary pictures and writings and from the few examples of pre-1600 instruments extant.

Some idea of the wealth of music making in the 16th century can be culled from contemporary accounts. A procession to honour Charles V of Spain had no less than fifty trumpeters, while in England the collection of instruments of Henry VIII included 154 flutes, 22 cornetts, 21 crumhorns, 17 shawms and 11 bassoon-type instruments.

The climax of this period is undoubtedly found in the canzonas and ricercares of Italy of the late 16th Century and in particular those of the Venetian School. The great antiphonal works of Giovani Gabrieli and his contemporaries were conditioned by the architecture of St. Mark's Cathedral, with galleries surrounding, each with an organ. It is convenient to cite his *Sonate pian e forte* of 1597 as the first work specifying dynamics as well as the orchestration of two choirs, one with violin and 3 sackbuts, one with cornett and 3 sackbuts. Already experiments were underway with the newfangled opera, and in 1606 Monteverdi was able to write the first masterpiece in this genre, *Orfeo*, with an orchestra of over 40 instruments.

The earliest permanent public groups of wind were consorts of shawms or of two cornetts and three sackbuts. These proliferated, carrying out civic duties throughout Europe, and every town had a group of Stadtpfeifer, many until the turn of the nineteenth century when revolution and legislation did away with these 'waits'. A great deal of music for five instruments, either recorders, or wind, or violas, or sackbuts and cornets, can be found in modern editions, including works by Holborne, Brade, Susato, Pezel and in 1661 Matthew Locke's *Musick for His Majestie's Sackbuts and Cornetts* to celebrate the Restoration of the Monarchy, of which more anon.

The Influence of Military Music

Drums and trumpets had been used in battle from time immemorial. In the Middle Ages, the Crusades had a considerable impact on Western music, through the introduction of a wide range of instruments in the Saracen armies; pipes, shawms, drums and kettledrums, cymbals and bells must have made a terrifying noise.

As Raoul Camus points out in his fascinating Military Music of the American Revolution, war up to and during the Middle Ages was a haphazard affair, with soldiers engaged in hand to hand fighting. What little organisation there was would stem from drum beats used to give signals; later during the 17th century, as a more disciplined teamwork developed, so the army needed marches, and bands became more necessary, first with drums to which fifes and bagpipes were added.

The concept of shawms and drums seems also to have come from the Turkish Janissaries, first adopted in France and then later in England, with the establishment of 6 'hoboys' attached to the Horse Grenadiers in 1678. Musically the climax of this period is found in the *Philidor Collection* of 1705, a large body of military music by Lully, Philidor father and son, Hotteterre and others, with music for oboes in four parts and intricate parts for side drum and kettle drums.

Development of Baroque Instruments

These were the musicians and instrument makers who spearheaded the first big technological revolution in the late 17th century at the Court of Louis XIV. The old Renaissance instruments had been made in one piece, the new Baroque were generally jointed in three, with a possibility for greater accuracy in tuning, and greater flexibility of dynamics. Gradually recorders gave way to flutes, shawms to oboes, dulcians to bassoons, and under the Sun King's court musicians, Lully, Philidor, Hotteterre, we see the growth of ballet, opera and orchestral music with mixed bands of strings and wind. The traditional nursery rhyme of 'Four and Twenty Blackbirds, Baked in a Pie' was originally a satirical piece of doggerel, attacking the 'Kings Violins', brought back to England by Charles II at the Restoration in 1660.

With the theatre came the need for a richer palette of orchestral colour; horns were introduced for hunting scenes, and for martial, trumpets and drums. Throughout the Baroque, the shape of the orchestra was left to the requirements of the occasion and the whim of the composer. The six Brandenburg Concerti of 1723 are perhaps typical, the first with a solo piccolo violin, two horns and three oboes, the second with a solo quartet of violin, flute, oboe and trumpet, the fourth with violin and two flutes, the fifth with violin, flute and harpsichord, the third and sixth with solo strings. The seeds of the established wind section of the classical orchestra were sown in the mid-

Baroque military bands of the late 17th century.

In England, one of the initiatives of Thomas Cromwell's Commonwealth had been the formation of the New Model Army, which in 1660 swore allegiance to Charles 11, forming among other regiments the Grenadier and Coldstream Guards. Drummers were attached from the outset, in 1662 a fifer was added, and in 1685 a warrant was signed by the King authorising the maintenance of twelve hautbois By 1725 a pair of horns had been added, by 1748 the Coldstream Guards had an octet.

The first recorded example in England of what must have been a 'classical' orchestra is the advertisement for a concert by The Buffs, 3rd Regiment of Foot, at the White Hart in Lewes on 29th December 1749; there were ten items, four described as Symphony with French Horns, with two concertos for Hautboy, one for the German Flute, one for Violin, and solos for the French Horn and the Trumpet Tickets were not cheap, 1s 6d, but since the regiment inspection report of 1785 notes briefly 'No Band', the longest surviving British band is almost certainly that of the Royal Regiment of Artillery

Formed in 1716, the regiment was on active service in Minden in 1762 during the Seven Years War, when the commanding officer, Lt Colonel Philips, decided that the long winter evenings would be enlivened by the appointment of a band He proposed the following:

i The band to consist of eight men, who must also be capable to play upon the violoncello, bass, violin and flute, as other common instruments

ii The regiment's musick must consist of two trumpets, two French horns, two bassoons, and four hautbois or clarinetts; these instruments to be provided by the regiment, but kept in repair by the head musician

Articles of Agreement for the formation of the Royal Artillery Band, 1762.

Already pay differentials were in force since it was stipulated that "So long as the artillery remains in Germany each musician to have ten dollars per month, but the two French horns to have twelve dollars per month "

A large proportion of the band, and in fact of bandsmen and bandmasters in general right up to the founding of Kneller Hall, were German, and in fact the son of a third cousin of J S Bach, one John Michael Bach, became a member of the RA It was later agreed that the players should be men whose regularity, sobriety, good conduct and honesty can most strictly be depended upon; that are most remarkably clean and neat in their dress; that have an approved ear and taste for music; and a method of teaching; without speaking harshly to the youths or hurrying them on too fast.

The history of the Royal Artillery Band deserves its own account; briefly, strings were added during the next fifty years, and on March 1st 1811, there is recorded a programme of orchestral music with an overture by Thomas Arne During the 19th century the orchestra became world famous for its playing, and with the appointment of Zavertal in 1881, the orchestra built a reputation as one of the greatest in Europe, to rival the Philharmonic, with composers such as Dvorak being frequent visitors to Woolwich

The Classical Harmonie

From these militaristic beginnings, what was perhaps the greatest development of repertoire of the wind ensemble took place in the latter part of the 18th century, under the enlightened patronage of courts throughout Europe but particularly in the Austro-Hungarian Empire The culmination was in the great masterpieces of Mozart, the *Serenades* in C Minor, E♭ and B♭, and the lesser works in similar vein by Haydn, Beethoven, Krommer and Hummel, but scores of works by lesser composers exist, especially of operatic arrangements by Wendt, Triebensee, Wendlak and other players

The next article in this series will explore the wealth of the Harmonie, the little-known music of the French Revolution, and will celebrate the birthday of the Cavaliere Ladislao Zavertal, 1849 - 1842

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