

The Practice and Context of a Private Victorian Brass Band

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The outline history of British brass bands is easy to plot. Most were a product of the commodification of piston valve brass instruments, which in the middle of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of sophisticated production techniques and lower raw material costs, were considerably cheaper to produce and buy than brass instruments had ever been before. These instruments were easy to play, and the most successful designs were invented almost exactly at the same time as key economic, social and demographic factors came together to provide an ideal environment for their mass-marketing.

Prominent among these favourable factors were population growth, urbanization and efficient marketing strategies. In addition, a new mass leisure industry was developing as many working-class people began to enjoy the benefits of better financial circumstances, hire purchase agreements, access to recreational time and railway travel.

The higher orders of society encouraged the participation of the working class in music-making, subscribing to the widespread belief that communal music-making might prove to be a panacea for the social crisis which many perceived to be looming.¹ This 'crisis' was more imagined than real, but it was no less a cause of concern because of that. Not only demographics, but also systems of belief and social order were changing. Moral reformers preached the merits of 'rational recreations' and 'self improvement'. The acquisition of deft musical skills by members of the working classes was encouraged, in the belief that this would facilitate the development of a mass working-class population possessing tastes and values in harmony with those of the dominant class. However, though such sentiments and intentions contributed to the background of the development of brass bands, in

¹ There were, of course, several dimensions to this. Eric Mackerness, in *A Social History of English Music*, London, 1964, has put forward the view that any form of communal music-making was interpreted as virtuous, because it relied on co-operation. In fact, the issues were more complex and involved matters such as the status of different types of music.

reality, the primary causes of bands becoming a mass activity were deeply commercial.

By the 1880s there were many thousands of brass bands, and they were distributed throughout the country. It was one of the most widely experienced forms of popular music. Indeed, in some respects, brass bands provide the classic illustration of the relationship of music-making to the buoyant producer–consumer dynamic of the Victorian period. But how should we position brass bands in British music history? Do they offer an example of musical continuity, or of change? Above all, how similar to or different from each other were brass bands? Should the term ‘brass band’ refer to a range of types, rather than a single genre?

This chapter will focus on a case study of the Cyfarthfa Band, and on the extent to which understanding the context and culture of such a band is the key to understanding its musical behaviour. But because the Cyfarthfa Band was not typical of Victorian brass bands, we need first to consider Victorian amateur brass bands in general.²

The formation of most brass bands was financed by public subscription or through a hire purchase agreement. In such agreements, an employer usually acted as the guarantor for the loan. Indeed it was common for band magazines and other publications to print ‘model letters’ which entreated groups of workmen to acquire such loans.³ Petitions requesting a guarantee for a loan were often accompanied by a deferential request for permission for the band to carry the name of the relevant mill, factory and so on; contrary to popular belief, few employers actually set up and directly financed works bands merely as an act of philanthropic benevolence.

When a band *was* set up, it soon became, in most practical senses, independent of the agency that had supported its foundation – whether that agency was an employer, a mechanics institute, a church or whatever. It was precisely this feature – the speed with which bands became independent of their sponsors, their capacity to become discrete musical institutions – that caused William Booth to go to elaborate lengths to separate Salvation Army bands from the rest of the brass band movement in the 1870s. The *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers* of the Salvation Army drew officers’ attention to ‘the advantages and dangers’

² A version of this chapter was given at the Historic Brass Society’s Festival and Symposium at Amherst, MA, in August 1995. It was published as Trevor Herbert, ‘The Reconstruction of Nineteenth-Century Band Repertory: Towards a Protocol’, in the proceedings of the event, *Perspectives in Brass Scholarship*, ed. Stewart Carter, New York, 1997.

³ Such a letter is printed in Algernon Rose’s *Talks with Bandsmen*, London, 1890, pp. 303–4.

of brass bands. Indeed Booth's directives in this respect were specific and consistent: 'The F.O. [Field Officer] must be ready to check the first beginning of anything like a separate feeling betwixt the Band and the Soldiers.'⁴

Booth's concern stemmed from his observation of the growing independence and ambition of brass bands outside the Salvation Army. It was common for them to put administrative infrastructures in place (sometimes with the help of lawyers) to emphasize and guarantee their independence and autonomy. Such infrastructures were almost always democratic but, paradoxically, most bands devolved powerful – almost autocratic – authority to a small group of members to guide the band musically and sustain discipline and propriety. The most ambitious bands focused upon contesting as their *raison d'être*, but almost all brass bands seem to have drawn pride from a sense of independence and self-ownership. They offered an alternative focus to that which members experienced in their working lives. The respect which men enjoyed as players affected the way they were seen and the way they saw themselves. Spheres of authority were different from those at work and, of course, there was the sense of collective identity which found expression in routine procedures and activities such as rehearsal nights, committee meetings and regular community obligations. Bands often further emphasized their collective and community identity through other rituals or gestures. The wearing of uniforms is an example of such a gesture. Uniforms signified and emphasized coherence and permanence; they also demonstrated the wealth of a band. Uniforms were often flamboyant demonstrations of collective pride. Brass bands did not wear them merely as show business props.

Some bands were recreational, but many had great ambitions. As the century progressed, a set of standard orthodoxies became evident. But equally evident were differences, and these differences often reflected local practices and preoccupations.

The advent of the brass band contest was the most influential agency in the process of standardization. The move towards a standard brass band instrumentation came about because of the need for bands to compete on equal terms. The brass band format which has been maintained until present times was put into place in the late 1880s, because the three most important conductors of competing bands, John Gladney, Alexander Owen and Edwin Swift, started using it consistently. Lesser bands imitated this format, and soon it was standard among publishers

⁴ *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, London, 1888, p. 54. These orders and regulations were also disseminated to soldiers through other publications such as *The War Cry*.

of brass band music. The performing style of the best bands was imitated too, and it is evident from the brass band magazines which appeared in the 1880s that by the end of the century there was a shared understanding of what the brass band idiom actually was.

The cultural identity of the Cyfarthfa Band

The Cyfarthfa Band, the main subject of this chapter, provides an interesting and important example of how some highly developed bands did not fit into the most commonly encountered stereotype. On the face of it, it might seem to be a typical example of a British brass band. Its name appears frequently in secondary sources for Welsh social history. All such sources refer to it as having been founded in 1844, in Merthyr Tydfil in the county of Glamorgan, South Wales. Many brass bands originated in the 1840s. Indeed, the development of the amateur brass band movement can be said to have started in 1844, when the Distins, the family troupe of English brass virtuosos, encountered the inventor Adolphe Sax in Paris, and negotiated the British franchise for his design of piston valve instruments. This is why many early bands were called 'saxhorn bands' – a generic term apparently invented by Henry Distin rather than Sax himself. Distin was a keen entrepreneur, who went on to establish important instrument manufacturing and music publishing concerns; the name 'saxhorn' was effectively a marketing ploy.⁵ There was no widespread amateur brass band movement in Britain before about 1844; where brass bands existed, they were small bands, usually professional – such as circus bands.

However, other aspects of the sources for the Cyfarthfa Band did not fit the usual pattern for amateur brass bands, or the development of the brass movement generally. Keyed instruments seemed to have been in use much longer at Cyfarthfa than they were elsewhere. Also, the repertoire – even in the earliest part of the band's existence – was considerably more sophisticated than that of other bands of the same period. Another important factor – perhaps *the* most compelling one – which made the Cyfarthfa Band appear different from others, concerned the social context of the town in which it was formed.

⁵ The patents registered by Adolphe Sax in Paris include one for a 'Saxhorn', but this was for a specific instrument rather than a group of instruments. It was Sax's usual practice to prefix the word 'Sax' to whatever instrument he was working on ('saxotromba', for example). Since the nineteenth century, the word 'saxhorn' has been used generically to describe valved, conical-bore brass instruments which have the bell pointing upwards – such as the tenor horn and euphonium. The word is used yet more freely in the USA.

Merthyr Tydfil is about 30 miles north of Cardiff and the south-east coast of Wales. It is the most northerly point in the southern industrial belt of Wales. North of Merthyr, up to the northern coast of Gwynedd and Clwyd, is the mountainous hinterland of central Wales, which is almost entirely agricultural. In the nineteenth century, Merthyr was by far the largest Welsh town, and one of the most important industrial centres of the British Empire. In 1851 it had a population of 46 378, compared to the next largest town, Swansea, with a population of 21 378. The present Welsh capital, Cardiff, had a population of 18 351 in 1851, and did not pass Merthyr in size until the 1880s.⁶

The growth and importance of the town came from a series of geological coincidences which made it possible for iron to be mined and smelted there cheaply and in vast quantities. For a period in the early Victorian era, one in every five tons of iron produced in the world was produced in the Merthyr area. The iron industry both of the district and of Wales was dominated by four families, each of which owned massive ironworks. The largest ironworks was the Cyfarthfa works which was established in the eighteenth century by the Crawshay family. The Crawshays were one of the most prosperous families in Britain. In 1821, William T. Crawshay had built a mock castle – Cyfarthfa Castle – overlooking the ironworks, as the family home. By the beginning of Victoria's reign, the incumbent was his son, Robert Thompson Crawshay. Cyfarthfa Castle is a large, imposing and impressive, if ostentatious, edifice which still stands and dominates most vistas of the town. It was set in several acres of well-stocked grounds with a large fishing lake. The interior of the castle was fitted and decorated with appropriate opulence.⁷

In contrast, the inhabitants of Merthyr, despite the town's industrial success, had no trappings of luxury, and seem to have experienced conditions comparable to the worst slums of London or Glasgow. In 1851, T. W. Rammell, an inspector for the Board of Health, submitted his report on conditions in Merthyr. It was as damning as it was graphic:

From a small village it has in half a century grown into an extensive town with a flourishing and busy population of more than 40,000 inhabitants, but without the existence of a single regulation promotive of the good order or well being of the community, or a

⁶ The 1851 Census, quoted in Harold Carter and Susan Wheatley, *Merthyr Tydfil in 1851*, Cardiff, 1982.

⁷ Cyfarthfa Castle is now a museum owned and run by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council in association with the Council of Museums for Wales. Some reception rooms have been carefully restored to their nineteenth-century state.

single constituted authority by whom such regulations, if existing, could be carried into effect. In a word, for all intents and purposes of civic government, Merthyr Tydfil is as destitute as the smallest rural village in the empire ...⁸

In fact, 'the smallest rural village in the empire' was probably considerably less destitute. Page after page of Rammell's report produces evidence that Merthyr was lamentably lacking in any of the most common benefits that other towns of its size and station enjoyed. Three years later, William Kay's *Report of the Sanitary Condition of Merthyr Tydfil* provided more evidence of squalor: '[We observed] without surprise, street after street of low, confined tenements, with roads unformed, without footpaths, undrained, presenting a mass of mud and filth, and destitute of the slightest provision for carrying off the refuse of a teeming population ...'⁹ While this may not necessarily present an accurate picture of the town as a whole, it remains true that Merthyr had few features in common with other places where amateur brass bands were formed. Most such places were small industrial villages on the edge of larger conurbations. Bands often had affiliations with a factory or some other source of employment that provided a collective focus. The ironworks provided a focus in Merthyr, but these other places manifestly shared a single feature of which virtually every contemporary commentator observed the absence in Merthyr Tydfil: a developed or even embryonic sense of *community*. As Rammell remarked, in Merthyr, 'whenever a man made a little fortune, or even a sufficiency for the supply of his future days, he took leave ... [for] ... a more healthy and agreeable place'.¹⁰

Thus Merthyr was clearly not the type of place which, mainly through the raw endeavours of its ordinary inhabitants, would have produced a virtuoso amateur brass band, and the extant repertory and unusual instrumentation raised further questions about the date when the band was founded.

Important evidence surviving in the Crawshay archives at the National Library of Wales shows that the band had indeed been established before 1844. A bill of sale to Robert Thompson Crawshay for '3 Eight Key'd Bugles with Tuning Slides', from Charles Pace and Son, is dated 21 March 1840.¹¹ Though piston valve instruments were widely available, Crawshay was buying keyed instruments. It therefore seems likely

⁸ T. W. Rammell, *Report to the Board of Health on a Preliminary Inquiry into ... the Sanitary Conditions of the Inhabitants of Merthyr Tydfil*, London, 1850, p. 12.

⁹ W. Kay, *Report of the Sanitary Condition of Merthyr Tydfil*, Merthyr Tydfil, 1854, pp. 68-9.

¹⁰ Rammell, *Report*, p. 11.

¹¹ National Library of Wales Cyfarthfa Papers (NLW Cyf.), Box XIV.

that the players who were to perform on them could already play, as it was valve instruments that were being promoted for players to learn on. That the band had been established in 1838 was further confirmed by a detailed account of the formation of the band printed in Crawshay's obituary.¹²

The first band – formed in 1838 – was amateur and (apparently) incompetent, so it was immediately wound up and re-formed with professional players from London, and touring show and circus players. Even in its first year, this new band was musically literate and technically competent.¹³ The first conductor, a Mr Gratian, was a London theatre musician. In the early 1840s he was replaced by a man from a similar musical background, Ralph Livesey. He and his son George were directors of the band for the rest of the century. Players were enticed to Merthyr with promises of abundant playing opportunities, good secure jobs and housing. Crawshay also employed a French arranger, a man named George D'Artney, whose only responsibility was to transcribe and arrange music for the band to play.¹⁴ The establishment of the band was motivated by the same sentiments that led to the building of Cyfarthfa Castle. It was part of the construction of an oasis of culture. The evidence clarifies the identity of the Cyfarthfa Band: unambiguously, this was a functional private band.

Throughout its existence it was entirely separate from the rest of the brass band movement. It seldom entered brass band contests. One important exception was the contest held at the Crystal Palace at Sydenham in the summer of 1860, where it won the second day's competition with a performance of the overture to Verdi's opera *Nabucco*. The 1860 Crystal Palace brass band contest was not a run-of-the mill event, and though it only existed in this manifestation (the contests were revived in 1900) for four consecutive years, it can in many senses be taken as something of a milestone in the history of brass bands.¹⁵

¹² *The Merthyr Express*, 17 May 1879.

¹³ A typescript copy of a manuscript kept at Cyfarthfa Castle, which appears to give the start of a history of the Crawshay family, relates the story of the earliest days of the band. The information in this typescript is different from, but consistent with, the story given in Crawshay's obituary.

¹⁴ D'Artney figures prominently in all writings about the band including, for example, David Morgans's *Music and Musicians of Merthyr and District*, Merthyr Tydfil, 1922. But leaving aside the band part books which are presumably in D'Artney's hand, there is no primary source material which casts light on his origins or background. Morgans claims that he was recruited from France and given accommodation on the Crawshay estate, and that he was a notorious and incurable drunkard.

¹⁵ The contest was held over two consecutive days in 1860 and 1861, the first day being called the National Contest, the second the Sydenham Amateur Contest. There seems to have been little material difference between the two events, and most bands

The Crystal Palace Company commissioned the Hull-based impresario and musician Enderby Jackson to run the contest, following the success of similar ventures at Hull and at the Belle Vue Zoological Gardens in Manchester. It drew 39 bands, most of which contested on two consecutive days. Vast crowds supported the event, which attracted much attention from the London press because it was the first large-scale brass band contest to be held in southern England. Jackson's contests provided the model if not the prototype for all brass band contests. They were carefully organized open air events, with a wide variety of attractions – such as balloon ascents – running simultaneously. Central to Jackson's organization of these contests was his liaison with the growing railway network. Bands indicated their point of embarkation on their contest application forms, and he corresponded with the railway companies to set up the novel idea of cheap day excursions.

Crawshay almost certainly put his band forward for this contest because of the distinctive nature of the event. That it was beaten by the Black Dyke Mills Band on the first day may have been a surprise as well as a disappointment. The Cyfarthfa Band did not enter many subsequent contests and seems to have been, in effect, an isolated institution, serving one sponsor and his needs. The band is mentioned by the brass band press, but it is obvious that it was regarded as special. Indeed, a correspondent writing a summary article on brass bands in Wales paid homage to the virtuosity of the Cyfarthfa Band but observed, somewhat caustically, that it could hardly be cited as a Welsh band because it was made up almost entirely of imported Englishmen.

Crawshay died in 1879, by which time the family fortunes were in terminal decline. The band did not last as a major force for long after his death; it seems to have been on the wane by the 1890s. It was during Crawshay's lifetime that the band was at its zenith. It had no democratic structures and was always led by a professional conductor who took his instructions from Crawshay, the sole sponsor. Many of the players too were professionals who, when they joined the band, took other more secure and better paid jobs, most of them in the ironworks. Some younger players joined the band during this period, but all were the offspring of the first generation members. However, some new, outstanding players were brought in, such as the great ophicleidist Sam Hughes, who, during his sojourn in Merthyr Tydfil, ostensibly worked as a 'railway agent'. In fact, Hughes may have been working in London as a professional player with Julien's orchestra and at Covent Garden,

entered both of them. The 1862 and 1863 contests were held on one day only. The contest was then discontinued until 1900, when it was held annually without a break until 1936.

in addition to his engagements with the band.¹⁶ It is probably fair to class the players as amateurs – but only just. Hughes was just one of a group of players who were highly accomplished and sophisticated musicians before they ever came to Merthyr.

The repertory

No brass band repertories from the nineteenth century are known to have survived intact and very few have survived in a state which makes their performance possible. The Black Dyke Mills band books, which probably date from 1855, are kept at the band's headquarters at Queensbury, Yorkshire, but less than half of the part books survive, and there is no full score. More complete sets survive in the library of the Besses o' th' Barn Band near Bury in Lancashire but these are later, dating mainly from the 1880s/1890s, and are written in the hand of Alexander Owen, their distinguished conductor. A number of smaller collections survive which do not contain virtuoso music.¹⁷ An abundance of printed music survives in the form of published 'journal' music, but this type of source is much less interesting than handwritten part books, which testify to the musical identity of a group of players at a particular time in history.

Though the Cyfarthfa repertory is not complete, it is by far the largest and most comprehensive brass band music library to have survived. It is also, as far as is known, the repertory which covers the longest period in the existence of any one band – it appears to have been used persistently for almost half a century. The repertory is contained in 104 part books, all handwritten.¹⁸ Most of the copies are done by two hands, almost certainly those of D'Artney, the arranger, and Livesey, the conductor. There are six sets of part books with between 13 and 20 parts in each. A label on the cover of each book identifies the set, or series, to which the book belongs: 'B', 'G', 'H', 'I', 'J', 'L'. Another label gives the name of the instrument, or part, contained in that book. Both labels are printed rather than handwritten (see Table 6.1).

Two ledgers survive which were obviously compiled by a band librarian a considerable time after most of the music was transcribed. They

¹⁶ See Trevor Herbert, 'The Virtuosi of Merthyr', *Llafur: The Journal of Welsh Labour History*, August (1988), 60–69; and Trevor Herbert, 'A Lament for Sam Hughes: The Last Ophicleidist', *Planet: The Welsh Internationalist*, July (1991), pp. 66–75.

¹⁷ Among such collections are the 'Goose Eye' band books at Keighley, Yorkshire, and part books used by the W. L. Marriner's Band.

¹⁸ A list of the works in the repertory is given in Herbert, 'Reconstruction'.

Table 6.1 Instrumentation in the Cyfarthfa part books

1	2 B	3 G	4 H	5 I	6 J	7 L
Soprano Cornet				Db	Db	Db
Soprano Cornet						Db
Cornet 1	Ab / Bb	Ab	Ab	*		Ab
Cornet 2	Ab	Ab	Ab	Ab	Ab	Ab
Cornet 3			Ab		Ab	Ab
Repiano Cornet						Ab
Bugle 1	Db / Bb	Db	Db	Bb	Db	
Bugle 2	Bb	Bb	Bb	Db	Bb	
Bugle 3	Ab					
Repiano Bugle	Db	Db	Db			
Flugel Horn						Bb
Saxhorn 1	Db / Eb	Eb	Eb	Eb	Eb	Eb
Saxhorn 2	Db / Eb		Eb	Eb	Eb	Eb
Alto Tbn	*					
Tbn 1	*	*	*	*	*	*
Tbn 2	*	*	*	*	*	
Tbn 3		*	*	*	*	
Tbn 4		*	*	*	*	
Valve Trombone		*				
Valve Trombone		*				
Baritone		Bb	*	Bb	*	*
Baritone				Ab		
Baritone				*		
Euphonium [<i>sic</i>]			*	*	*	
Euphonium						*
Euphonium						Bass
Ophicleide 1	*	*	*	*	*	
Ophicleide 2		*	*	*		
Bombardon	*	*	Bb Bass		BBb	BBb
F Bass		*		*		*
Bassi		*	*	Eb	Eb	Eb
Drum		*	*	*	*	*

Key: Column 1 gives the names of instruments which appear on labels on the covers of all part books. In Columns 2-7, an instrument pitch or an asterisk indicates the instruments named in specific series of books. The asterisk means that an instrument name appears without an instrument pitch. The table should be taken as no more than an impression of the instrumentation of the band at various points of its existence. The labelling was probably not always accurate and most sets of books seem to have been used simultaneously after the 1860s even though the instrument had changed.

do not contain a comprehensive list of all pieces in the repertory, but rather an index by genre – marches, waltzes, overtures and so on – of the music that the band performed most often when the ledger was compiled. It is evident from this catalogue that other sets of music are now lost. However, the five sets that survive seem to be those which were most frequently used, as they contain most of the more important and interesting pieces in the repertory. In all, the six sets contain something in excess of 350 pieces. Because the pieces are unique, bespoke arrangements, they are an important testimony of the technical ability of the band. The authors of the arrangements and the original works knew the players, and it was for them that they wrote. It would have made no sense for them to have written parts that were beyond the capabilities of their players.

There is little evidence of the band having played from printed music, and given that published journal music at this time was extremely simple and undemanding, it is easy to understand why. One of the prizes for the 1860 Crystal Palace contest was a set of military journals. These survive, but it appears that they were never used.¹⁹

The part books were used for the entire period of the band's existence, but they need to be read with caution, because their use changed in two important respects. First, the repertory was continuously being added to. It is almost certain that the arrangers did not routinely finish all pages of any one set of books before starting another. After all, most of the books were in day-to-day use – the contents of each set grew simultaneously; the five sets do not represent a single chronological sequence revealing the growth of the repertory. Second, the instrument named on the front of a book may not accurately indicate which instrument played that part at any given time. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the labelling was ever entirely accurate. The instrumentation of the band changed several times. For example, parts originally written for ophicleide were played by euphonium players by the mid-1870s, and keyed bugle parts were eventually played by cornets. No new parts were made for new instruments or their players. However, markings on individual leaves inside the books provide clues about a series of changes in instrumentation. It is clear, however, that the mix of keyed and valve instruments continued for much longer than it did elsewhere. After all, the players were expert keyed instrument players when they arrived at Merthyr. They had no need to acquire valve skills.

The greatest part of the repertory can be divided into three groups or types of pieces. The first served the band's function as a surrogate orchestra, and contains a large selection of music from the classical

¹⁹ The military journals are archived at the Merthyr Tydfil Public Library.

repertory. *Complete* symphonies by Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn were arranged, but derivatives from opera, particularly contemporary Italian opera, are the most prevalent sources for arrangements. Italian opera selections and overtures were performed in transcription by brass bands in Britain very soon after their first performances. The sources for these arrangements were probably short score publications such as those found in the Novello catalogues.

The second group of pieces served the band's function as a dance band. The Crawshays held elaborate banquets and balls which were famously popular among the well-to-do of South Wales and the West of England.²⁰ The part books contain a large selection of quadrilles, polkas and waltzes. In common with practices elsewhere, some of the dances, particularly polkas, were elaborated to make virtuoso solos for cornet players. But the form – very long series of repeated sections – indicates that the music was played to be danced to, not merely used as concert pieces.

The third group, which is smaller, is made up of miscellaneous pieces that do not fit easily into the other two categories. It includes some original works, none of which seem to be paralleled in other repertoires. Among them is *The Tydfil Overture*²¹ by Joseph Parry, the most important Welsh figure in the world of nineteenth-century art music. This is almost certainly the earliest original work for brass band by an established composer, and perhaps the earliest instrumental art-music work for ensemble by any Welsh composer. Other interesting works include an arrangement of 'The Triumphal March'²² by Charlotte Sainton-Dolby – probably the first arrangement for brass band of a work by a woman composer. Apart from their intrinsic musical interest, these works point to the fact that the band had a status which was quite different from that of other bands of the time, in that it seems to have been the focus of attention from some of the most prominent establishment figures of the day.

²⁰ Watercolour paintings of these occasions by the Welsh artist Penry Williams survive at the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum.

²¹ The work is undated, but it is likely that Parry composed it in the late 1870s, following his return from the USA, and prior to his appointment as first Professor of Music at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. The parts are headed 'Composed and arranged expressly by Joseph Parry for the Cyfarthfa Band'.

²² The 'Triumphal March' is part of Sainton-Dolby's cantata *The Legend of St Dorothea* (1876).

Performance practice

The surviving instruments, the part books, contemporary documentary commentaries and photographs all represent sources for the performance practice of the band, but none of these types of source on its own provides conclusive evidence. The earliest surviving photograph, probably taken by about 1850, may well be the earliest photograph of any British brass band. The new 1838 band had 20 players, and played a mixture of keyed and valve instruments, together with trombones and percussion. In 1841 Crawshay bought the three new keyed bugles mentioned above. The 1850 photograph shows a mixture of keyed and valve instruments. The only other picture taken before the end of the century that is of any research value was taken in 1873, and shows the band in attendance at a Crawshay family wedding.

At some time, probably in the late 1840s or early 1850s, Crawshay bought a number of new valve instruments. Many of these survive and are engraved with the Crawshay name. He did not buy British-made piston valve instruments which were easily available, but rotary valve instruments imported from Vienna. Why these instruments were chosen when instruments based on the Sax designs were easily available is difficult to understand – the use of such instruments in Britain is probably unique. Crawshay, like other people of his station, kept an account with a series of leading London trade houses. His supplier of musical accoutrements was Charles Pace. It is possible that he instructed Pace, one of the longest established suppliers, to obtain the best foreign instruments. A simpler explanation is that the purchase of exotic Viennese instruments was one of Crawshay's typically extravagant gestures. It further signified the exclusive and private nature of his band, at a time when piston valve instruments of the Sax design must have been commonly seen in the hands of amateurs. Despite the acquisition of rotary valve instruments, ophicleides and keyed bugles appear to have been used until well into the 1860s. Sam Hughes was with the band in 1858.

Conclusions

The idiomatic repertory of the British brass band has only really developed in the twentieth century, though the standard instrumental format has its origins a little earlier. During the twentieth century the standard brass band sound – mellow and homogenous – has provided a soundscape for a number of television and film images, because it summons up instant resonances of the Victorian working class. This

stereotype of the idiom is easily drawn, because the orthodoxies of the brass band have become so firmly fixed. But in the nineteenth century, such standardizations took some time to become established. A variety of circumstances and a multiplicity of musical and social functions must have produced several very different models of brass band. In the densely populated areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire similarities might have emerged very quickly. But elsewhere bands must have developed largely oblivious of what was to become known as the brass band 'movement'. The Cyfarthfa Band is a vivid example of such a phenomenon, but it may not be the only one. Other private bands are known to have existed, and despite the ascendancy of northern bands, the 1863 Crystal Palace contest was won by a band from Blandford in Dorset.

It is not just the twentieth-century peddlers of sound-bites who have characterized Victorian brass bands as a standard species. The Victorians themselves were eager to fashion the brass band into a series of stock images which substituted for the truth. In 1850, Charles Dickens published an article under the title 'Music in Humble Life', in *Household Words*, the magazine he owned and edited. The article took the Cyfarthfa band as a convenient model:

[Another] set of harmonious blacksmiths awaken the echoes of the remotest Welsh Mountains. The correspondent of a leading London newspaper, while visiting Merthyr, was exceedingly puzzled by hearing boys in the Cyfarthfa iron works whistling airs rarely heard except in the fashionable ball-room, opera house, or drawing room. He afterwards discovered that the owner of the works, Mr Robert Crawshay, had established among his workers a brass band ... I had the pleasure of hearing them play and was astonished by their proficiency.²³

The article properly signifies the repertory and quality of the band, but the characterization of it as a 'workers' band, the product of generous philanthropy on the part of Crawshay is thoroughly misleading. It may have suited the moral and social posture of Dickens and his associates, but it disguises the true identity of this remarkable band.

²³ *Household Words*, 1, (7), 11 May (1850), 161. Article written by George Hogarth and W. H. Wills.