

# BANGING THE DRUM SLOWLY

Evolution of Military Music – Part 2

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TWO factors which brought a forceful *crescendo* to the military band were the so-called "Janissary" Music and the inordinate military and social zeal aroused by the French Revolution. The Oriental influence was nothing new in the field of Military music. We have seen the Saracen influence in the Middle Ages. At the Renaissance, the French, envious of the kettle drums of the Hungarians, already borrowed from the Turks, introduced them into the West as *timbales*. These *Timbale's* were reserved for royalty and corps of elite cavalry, although artillery had them mounted on a chariot. Oboe bands, as we know, were also an Eastern plagiarism, and in the early eighteenth century the borrowed plumes from the Turks found favor. Janissary Music, which meant the adoption of the bass drum, the deep but portable kettledrum and the tambourine, together with cymbals, triangle and "Jingling Johnny" (the last being a popular imitation of the Turkish impliment named *chahana*).

The credit for having introduced this battery of percussion and concussion into Europe usually goes to Poland which, in the **1720'S**, had received a full Turkish band from the Sultan. Russia, not to be outdone, sought a similar favor of the Sultan in 1725. Prussia and Austria following suit and by the **1770'S** most other countries had fallen under the sway of Janissary Music. Later, borrowers dispensed with hiring Ottoman performers with negroes being employed in their

stead; these had long been employed as trumpeters and drummers in European armies. In the British army we see cymbals in the 24th Foot (1777), with bass drum and tambourine added in the Royal Artillery (1782), and a Jinglyng Johnnie and tambourines in the Coldstream Guards (1785).

These "blacks" as they were designated on the muster rolls displayed great ability and agility in the handling of these percussion instruments. Dressed in the most outlandish Eastern style and by performing their rhythmic functions they added not only to the gaiety of nations but to the rehabilitation of military music from a military point of view. In 1786 the British War Office had forbidden the "band" to be used for parading, but the new exotic craze helped to bring about the restoration of the musically cadenced step. Many of the march books of the period reveal that the instruments employed, and music were Turkish in content. The military band did not retain sole possession of Janissary Music. Mozart used this medium in the Opera "abduction from the Seraglio" (1781) and Haydn in the "Military Symphony" (1794) Hector Belioz is quoted as having said that the "alien instruments" had come to stay as they were cradled in the orchestral score but having been born in the military band. One of the contributory reasons for the emergence of military band instruments other than the simplistic instruments associated with what was called Harmonie-Musik was the necessity to develop tonal colors and balance within the military band. The addition of percussion and the advancement of wind instruments made this condition possible.

When the French Revolution broke out in 1789, military music in France was at a low ebb. Within a year France became the military music luminaries of western Europe. The watch words of the revolution, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" were but grand slogans which needed to have some cultural attachment to make the message clear to the populace with sights and sounds. It was then that the French developed the grand national festivals. To celebrate the revolution, monster parades and outdoor concerts were used. Massive bands and choirs all played and sang to praise and further the philosophical doctrine of Mirabeau and Voltaire. An outstanding part of the open-air fetes was played by the newly formed band of the National Guard. Raised in 1789 by Bernard Sarrette with 45 performers who were taken over the following year by the Paris Municipality. In 1792 the band was suppressed and although the band had limited success it became the focal point for the establishment of the ECOLE ROYALE de CHANT (later the Conservatory of Music) and the school was the mainstay for the provision of military musicians for the numerous French military bands which began to become established. The instrumentation of bands during the revolutionary period is of importance to the history of military music itself. As

planned by the Conservatory the *military* band of 1779 consisted of 1 flute; 6 clarinets, 3 bassoons, 1 trumpet, 2 horns, 1 serpent, with bass drum and cymbals. The massed bands for the fetes were of enormous dimensions. . On one occasion there were 10 flutes, 30 clarinets, 18 bassoons, 4 trumpets, 2 curved tuba, 4 buccins, 12 horns, trombones, 8 Serpent; with 10 side-drummers, bass and kettle drummers, cymbals and triangle beaters. Indeed, for spectacular effects, three hundred drummers could be mustered for a prodigious roll when needed. In this instrumentation one observes the temporary eclipse of the oboe by the clarinet. This was because the latter instrument, played with the reed uppermost and an embouchure produced a clarino (high trumpet sound). The clarinet also had a very good range from the chalumeau (low register)' to the sopranino register. Then there was the Small F flute as help in the higher registers, and Berlioz thought that such an instrument would be serviceable in ordinary orchestras.

Lastly, and more importantly, there was the addition of the trombone and serpent to give greater weight to the foundations of the wind ensemble. The reaction to the radical changes in French bands was not long in making itself manifest elsewhere. Germany, not wishing to be surpassed, immediately created a Guards band with an instrumental establishment of 1 piccolo 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 1 trumpet, 3 horns, 1 serpent and 6 Schlaginstrumenten (percussion). Britain also saw the value of a balanced instrumentation although influenced by the French Model as seen in the Grenadier Guards band of 1794 with 1 flute, 6 clarinets, 3 bassoons, 1 trumpet, 3 horns, 2 serpents and the Janissary percussion. It was agreed that by 1794 France, Germany and Britain certainly were at the leading edge of military bands worldwide.

Returning to the hub of the military band world band world in France, we see that the band of the National Guard numbered twenty-seven. Cavalry bands were eventually raised and handsomely furnished with 16 trumpets, 6 horns and 3 trombones, to which kettledrums were added in the Cuirassiers and Carbineers. The newest band which was raised was the Consular band which eventually took the place of the National Guard band and won fame under directors Michel Gebauer and Mathieu Blasius. The oboe had been restored Under the Empire (1804) with Napoleon and a larger band was allowed for the Imperial Guard. It was for this combination that Pare composed his four "Grande Marches" for Napoleon's wedding with Marie Louise in 1810.



What contributed most to France's pre-eminence in military music was the requirement for it. Secondly, it had composers of the mettle of Gossec, Catel and Mehul and Cherubini living and working in France. Thirdly, the band of the National Guard was composed of some of the finest wind band players in Europe. The output for the military band was enormous. In addition to the innumerable quick steps and other parade band and marching music and the settings of patriotic songs, there were symphonies, suites and overtures of the first rank composed for this combination. Gossec was already a pioneer in music before the Revolution broke out, having been the first to broach the symphonic form, to use a military band with an orchestra, and to demonstrate the value of the Clarinet and trombone in the latter. The Revolution, with its clear cut with the past, provided a medium for new and vibrant works from his facile pen. In terms of "form", the symphonies of Gossec take first place. There is one in 'C' which comprises one movement only, another, in F of two movements. They may not be what we now discern as symphonies but, the three movements were quite an engaging and animated work. His "Marche Lugubre", written for the transition of the body of Voltaire (1791), with those preludial notes 'for the gong and kettledrums', is a somber, moving dirge. Of greater consequence are the symphonies of Catel, who shared honors with Gossec in directing the bands. His symphony in F, written in the Hayden style is an exhilarating piece of writing, whilst the one in C displays some daring modulations, almost modern in their audacity. A symphony by Louis Jadin is even more advanced in its bolder harmonies and, incidentally, reveals a striking prophesy of what Felix Mendelssohn was to write in the Scherzo of the "Reformation Symphony".

The overtures by the composers of the Revolution are even better than the so-called symphonies. Two by Catel are of some importance, especially the one in F but another, in C, by Louis Jadin, is superior in many ways, with some unconventional touches in harmony and a quaint rhythmic shadowing of the Finale in Beethoven's Symphony in C minor. Lastly, there is an overture in F by Hyacinthe Jadin a brother Louis Jadin which stands an easy first among the overtures of the revolutionary period. Practically all this music has passed out of use but remain as outstanding treasures of military band music. "Ca Ira" attributed to the drummer Becourt is an outstanding example of music which has withstood the test of time. It remains a well known and often played march, being a staple of French-Canadian regiments.

Turning to Germany the great composers of this era also lent their hand to the creation of band music. Dittersdorf, Franz Hoffmeister, Pleyel and Franz Kummer began writing for the band combinations. Some of the music was forgettable but it was important material to add to the repertoire. Beethoven also saw the military band as a good medium. Most of the music falls within the period which closes with the events of 1815. His earliest compositions include the Rondino and the Octetor Parthia in Eb (1872) which was originally written for String Quartet, (Opus 4). He followed these works with his sparkling tattoo music (ZAPFENSTREICH) of 1809. The one in F having been written for the Bohemian Landwehr. These were followed by the "Polonaise Ecossaie" and the "March in F" (1810). The march for 2 clarinets, 2 horns and 2 bassoons although undated was a fine composition for the period. His march in D written in 1816 is an example of his finest writing for the wind ensemble. The full score for this march indicates that save for the omission of the trombone it is very much equal to modern instrumentation (no saxophones of course). He also employed the F clarinet which had been used in the French Bands previously. It was useful as an outdoor backup for flutes. This march is certainly in advance of anything previously. Beethoven wrote to his publisher and said, "this march could be played by several bands united, but even if one band lacked instrumentation it could be easily utilized by leaving out some of the parts". He foresaw the versatility of bands and their ability to adapt themselves with small or large combinations. A hundred and fifty years passed before formula band writing was discovered.

Band music in Britain had also begun to expand with the Royal Artillery band mustering thirty-eight performers in 1812 including boys and Janissaries. The Coldstream Guards had risen from twelve in 1785 to twenty-two in 1815. The King's regulations also were changed to allow line bands to have as many as twelve performers by allowing one bandsman per company. Bandmasters were

now beginning to have more attention paid to their merits as leaders such as George McKenzie of the Royal Artillery while John Mahon and Edward Hopkins became the leaders of the Scots Third Guards band. One of the attractions of Life in 18<sup>th</sup> century London was the "Guard Mounting" at St James Palace which began around 1818. There also sprung up another universal type of band and that was the band for militia, volunteers, Yeomanry and Fencibles. These bands which were formed mostly in Britain were of very high quality. In many instances they were led by well known local musicians. The abundance of new music also helped to create a healthy atmosphere for the bands. It is also interesting to note that much of the music from this period was published and in reviewing the scores we find that the composers were very serious about their work and the quality. The music also tells us that the performers were of very high standards, particularly in works that were arranged from orchestral sources. Thus, we can see a pattern emerging which shows that the developing musical instruments in tandem with the literature and the evolution of the military musician were entering a new sphere; a new world was dawning for the military band.

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