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MILITARY MUSIC IN THE COLONY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, 1788-1850

By PETER RICHARDSON

Towards the end of the 18th century, public band concerts in the open air were an established institution in all the capitals of Europe, having first become common in Germany where the town musicians had established a tradition of popular outdoor music.

Regimental and national rivalry led to the rapid growth in size of bands in all countries. In 1783, the Duke of York introduced a band of 12 players imported from Germany for the Coldstream Guards. This band included two oboes, four clarinets, two horns, two bassoons, trumpet and serpent. This was obviously a huge and impressive affair in comparison with the bands then usual. Trombones and percussion were added some years later.

It must be understood that the entire welfare of the bands of the British Army depended on the enthusiasm and pockets of the officers and the particular regiments, and it has been asserted that this system was more beneficial to military music than that in vogue today. It was not until 1857 that the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall was opened. This means that all the bands coming to N.S.W. in the period of this study were assembled under the old system.

During the period from 1788-1850 there were in addition to the first company of Marines brought out by Governor Phillip no less than 21 British regiments at one time or another stationed in N.S.W. These regiments were sent out for a two-fold purpose: firstly to police and protect the Colony and secondly as a toughening-up campaign to prepare the soldiers for Indian Service. Because of this system N.S.W. was fortunate enough to have some of the best regiments of the British Army, and their bands which travelled with them would have contained some of the best army

musicians. The one regiment which was below standard was the N.S.W. Corps, later known as the 102nd regiment. This unit replaced the Marines during the years 1790-1792 and was replaced in turn by Macquarie's 73rd regiment, the Royal Highlanders, in 1810. Its personnel was a rabble of men press-ganged and recruited from the prisons and left-overs from the Napoleonic wars. Discipline was bad and there was much corruption during its stay.

In these early days of the Colony it is quite surprising to see just how much active music making took place; it was probably quite a shock to these musicians, who would have been used to playing for parades, regimental dinners and so forth, to find that they had to be prepared for anything that was likely to turn up. These bands provided, in addition to their normal military duties, church music, music teachers, theatre players and light occasional music for balls, dinners, and so on. At certain times they banded together to become the Colony's first symphony orchestras.

The first reference to music in the Colony occurs in a diary in the possession of the Mitchell Library, Sydney, written by a naval officer, Lieut. Bowers:

Thursday, 7th February, 1788.

This morning at 11 o'clock all who could leave the ships were summoned on shore to hear the Governor's Commission read and also the commission constituting the court of Judicature. The Marines were all under arms and received the Governor with flying colours and a band of music. He was accompanied by the Judge Advocate, Lt. Gov., Clergyman, Surveyor General, Surgeon General, etc. After taking off his hat and complimenting the Marine officers, who had lowered the colours and paid that respect to him as Governor which he was entitled to, the soldiers marched with music playing, drums and fifes and formed a circle round the whole of the convicts, men and women, who were all ordered to sit down on the ground.

In the same diary, this time on Saturday, February 9, Bowers recorded the events of the day: "One of the sailors was caught in the women's tents and was drummed out of the camp with his hands fastened behind him and the fife and drum marching before him playing the 'Rogues' March'."

Much information can be gained from a series of returns entitled "General Statements of the Inhabitants of His Majesty's Settlement". These have been published in *Historical Records of N.S.W.* edited by F. M. Bladen, 1892-1901.

The N.S.W. Corps apparently had only drummers until 1806; from August of that year there is mention of drummers and fifers. It is quite reasonable to assume that it took some years for these soldiers to gain proficiency on their instruments.

In a letter from Provost-Marshal Gore to Viscount Castlereagh dated March 27, 1808, published again in *Historical Records of N.S.W.*, we read of a march on Government House during the Rum Rebellion which was led by the fife and drum playing *The British Grenadiers*.

With the arrival of the Royal Highlanders one is tempted to think of the skirl of the pipes; but it is important to remember that these instruments were used by clans, not by recruited regiments—that is, not until Queen Victoria's time at least. This band consisted again of fifes and drums.

There exist a number of documents referring to musicians performing in church.

One, from the *Wentworth Papers* in the Mitchell Library, addressed to D'arcy Wentworth, secretary of the Police Fund, dated March 10, 1814, states:—

Please to pay to all the undermentioned seven men belonging to the band of the 73rd Regiment the sums herein annexed to their respective names (in lieu of shoes agreed to be given to them in remuneration for their performing sacred music on Sundays from 1st October, 1812, to 31st March, 1814. There being three pairs of shoes, one to each man. [Then follows a list of names; it is signed L. Macquarie.]

The second, again from the *Wentworth Papers*, addressed to Wentworth says:

Sir, please to pay the bearer Mr. Francis Ditrich, Master of the band of the 73rd Reg., the sum of £2/11/- in lieu of six pairs of shoes due to him as remuneration for conducting the band in performing sacred music at Church at Sydney from 1st Oct. 1812-31st March 1814 inclusive, charging the same to the Police fund. [Signed L. Macquarie:]

An extract from Captain Piper's papers in the Mitchell Library gives us this information:

Account of Sundry Payments made by Wm. Piper esq. as Acting Treasurer of the Colonial Police Fund for the quarter ending March 1821. Paid for the performance of Sacred Music in the Church of St. Phillip Sydney from 1st April 1820-31st March 1821.

The musicians on this occasion would have been drawn from the 48th Regiment.

The next reference is from the Colonial revenue accounts in the *Wentworth Papers*. It reads:

Wentworth Esq. treasurer of the Colonial Revenue N.S.W. with the trustees from 1st Jan. to 31st March 1824.

Rev. Mr. Cowper for the performance of Sacred Music at St. Phillip's Church by the band of the 48th Artillery.

Around this time it is apparent that the social life of Sydney was getting well under way; there are numerous references in the Colony's first newspaper, the *Sydney Gazette*, informing us of various entertainments. The *Gazette* for April 14, 1810, tells us that: "On Monday evening last a farewell Ball and Supper were given by the Captain and Officers of H.M.S. Porpoise." Many officers of the 73rd Regiment and 102nd Regiment were present, and "the atmosphere resounded with loyal airs from a large Band".

Again, in the *Sydney Gazette*, June 9, 1810, on the occasion of His Majesty's Birthday: "The fascination was rendered complete at this time by numerous airs and pieces performed by the band of the 73rd which was stationed in the hall of Government House."

October 20, 1810: "The full band of the 73rd played off God Save the King in exquisite style and between the country dances filled the room with other melodious and appropriate airs."

Although the greater proportion of music at this time was performed by military bandsmen there is evidence that visiting ships also brought with them a band of some description.

Again from the *Sydney Gazette*, November 28, 1825:

His Excellency and Lady Brisbane entertained the Honourable and Chief Justice, Mrs. Forbes and family on board at dinner on Friday last. The band of the 3rd Regt. (Buffs) as well as the Naval officers were playing all the afternoon on each side of the Ship.

[December 9, 1826:] The Band of the Hugh Crawford, which Captain Langdon has brought out with him this trip, for the accommodation and amusement of his passengers both outward and homeward bound by no means diminishes the gaiety of our harbour at this delightful season of the year. Morning and Evening our ears are attracted by the melodious and warlike airs of the bands of the H.M.S. Warspite, and the merchant ship Hugh Crawford.

On February 7, 1818, the *Gazette* printed this advertisement:

To the gentry of the Colony and the public at large. Robert McIntosh respectfully begs to inform, that he has commenced teaching music at his house in York Street and hopes that an early experience of his assiduity and attention to pupils on the various instruments will recommend him to public favour—terms 2/6 per lesson on the piano-forte and 2/- per lesson for the violin, clarinet, Hautboy and other wind instruments.

Instruments tuned and put in order when they require it—also music furnished for balls and private entertainments at a short notice and at a moderate rate of charge.

This man was originally a bandsman and probably was the first professional music teacher in the Colony.

C. T. Burfitt, honorary secretary of the Australian Historical Society, writes:

Through the courtesy of Mrs. Rankin I have had the loan of a rare and musically interesting volume titled *The Music and Song of old Sydney* written by J. P. McGuannae.

In 1825 Mr. Reichberg, music master to the 40th Regiment, composed a set of Australian Quadrilles for sale at 6/-, but a day's notice was required in order to give time to copy its manuscript. Bandsmen enlarged their income by copying regimental music and the Bandmaster, with the Colonel's permission, gave music lessons to a privileged few at high fees. Patriotic music became highly popular. Early in 1826 Bandmaster Kavanagh, 3rd Regiment, composed the *Currency Lads* followed by an *Australian March*, slow time, dedicated to Governor Darling, and *Hail Australia* to Colonel Stewart. Later in honour of Governor Brisbane he composed *The trumpet sounds Australia's fame*, a great favourite. Next came from his facile pen a *Grand Australian March*, quick time, and minor efforts all for sale at 93 George Street.

These early attempts at composition were most probably quite slight; nevertheless there was an urgency to create, coupled with a growing nationalism.

During the first thirty years or so there were several attempts to introduce drama into Sydney. These attempts were mainly amateur productions by convicts. All these performances were of a temporary character and it wasn't until the advent of Barnett Levez of the Royal Hotel, 72 George Street, that Sydney possessed a real theatre.

Levez began concert-giving at his hotel premises in 1829. The first concerts took place on August 20 and 26.

The first programme included Cherubini's overture to *Lodoiska*, probably played by members of the band of the 57th Regiment, and a quartet for flutes and horn which, as the *Sydney Gazette* stated the next day, was spoilt by the clinking of glasses. Successive concerts in September and October showed an improvement in the programmes, which included overtures by Mozart and Weber. The conductor was Bandmaster Sippe.

Music making was by now showing a degree of sophistication and we read of the appearance of "the string band" of the 17th at later concerts.

This means that there was a nucleus at last for a small chamber orchestra of wind and strings.

It was on the site of the Royal Hotel that the Theatre Royal was built. According to the *Sydney Gazette* it was opened on December 26, 1832, with a "nautical melodrama" called *Black-eyed Susan*. On this occasion the band of the 17th supported the production. In the years that followed most of the major musical entertainments took place within this theatre.

With all this musical activity going on the time was ripe for the appearance of professional musicians who could lead and direct the existing musical talent. The first man of

importance was William Vincent Wallace, remembered today as the composer of *Maritana*. Both his parents were Irish, his father being a bandmaster in the British Army. In 1835, for the sake of his health, he came to Australia. He gave concerts in Hobart, then made his way to Sydney, where he arrived in January, 1836.

Wallace lost no time in presenting a concert, and from the advertisement which appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* we learn that on February 12 he conducted the band of the 17th Regiment. Amongst other works, they played the Overture to *William Tell*. At a concert on February 26 the band of the 28th played two other overtures of Rossini, *The Silken Ladder* and *Semiramide*.

Wallace's arrival created much interest and on March 5, 1836, the *Sydney Gazette* published this piece of news:

We understand the Officers of the 28th Regiment intend availing themselves of Mr. Wallace's valuable services during his sojourn in N.S.W., for the improvement and instruction of the string musicians of the band.

Next to arrive in the Colony in 1836 was the violinist John Phillip Deane. He too came up from Hobart, where he had been organist at St. David's Church. He and his daughter opened a studio in Pitt Street where they taught music.

In the same year the Deane family and the Wallace family combined with a choir and members of the 4th Regiment, the King's own band, to present selections from *Messiah* and *The Creation* in the Church of St. Mary to raise funds for an organ which was on its way from England. On September 21, 1836, the Colony's first music festival was given at the same church, and again the band provided the accompaniments during the performance.

We reach the next milestone with the arrival in the Colony of the composer-performer Isaac Nathan.

Nathan was born in 1790 of Polish-Jewish parents. He decided to emigrate to Australia in 1840, probably to escape his creditors. After a brief stay in Melbourne he arrived in Sydney

during April, 1841, and immediately gained a reputation as a musician. He was indefatigable in developing musical talent and in improving music in churches and choral societies. Within a month of his arrival he was making plans for the opening of an Academy of Music.

His first public performance took place on June 30 with the Deanes, Wallaces and the 28th Regiment band. The programme consisted of a "New National Anthem" by Nathan, as well as excerpts from *Messiah* ("Comfort ye", "The trumpet shall sound", *Hallelujah Chorus*, etc.).

Many concerts were given in the Royal Victorian Theatre by the band of the 50th. The programmes usually consisted of numerous and varied works. Each half opened with an overture and then would follow some operatic excerpts, usually drawn from composers such as Bellini, Auber, etc. A grand concert which took place on October 12, 1841, again at the Royal Victoria Theatre, was presented by "Mr. Pock" who assembled the principal instrumentalists of the Colony with the band of the 50th. They played two overtures, *The Two Blind Men of Toledo* of Méhul and *The Marine* by Henry Bishop. The *Australasian Chronicle* is our reference here, and also for the information that on August 31, 1842, the complete *Messiah* was performed. The advertisement gives valuable information as to the forces used. In the chorus there were 20 trebles, 12 altos, 14 tenors and 16 basses. In the orchestra there were five first violins, six second violins, four violas, four 'cellos, three double basses, two flutes, two oboes, two clarionetti, two horns, two trumpets, two fagotti, four tromboni and two double drums. The critique which appeared the following day says this:

The overtures, excepting the opening movement in Handel's, were perfect and the pastoral symphony was exquisite. By the way, we were sadly puzzled about the second overture said in the programme to be from Mozart's Requiem. We never heard of more than two Requiems by Mozart neither of which has an instrumental overture. The mystery vanished when tones of the Overture to the Magic Flute sounded.

The *Colonial Observer*, June 29, 1842, mentions the band of the 80th (which was said to be one of the best in England) and its performances every Monday and Tuesday evenings in the Domain. The *Chronicle*, October 27, 1840, gives an account of its presence at the opening of St. Matthew's Church, Windsor, and St. Gregory's, Kurrajong, playing what is described as "Sacred Music of the great German and Italian Masters." For its debut at the Royal Victoria Theatre on July 25, 1842, they played Rossini's overtures to *The Italians in Algiers* and *William Tell*.

When the Royal Victoria opened for its 1842 season the *Sydney Chronicle* (February 19) stated that the orchestral department was made up of the following personnel: S. W. Wallace (leader), then Mr. Deane, Master Deane, Leggart, Wallace senior, Walton, Portbury, Puffin, Sippe, Robertson, Boyle, etc. A good half of these were one-time military bandmen. Sippe has been mentioned earlier as bandmaster of the 57th.

A most interesting piece of evidence as to the numbers constituting a band comes from the *Herald*, September 4, 1844—an article simply called "The Band of the 99th" (sta-

tioned in the Colony from 1842-1856):

We would recommend to our readers who have not yet heard this Band no longer to defer that enjoyment, for we sincerely assure them that this Band of the 99th is one of the most complete military Bands that has ever gratified the inhabitants of our city. The general observer may not be aware that this Band possesses several advantages over ordinary Bands. For instance, the 99th have no less than eight beautifully toned C and Bb Clarionets and one in Eb, which play together in perfect harmony. Their flutes are equally good, nor are they open to the rebuke *ajustez vos flutes*, for they keep together in excellent tune, forming as it were one unbroken chain of linked sweetness. Their trumpets again produce a clear martial intonation, free from those disagreeable shrill "cork-cutting" sounds which set one's teeth on edge. Indeed, there is scarcely a performer in their masterly Band who is not competent to play a solo in respectable style on his peculiar instrument. Their bass instruments are of the first description, for in addition to the *Bassoons*, the *Serpent*, and last but not least the *Ophicleide* which from the full rich grave yet mellifluous tone it is capable of sending forth in the hands of a skilful performer (and we have the authority of a professor of acknowledged judgement in all matters connected with music for saying it could not be in better hands than the present performer in the 99th) is a powerful auxiliary in any orchestra—they have also the *Bomhardone* . . .

Although these early attempts at music-making had a rather modest beginning, it is important for us to be aware of the conditions in which they were presented and from this knowledge comes a greater appreciation of our heritage.

On April 6, 1964, Mr. Roy Caddy addressed the Society on ELECTRONICS AND MUSIC. This was essentially a demonstration lecture, and Mr. Caddy is in agreement with the editors that a written summary would not give an adequate record of it.
