

THE GODFREY FAMILY

For a period of sixteen years Charles Godfrey was one of the adjudicators at the Belle Vue Contest and for an even longer period he seemed to have a monopoly on test piece arrangements for that contest. Charles Godfrey was born into a musical family his father also called Charles (born 1790 and died 1863) was bandmaster of the Coldstream Guards, a man wholly absorbed by his band, not content with daily ensemble practice he would have the backward ones and soloists alike at his house might after night and "drill" them thoroughly in their parts until they were as near to perfection as they could reach. Charles Godfrey Senior had five sons, three of whom followed in his footsteps. Fred Godfrey, who was Bandmaster of the Coldstream Guards in succession to his father, Lieut. Dan Godfrey, Charles who we will look at today, George W. Godfrey who strayed away from family tradition was distinguished in the literary world as the author of several successful plays and Julian L.H. Godfrey who although he studied at the Royal Academy for three years gave up the idea of entering the profession on the death of his father and joined the Civil Service in the Paymaster General's Office in Whitehall.

Charles Godfrey (Junior) was born on 17th January 1839 and was, with his brothers, literally cradled in music. When a schoolboy he used to leave school before the proper time so that he could take his place in his father's orchestra at the Royal Zoological Gardens Surrey, thus from early boyhood acquiring an interest in and acquaintance with military music and instruments. At the age of fourteen he played the clarinet and kettle drums in Julian's Orchestra and went on two winter tours with them travelling throughout the United Kingdom. He also while in his teens played the clarinet at the Haymarket Theatre under Mr. Edward Fitzwilliam and was afterwards engaged as principal clarinet in Mr. John Hatton's Orchestra at the Princess's Theatre. At the early age of twenty years and eleven months in December 1859 Mr. Godfrey was appointed Bandmaster of the Scots Fusilier Guards, an almost unprecedented achievement for so young a candidate. He served with the regiment until December 1868 when he was transferred to the Royal Horse Guards. During the time he was bandmaster of the Scots Fusilier Guards he was presented with a very handsome scarf pin by H.R.H. the Princess of Wales as a souvenir of the pleasure his valse, the "Mildred" had afforded, a copy of which had been presented to H.R.H. by her command. In 1889 with a portion of the Royal Horse Guards he had the honour of attending at Sandringham House for a week and in 1890 when he returned there yet again he was presented with a full length autograph portrait of H.R.H. the Princess of Wales and the band received an even larger portrait for their bandroom.

Under Mr. Godfrey's direction the Royal Horse Guards travelled throughout the country playing at most of the industrial exhibitions and taking part in State ceremonials, concerts and reviews given in honour of the Imperial and Royal Sovereigns visiting this country, including the Sultan of Turkey, the Shah of Persia, the Emperor of Germany and the Czar of Russia.

By 1894 Charles Godfrey was the second senior bandmaster in the army, he had received the medal for long service and good conduct. Besides the practical lessons given to him by his father and a Mr. Lazarus he also studied under Sir G.A. Macfarren at the Royal Academy of Music where later he was created a Fellow and an Associate. His abilities were further recognised by his being appointed Military Music Professor at the Royal College of Music, as well as at the Guildhall School of Music.

During his career he composed and arranged innumerable pieces. His association with Belle Vue Contests started in 1872 as far as the arrangements of test pieces was concerned with "Souvenir de Mozart" and his subsequent output seems phenomenal few composers escaped, Meyerbeer, Spohr, Balfe, Gounod, Verdi, Rossini, Donizetti, Wagner, Weber, Kreutzer, Lortzing, Bemberg, Bellini, Herold and Adam were amongst the composers whose works were selected and arranged. What a feast of music the Belle Vue audiences must have had and whichever side you are on in the argument original works v arrangement you must admit that a large proportion of brass band

audiences at that time would have never have heard many of these works of the great musical importance without the medium of the brass band. Although I have no evidence to support my view I think it likely that hearing such arrangements may well have inspired many listeners to go and hear the original, thus doing a great service to music in general.

At a time when bands and conductors are starting to realise the true importance of musical heritage of the brass band movement it would be of great interest to revive some of these arrangements to see how the band of today could cope with the technical problems presented to them by Charles Godfrey and his contemporaries.

However, to return to Charles Godfrey amongst his many other achievements he is accredited with the origination of the present scheme of adjudicating, taking notes during the playing of the bands and by showing the weak points helping many bands to strengthen their weaknesses.

It is a regrettable fact that no third generation entered the Army to my knowledge. However, Charles Godfrey's three eldest sons did enter the profession, Charles Godfrey Junior, yes, another one, Charles was certainly a popular name in the Godfrey family and this resulted in some confusion in recent publications who have assumed only one Charles Godfrey who must have lived to be at least 150 years old! Charles Godfrey Junior, Junior also had a reputation for arranging and directing the military band at Crystal Palace. Arthur E. Godfrey was musical advisor to R. Cocks & Co. and Herbert Godfrey made a name for himself as a cornet soloist and bandmaster of Christ's Hospital Boys Band. In addition to three sons Charles Godfrey also had two daughters, the elder; Miss Winnie Godfrey was a student at the Royal College of Music in 1892 and 1893 and gained an Exhibition prize for pianoforte playing. The younger, Miss Rosie Godfrey at the same college in 1894 studied singing and Pianoforte playing.

To sum up Charles Godfrey was devoted to his family and his profession an indefatigable worker, a thorough musician and a popular man.

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Derek Rawlinson March 2007