

Delightful Brass Band music - tunes from the past?

Prelude...

Reminiscing a slow, quiet and leisurely walk in the park during a warm Sunday afternoon listening to an open air concert with a Brass Band playing wonderful music of a long gone era...

A 2010 summer visit to Portland by the Swedish Sigtuna Brass Sextet aroused a curious interest in the topic calling for a for a closer look.

The writer wonders; "Is this just recalling fine tunes from a another time area, or is it relevant also today?"

Let's share little music history...

We commonly define a Brass Band as a musical group generally consisting entirely of brass instruments, most often with a percussion section. Ensembles that include brass and woodwind instruments can in certain traditions also be termed brass bands, but are usually more correctly termed military bands, concert bands, wind bands or wind ensembles.

In the past, professional wind music in Sweden was entirely a military phenomenon. In 1971, the unique step was taken of transferring more than 500 musicians to a civilian national organization. Then, in 1988, the Swedish Government decided to regionalize this resource to county council level, where in most cases it was given foundation status. However, already in 1982, the Music Platoon - recruited annually among new conscripts - was set up, mainly with a view to preserve traditions of military music. The only remaining military organization is the Marine Music Corps that consist of 30 fully employed musicians who represent a well respected and competent organization for Swedish Military Brass Music.

Along side the military brass band several private bands have established themselves as strong representatives of the rich traditions established since the early 1800's in Sweden.



Sigtuna Brass Sextet



Liljan Sextet from Landskrona
Picture: Landskrona Museum



Kungliga Flottans Musikkår
Barnes Dag Landskrona
Picture: Marinens Musikkår



1909 Åtvid. Sextet
Picture: Landskrona Museum

These musicians have a long tradition of being mostly military trained musicians and have established a long and productive cultural function providing music at festive events.

The most common Swedish Brass Band tradition with full compliment of instrument played are;

Soprano Cornet in E \flat

Cornets in B \flat

Flugelhorn in B \flat

Horns in E \flat

Tenor Trombones (notated in B \flat ,
(playing separate parts)

Bass Trombone (the only instrument in the
band notated as it sounds)

Euphoniums in B \flat

Tubas (in E \flat and 2 in B \flat ; often called Bases)

Percussion (timpani, glockenspiel, snare drum, triangle, cymbals, a drum kit and more)



Holmsunds Musikkår 1890
Picture: Västerbottens Museum

This overall instrumental set-ups provides for a broad wonderful and lasting tune to the ear following us through centuries. Most of the music played was performed by military bands, with said instrument set up, during the 19th and 20th centuries and was arranged and composed by their own music directors. Many of these music pieces was marches, and they are now on the repertoires of many brass bands in Sweden.

What is music anyway and who is writing the music for these brass bands...

Music could be described as a wonderful feeling of wellbeing and allows the listener to softly touch the most inner feeling of the human. The writer has often wondered what is going on in the heads of people that are able to touch these human feelings. The popular music during the times was so called promenade concerts that was



Sheet Music

played in open air concerts with the audience leisurely walking around during the performance. The typical concert started with a march followed by a variety of popular tunes and the concert ended with a march.

The best known composer is Viktor Widqvist (1898-1952) mainly due to his composition “Under Blågul Fana” (Under the Blue and Yellow Flag), and it has been recorded by brass bands all over the world. Widqvist was the 1898-1918 tuba player at Svea Ingenjörkårs musikkår in Stockholm, and was further a violin player in a theater orchestra. He graduated as director of music from Stockholms Musikkonservatorium in 1908. During the period 1918-25 he was the director of music at the engineering corps (ingenjörstrupperna), first in Boden and later in Karlsborg. He later left the military music and worked as a civil musician and leader of several orchestras in Stockholm.



Blue and Yellow Flag

Most of the composer’s/director’s music composed was mostly as marches, and these are now on the repertoires of many brass bands in Sweden and abroad. Along with Viktor Widqvist there are many well-known names such as Sam Rydberg, Per Berg, Per Grundström, Ivan Widner, Curt Larsson and Åke Dohlin to mention a few among many.

Delightful Swedish tunes at Fogelbo delivered by Sigtuna Brass Sextet...

As mentioned we had a wonderful summer afternoon where we were treated with traditional Swedish Brass Band music recalling the era of popular promenade music from the 1920’s, various folk music and other well known tunes, played in open air concert parks across Sweden.

We heard music written by composers such as Bellman, Taube, and Adolphson who seem to portray a feeling of Swedish nationalism during their contemporary periods. The band performed the “The Royal Ball” by Gustav Fröding. A portrayal of an Oscar II ball in honor of the wedding of Crown Princess Victoria and Daniel Westling at midsummer, 2010.



Ross Fogelqvist introduce Sigtuna Brass Sextet at Fogelbo, Portland

The sextet wears the Swedish military captain’s uniform from the late 1700’s. Unique are the three buttons on sleeves which represent the three kingdoms of Sweden at the time—Sweden, Norway and Finland.

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We hope they will come back and entertain us again!

Pomp and circumstances with the Marine Band playing.



The Marine Band performing in Stockholm
Picture: Marinens Musikkår

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