



MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF BRASS BANDS

A Workshop Manual

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**Compiled by
James Moule - St.George Brass Band**

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INTRODUCTION

Brass bands have been an important part of Western civilisation for around 150 years, yet over the past 50 years, the number of bands has decreased significantly. What was the tried and true approach to running a band in the 1950s no longer seems to work.

Bands have been run traditionally by committees. It is a matter of “luck of the draw” whether or not the committee has the management skills and commitment to keep the band viable. This manual is intended to be a support document for committees who want a source of ideas to keep their bands running smoothly and ensure that the band has a future.

I have compiled this manual without the support of the Band Association of NSW, which has a record of standing by while brass bands collapse. They have shown no interest in offering support to struggling bands.

This document is simply an “opinion piece”, based on my experiences while founding St. George Brass Band, working to keep the band afloat and observing the turmoil in other bands.

I make no apology for concentrating on brass bands rather than “concert” bands (once defined by one of the characters of the banding world as a brass band sitting down). Reed bands have different problems and, while this document might serve as a guide for an author of a similar workshop manual, the overlap in advice would be small.

As this document will only be published on line, it can be updated and corrected easily. I value opinions and anecdotes and hope that the banding community can build on this initial workshop manual as we learn from experience.

Please send comments and suggestions to jamesmoule@hotmail.com.

1. WHY DO PEOPLE JOIN A BRASS BAND?

Understanding why people join a band and knowing their expectations will help a committee to provide an experience for members that meets their needs. Consequently, there will be less “turnover” of membership and this should ensure band growth.

I asked people from several different bands why they played in a brass band. The responses were, most commonly:

I like brass band music

Social aspects of being in a group

Wish to contribute to a community organisation

My parents wanted me to join

To improve as a player

It is assumed all too often that D Grade bands are made up of D Grade players. In winning a prestigious section of a State Solos competition, someone remarked that it was amazing that a D Grade player could have beaten all those A Grade players. The winner was, in fact, a semi-professional who played with the D Grade band so that he could be with his children while they were developing as players.

People might tolerate an unpleasant atmosphere as the price to be paid for being part of a first class band. They will not tolerate unpleasantness in a run-of-the-mill community band. The committee and MD must ensure that, above all else, an enjoyable climate exists at all times in the band. When problems occur, they should be dealt with by committee without fuss and away from other band members.

The Social Climate

While music is the common reason for people to be in the band, they often share other interests. A theatre party to see a movie (such as *Brassed Off*) is a good way to enhance band cohesion. Group bookings for concerts fit the same purpose.

At the end of the year before the band has a recess, a small party should be held to celebrate the band's achievements for the year. Awards could be presented to individuals for attendance, success in competitions and generally being a strong supporter (bandsmanship).

One band reported that they have games at their Christmas party, including Pin the Mouthpiece on the Tuba and Christmas Carol Bingo (in which the number of a particular carol must be marked off on a card).

2. MAKING YOUR REHEARSAL A SATISFYING EXPERIENCE

What one person finds satisfying in a rehearsal is not what everyone finds satisfying. Some people are totally “task oriented” - their only interest is in improving their performance. For them, any interruption to a rehearsal is a waste of time.

Other people see a rehearsal as a social occasion. They can drive musical directors mad by distracting other players with jokes and generally keeping the tone of the rehearsal light-hearted. Such people can be the glue that keeps a community band together.

Perhaps it comes down to what sort of band the committee wants.

Some of the things that successful bands do at rehearsals:

- Have a supper break at half time, food provided on a roster basis
- Go for drinks afterwards
- Acknowledge birthdays, “hatches, matches and dispatches”
- Acknowledge the achievements of members (Sally completed 4th Grade Trombone with an A+, Emilio came 2nd in Under 13 Novice Flugel)
- Avoid individual embarrassment of players
- Avoid over-rehearsal of small sections of a piece
- Avoid having one section of the band playing their part while the rest of the band twiddles their valves for long periods
- Choose pieces that are of a suitable difficulty for the standard of the band
- Choose pieces that meet the musical interest of at least a reasonable proportion of band members. Don't limit the band to just one style of music.

The Musical Director

Stories abound about the antics of some musical directors / conductors. The choice of musical director reflects the Band's image of itself. A band aspiring to win an A Grade contest is likely to employ a high profile conductor. A member of the band is likely required to do the hack work of preparing the band, getting all the notes right and so on. The celebrity then comes in and takes all the credit for the wonderful performance.

“Lower grade” community bands are more likely to depend on a conductor who is a band builder, someone who will take them for performances in the park as well as for national championships.

In either case, bands rarely respond to harsh criticism, bullying, bitter sarcasm, rants and screaming. Band members generally try to do their best and respond to encouragement and positive advice. The demeanour of the conductor at a two-hour rehearsal is probably the most important influence on the level of satisfaction among band members.

If criticism is deemed necessary, then it should be administered in private and without venom.

3. RAISING FUNDS

To paraphrase and update Wilkins Micawber (in *David Copperfield*):

Income \$1000, expenditure \$900 = bliss
Income \$1000, expenditure \$1100 = misery.

Good financial management of a band requires that the income meets the expenditure and that waste is minimised. This chapter deals with the income side of the balance sheet.

Community bands require a steady income to survive. The minimum level of the income depends on the stage of band development, the aspirations of the band and the amount of good will that it can muster.

Starting a band from scratch is a daunting prospect. Even a basic community band needs to have assets in the region of \$50 000, including scores, instruments, music stands and uniforms. In more advanced bands, \$50 000 would barely cover the value of two tubas. Somehow, the initial stock of assets has to be borrowed, donated or bought through some financial arrangement, be it a loan or issuing debentures to investing members.

Once the band is established, there are maintenance expenses that must be covered. Here are some of the ways that bands raise money.

Membership Fees

In NSW, there is a statutory requirement that incorporated bodies charge a minimum annual membership fee of \$2. A band with 30 players would raise only \$60 if they charged this amount. On the other hand, if the band charged \$100 p.a., they would raise \$3000 and have a guaranteed basic income. On the negative side, the higher fee might discourage people from joining the band, especially beginners and juniors.

Performances

Unlike many organisations, a community band has the means of raising money through its primary purpose, its performances. Community groups often engage a band to add a festive atmosphere to their fete. A small donation from such groups adds to the coffers and the band gets a public presentation: win-win.

Concerts can be used to raise money but the standard of performance has to be high enough to justify a ticket price. Money raised in donations at the door or sale of programs is often disappointing. The venue might have a hire cost and there are printing costs and advertising costs.

Outdoor performances where a large number of people pass by can give the band an opportunity to be seen in public. A donation bucket nearby can raise a small amount by way of appreciation.

One band reported that they played in a park where birthday picnics were held. Playing “Happy Birthday to You” invariably elicited a donation from the parents of the child.

Ensembles

Community bands usually have players ranging in ability and experience from beginners to professionals. While a carefully chosen full band program can cover the limitations of the less able players, formation of ensembles within the band can give the best players some challenging music to play, as well as providing the band with an elite group capable of accepting high paying jobs such as

- Christmas parties
- weddings
- funerals.

Ensembles of juniors might include less experienced players but the occasional inaccuracy is overlooked by members of the public. Carolling in local shopping centres and train stations during December can raise thousands of dollars

Grants and Donations

Bands can register as charities, though rarely is tax deductible status granted.

Local councils sometimes have a small pool of money to allocate in the form of community grants. Small, targeted requests are best. Beware that the band will be in competition with the Kurdish Disabled Women's Darts Group and so on.

Licensed clubs are required to disburse a proportion of their poker machine income through a grants program. Formerly called CDSE grants, this program is usually administered by the local council.

Rather than just ask for money from local businesses, suggest that a business sponsor a marching coat to the value of \$300 and acknowledge the sponsorship inside the coat and on the band website.

The Band Association of NSW usually receives a grant from the Department of Arts in the State government. This is allocated to band projects on application.

Leasing the Band Room

In the early 20th century, it was common for a band to have its own rehearsal hall. This has become increasingly rare, especially in big cities where property values have soared. Those bands lucky enough to own their rehearsal hall can earn an income by leasing it for parties and meetings. (See Section13.)

Minimising expenditure

Some of the major expenses that community bands incur regularly are

- rehearsal hall hire
- APRA fees (covering copyright when playing in public)
- insurance (public liability as well as asset)
- conductor fees.

The first three are largely unavoidable. The payment to the conductor is debatable. Some people consider themselves part of the band and therefore no more entitled to payment than any other member. High grade bands often engage a professional musician as their musical director and pay a professional rate. Each band has to decide if the musical director they need is a band builder or just a conductor.

4. ADVERTISING AND RECRUITMENT

The community needs to know that the band exists if they are going to be able to join or engage the band for a performance. The best form of advertising is being seen playing in the community. The committee should ensure that the band is active in the community, giving a public performance at least once every month. At such performances, signage is important so that people know which band is playing. An A-frame sign should have space for a flyer with contact details. Whenever possible, a march should be led by a banner carried by children.



The press release

The old complaint from business owners that they know that half their advertising is a waste of money but they don't know which half also applies to bands. Paid advertising generally is not justified by the returns. There is plenty of scope for getting free publicity. A photograph of the band or some of its members, accompanied by a few words of explanation, can be an attractive filler for the local newspaper and costs the band nothing. Winning a competition, getting a new MD, giving a free concert can all be the basis for a news item. A member of the committee who has the flair should be designated as the publicity officer.

theleader.com.au



Having a blast: St George Brass Band members (foreground) Sean and Dean Hou of Kogarah.

Band aims to be top brass

St George Brass Band will celebrate its 10th anniversary by entering the state band championships for the first time.

The championships will be held on the weekend of September 25-26 in the concert hall of the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre at Penrith. Brass orchestras from across the state will compete in four grades.

St George Brass is the first band from the district to enter the championships for at least 15 years.

The other bands in the community brass bands section represent Newcastle, Central Coast, Liverpool, Parramatta and Nowra.

The contest starts at 9am each day and will continue well into the night. There is a small admission charge.

St George has drawn second in playing order and will perform its 20-minute program at about 9.30am on Sunday, September 26.

The band will be conducted by Lauren Meule who is playing in Switzerland with the NSW Fire Brigades Brass Band at present.

The web site

These days, any band without a web site is passing up huge opportunities. The site can

- advertise the band's rehearsal times and contact details to attract new members
- publicise the calendar of performances for the coming year
- give a history of the band with lots of photos
- acknowledge the achievements of members in competitions.

There are bands with a page on their website listing free scores that have been arranged or composed by members. A good site should attract upwards of ten thousand hits annually.

Social media

Sites such as Facebook can provide up-to-date information about band activities. There can be one page for the general public and another for members only.

Posters

An eye-catching poster with the band's contact details can help with recruitment. Finding a place to pin such posters can be problematic. They can be placed on noticeboards of local libraries, notice boards in the music rooms of local schools and the odd community noticeboard but need to be renewed on a regular basis.

Business cards

Business cards are cheap. Make sure that every member has a few to hand out to people that might be prospective members. Cards are also good for giving information to people who want the band to play at a function.

Telephone listing

The Yellow Pages will list a community organisation free of charge.

Recruitment

For a century, brass bands have been offering free tuition to beginners. After learning the basics, the learner then joins the training band or even the full band with an experienced player as mentor. The learner can then continue with more advanced lessons with a private tutor. This arrangement can be attractive to parents who want their children to have a music education but cannot afford the cost of private lessons.

A band committee should think about the future of the band. Too often in the past, bands have relied on attracting experienced players rather than training their own. Perhaps only one child in five (or worse) will go on to play in the band as an adult but, in the process, there is education of a community. The nine-year-old on 2nd cornet today could be principal solo cornet in ten years time.

Tutors who work in peripatetic programs in schools have access to a pool of players that have reached basic competence levels. An invitation to come to the local brass band rehearsal can be used as a reward for achievement. This is another worthwhile symbiotic relationship, the local school benefiting from the improvement in playing standard that follows when a young player is challenged by more difficult music in an adult environment, the band gaining extra players.

5. UNIFORMS

Perhaps the most expensive purchase that a band will make is the uniform stock. The character of a band can be portrayed through its uniform. The usual choices are

- the traditional 19th century military uniform, coat with a parade collar, cap.
- the Bermuda jacket and slacks, wide brimmed hat
- bomber jacket and baseball cap.

There are pros and cons for each choice.

The traditional uniform has a formality that makes it suitable for most occasions. This can lead to the band being engaged for jobs based entirely on appearance. It is the look that people have come to expect from a brass band, especially when marching. If the band issues the coat to members on payment of a deposit, the members can then be responsible for buying their own (black) trousers, (black) boots / shoes and (black) socks. The cost of each coat is likely to exceed \$300 and the band is likely to need twice as many coats as it has players to allow for size variation. A band of 30 members would then be investing at least \$18 000 in coats. A suitable formal military style cap to suit the coat is likely to cost in excess of \$60, adding another \$3600 to the cost, at least.

Many bands have chosen the second option. The Bermuda style jacket is less formal, more modern but also less distinctive. On a march, the band risks being mistaken for a group heading for a lawn bowls tournament. The upside of this choice is the cost, less than half the cost of custom-made jackets. If a colour other than black is chosen for trousers / skirts, remember that there are 50 shades of grey.

The totally casual uniform can be attractive to some people and committees believe that young members will find the style more appealing. The low cost is very attractive to committees. Members can even be required to buy the uniform but reliable supply of the same fashionable style can be a problem, leading to the whole uniform being abandoned for a new style.

6. INSTRUMENTS

Purchase of instruments for the band is another huge expense. The band will need to have large instruments (basses) and percussion, including marching snares and bass drum with harnesses. The smaller the instrument, the more likely it is that a player will own one. Traditionally, brass bands have provided the full range of instruments to members. Solo cornets, trombones and euphoniums are the instruments most likely to be owned by members.

The committee has a choice of buying high quality new instruments, low quality new instruments or high quality second-hand instruments.

High quality new instruments, though the most desirable choice, is also the most expensive. Depreciation of the value of the instrument is rapid and there is the likelihood that it will not look like a new instrument for long in the hands of a ten-year-old beginner (or any other member for that matter).

Low quality (Chinese) instruments can be an attractive option. They often play very well when new. The purchase cost is usually lower than that of a high quality second-hand instrument. The problems arise as the instrument ages. The most minor problem (e.g. stuck tuning slide) can lead to the instrument being written off. The old adage that “The quality remains long after the price is forgotten” applies to musical instruments.

High quality instruments are often sold by service bands after a fixed number of years. These are usually of high quality but often need repairs.

Ebay and Gumtree are a source of used instruments. Another adage, “Buyer beware”, applies to these purchases. This is probably the best source of band instruments, especially for the less experienced players. Any instrument advertised as “suitable for a beginner” probably isn't. The beginner needs the best instrument possible as they will have enough problems to overcome without battling a faulty instrument.

A member of committee should ensure that instruments are being cared for by members. A deposit, refundable on return of the instrument in good condition, should be taken when the instrument is issued.

7. PERFORMANCES

Public performances advertise the band's capabilities. Only a small proportion of people can judge the quality of a band. An A Grade band playing in a park might be playing difficult pieces but most members of the public will not recognise that their efforts are more worthy than those of a D Grade band playing simple tunes.

It is important for the musical director to recognise that a public performance requires a different approach and a different repertoire to a contest. A rough performance is going to be remembered, even if the piece being attempted is difficult. An engaging, high standard performance should be the goal, even if it means playing music which the band finds easy.

Performances can be used to raise money for the band, either from donations, from ticket sales or from fees. A performance given free to support a charity can lead to significant support from other sources and can be used to justify applications for grants.

Bands should take note of the programs chosen by visiting bands such as Grimethorpe and YBS. There is a choice to be made between entertaining the audience and impressing the audience with technical prowess. Perhaps too many concerts are attended only by members of other brass bands rather than attracting the wider public.

8. TO MARCH OR NOT TO MARCH

In an effort to rid the public of the perception that a brass band is a band that spends all its time marching, bands have lost a lot of the public exposure that they once enjoyed.

Brass bands have a distinct advantage over reed bands. Their sound is more powerful and more rounded when playing in the open air. Some reed players find it impossible to play while marching. Clarinet players run for cover at the first sign of rain. Brass bands should use this advantage by supporting street parades whenever possible. This can be a good source of revenue for the band.

In the mid 20th century and earlier, formation marching was a major part of brass band activities. It is rare today to find a community band that marches well, let alone one that can counter-march, march in a figure of eight or even perform a snake. Diagram marching is virtually extinct in NSW.

The decision to march must be made by members. Older members and members with infirmities will be excluded. It might be difficult to get enough members to form a marching band. Some musicians believe that it is below their dignity to march, that they didn't join the band to play toy soldiers.

Marching rehearsals can rarely be held on normal rehearsal nights. Finding a time when all members can meet for a marching rehearsal can be a challenge. Combining the marching

rehearsal with a picnic can encourage members to attend. The event can be quite amusing for the public too.

Marching requires extra equipment, including instruments, music on cards, marching lyres, backing cards displaying the band's name, a banner displaying the band's name, a marching bass drum, marching snares and suitable harnesses.

Forming a partnership with the local RSL sub-branch by marching on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day can be beneficial to both groups.

Local councils are more likely to support a band that represents the district in major events such as the Anzac Day march in the city, the Greek National Day march or the Royal Easter Show.

9. CONTESTING

Some bands exist just to contest.

Not all players enjoy contesting and many a band has collapsed following the stress of preparing for the National Championships.

Band committees need to take their members' feelings into account when deciding whether or not to enter. On one hand, a band that contests can claim to represent its district and thereby make all sorts of claims in advertising. On the other hand, a band that is pushed hard to achieve might be set back many years by the experience.

Contests encourage the band to perform at a higher standard as members know that they are going to be judged, both collectively and individually. This can be good for some players and bad for others.

Contesting takes a lot of effort and can impact of the band's ability to perform at community functions. It is also expensive, taking into account the entry fees and the cost of music scores that are probably not suitable for other purposes.

It is a mark of a successful band that they can perform well at a contest. Some bands take contesting very seriously, holding extra rehearsals and bringing in better players for key positions. This can be viewed negatively by loyal Trojans in the band.

A band has to be prepared to come last in their grade without sparking recriminations. Winning might involve playing well but, more critically, it involves the adjudicator believing that you are playing well. Bands who benefit most from contesting care little of the result, as long as they enjoy the preparation, involving as it does music of a type that they might otherwise not play.

There is also the thrill of being involved in a big competition, seeing all the other bands and having them listen to your band. The world of the brass band is quite incestuous so people tend to

get to know people in other bands, as well as their own. Gossip moves around the bands at near the speed of light. While there might be rivalry amongst conductors, it is generally friendly as many play in more than one band. Your rival one day might be playing next to you a few days later.

For a community band in general, contesting should be seen as the sign of a good band, not the reason for its existence.

10. MANAGEMENT BY COMMITTEE

Most people join a band for the enjoyment of playing music with other people. Managing the organisation is time-consuming and often unrewarding. The choice of who is on committee and how much they do is crucial to the success of the band.

The relationship between committee and musical director can be central to the success of a band. Some conductors are members of their band committee and so have an input when important decisions are being made. A committee that tries to give instructions to the musical director without consultation is likely to cause a disaster.

The Model Constitution as offered by the NSW Department of Fair Trading sets down the roles for committee members in incorporated societies like clubs. These are general. Specifically, the band needs a small, harmonious committee, probably no more than six people. Their roles should be defined clearly. For example:

President

has to lead the band. New members and visitors should be welcomed by the president, introduced by the president to other members and generally made to feel welcome. The president has to unite the committee, avoiding factions and keeping disputes away from other members' attention.

Secretary

is the workhorse of the band. Most of the paperwork goes to and from the secretary. The secretary is the main contact person for the band. Liaison with other bands and the umbrella bodies is the secretary's responsibility. Organising meetings, managing membership and registrations and dealing with correspondence are the responsibilities of the secretary.

Treasurer

The treasurer should take responsibility for all money handled by the band, both income and expenditure. It is position requiring honesty beyond question.

Other roles

From the elected members, the committee will allocate other roles such as uniform officer, instrument officer, publicity officer, Band Association delegates and so on.

11. WHAT CAN GO WRONG WITH A BRASS BAND?

Look at a list of bands that competed in the local state championships twenty years ago. Many of those bands will no longer exist. Many will have progressed to higher grades. Others will be in lower grades. It is an interesting exercise to look at each of those bands and identify what has been the key to their success or failure.

The most common reason for the collapse of a band is failure to plan for the future. This especially applied to successful bands who have little change of personnel over decades. They might experience a degree of competition success. As the members age, they drift away from the band. As numbers dwindle, the committee starts to look for new players. These are difficult to find so players are borrowed from other bands so that performance commitments can be honoured. This just postpones the inevitable. When the band has only a handful of players, the remaining members, now all in the seventies, decide that the band should be wound up.

Another major cause of band implosion is the Cult of the MD. A musical director is appointed who is able to bring in a lot of players, perhaps from the previous band that he/she conducted (which had collapsed). The band goes well for a time, then there is a disagreement between the committee and the MD. The MD leaves and half the band follows.

Poisonous relationships in a band can be very destructive. Typically, a player is admitted to the band on the strength of playing ability. They form a clique, start rumours or generally behave inappropriately towards other members. This generates tension but no one on committee wants to tell their best player to leave. Instead, half the band leaves, either to join a happier band or vowing never to play in a band again.

Sometimes, the committee is the cause of the problem. A committee that cannot organise performances or cannot manage the band's finances well or makes decisions that are contrary to the wishes of a lot of members can drive members away.

When things go wrong, as they inevitably do, it is important that the committee analyse the problem, think rationally, ask for help and not panic.

BAND MAINTENANCE

If personal relationships are so important within a band, then the committee has to have strategies in place to foster a good atmosphere. Here are some of the things that bands do to maintain good relationships.

- Establish a supper roster. Most brass bands don't want to play for more than an hour without a break. Each week, a member is responsible for providing snacks and drinks (non-alcoholic). A ten minute break gives a chance for lips to recover and conversations to start.
- Remember birthdays. A committee member is responsible for announcing birthdays each week and the band plays "Happy Birthday". Special birthdays warrant a special supper.

- Recognise achievement of members, especially juniors. Bands are made up of individuals. The improvement in the playing standard of a member leads to improvement across the band. Announce when a member has passed an AMEB / Trinity grade exam.
- Organise social events for members. For example, after a marching rehearsal, have a picnic. Organise a group booking to hear a visiting band.
- Ensure that child protection guidelines are followed so that everyone feels satisfied that children are safe when with the band.

12. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REPAIR A BRASS BAND?

It seems inevitable that bands have their “ups and downs”. The relocation or death of a key member such as the secretary, a personal dispute that sours the atmosphere and so on can change a band virtually over night. What can be done once the damage has occurred?

The author remembers nights when members of his band used to wait on the steps of the band room at 7:30pm, hoping that one more player would arrive so the band could play quintets instead of quartets.

Sometimes, the committee or musical director has to recognise that it is time to take a break from contesting and playing difficult pieces. It is time to get *Boston Bounce* out of the drawer.

Many bands have reached the point over the years where a split has occurred and the nature of the band changed. Rather than deal with the issue and look to the future, panic takes hold and many unwise decisions are taken. There is no reason for a band ceasing to exist simply because it can no longer compete in A Grade.

Below are some of the measures that bands have taken.

Turn the band into a “concert” band

It seems like an attractive path to take. After all, most schools these days run reed bands rather than brass bands. There seems like no shortage of flute and clarinet players. Membership can increase in no time.

The downside is that most of the brass players will leave. Most parts in reed band music are in concert pitch, very inconvenient for the euphonium and trombone players. The solo cornets will not have the same level of responsibility that they had in the brass band. The melodies now go to the clarinets. The tenor horns can stay at home. It might be a way of preserving the band's name but it still results in the loss of a brass band.

Combine with another damaged band

When two bands can find only twenty players between them, it is tempting for the committees to suggest amalgamation. All problems seem to be solved in one stroke and the band can go on contesting. It is rare, however, for the two bands to meld easily. Typically,

- the composite band ends up with seven basses, no tenor horns, four euphoniums, etc

- the history of the original bands follow the members into the composite band, leading to “We did it this way in our old band...”.
- whatever caused the original bands to decline has not been addressed so there is every likelihood that the composite band will decline for the same reasons
- there is one brass band fewer because of the amalgamation.

Rethink and Recruit

It can take years to rebuild a damaged band. It takes people with patience and commitment to ask to drop a grade or two or even withdraw from contesting for a while. This gives time to develop an ensemble with however many players are left and gradually build the band from those foundations. Performance as a ten-piece band can be very satisfying and plenty of pieces for full band work well enough with a reduced band. Meanwhile, all members do what they can to teach young players and recruit experienced ones who move into the area.

13. FINDING A REHEARSAL VENUE

In starting a band from scratch, one of the major problems is finding somewhere to rehearse. At that stage, the Band will have little money and there a lot of things that the band will need. For the first few years, bands are usually limited to

- a Council-owned hall
- a school hall
- a facility shared with other groups.

All options will involve a hiring fee (unless the band has a friendly benefactor). There will be disruption when another group makes a mess or the council decides that a local ethnic ceremony has priority on your rehearsal night.

Ultimately, it is every band's dream to have their own band rooms with exclusive use. In big cities, real estate prices take this dream out of reach of most bands. In country areas, a disused property on the outskirts might be affordable.

Another possibility is to create a company and issue shares in order to raise enough funds to buy a commercial property. Remembering that noise from a band rehearsal might raise complaints from neighbours, a factory area is ideal. This project depends on enough people having enough confidence and enough “spare” money to invest in the band's future.

The ideal building has two levels: the lower level that can be leased out on a commercial basis so that rental income covers ownership costs. The upper level will be self-contained and include a rehearsal hall, tutoring rooms, a kitchen and toilets. The band would then pay the company a nominal rent for exclusive use of these rooms.

Owning a property involves responsibilities. There are maintenance issues, council rates, electricity charges, security and insurance premiums. Because the company owns the building, these issues do not concern the broader membership of the band; only the share-holders, led by a

competent accountant, will have to deal with the everyday running of the venue. Those shareholders would be rewarded with a yearly dividend, presuming that the rent of the lower part exceeds the costs of ownership.