

## Delightful Brass Band music - tunes from the past?

*Prelude...*

Reminiscing... A slow, quiet, leisurely walk in the park on a warm Sunday afternoon listening to an open air concert with a brass band playing wonderful music of a long ago era...

The Swedish Sigtuna Brass Sextet brought Swedish brass band music to America during a 2010 summer visit to Portland, arousing a curious interest in the topic calling for a closer look.

The writer wonders; "Is this just recalling fine tunes from another time era, or is it also relevant 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 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, unique step was taken; 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, in 1982, the Music Platoon - recruited annually among new conscripts - was set up, mainly to preserve traditions of military music. The only remaining military organization is the Royal Marine Band that consist of 30 fully employed musicians who represent a well respected and competent organization for Swedish Military Brass Music.

Along with 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 a full compliment of instruments is (per Royal Marine Band);

Soprano Cornet in E ♭

Cornets in B ♭

Flugelhorn in B ♭

Horns in E ♭

Tenor Trombones (notated in B ♭ ,  
(playing separate parts)

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

Euphoniums in B ♭

Tubas (in E ♭ and 2 in B ♭ ; often called Basses)

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



Holmsunds Musikkår 1890  
Picture: Västerbottens Museum

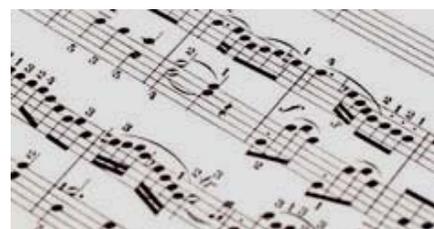
This overall instrumental set-up provides for a broad wonderful and lasting tune for the ear following us through centuries. Most of the music played was performed by military bands, with said instrument set up, during the 19th and 20th centuries and was arranged and composed by their directors. Many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

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

Music could be described as a wonderful feeling of wellbeing and allows the listener to softly touch the innermost feeling of the human. The writer has often wondered what goes on in the heads of people who compose and are able to touch these human feelings.

The popular music during these times was so called promenade

concerts; 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 ended with a march.



Sheet Music

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 also played violin in a theater orchestra. He graduated as director of music from Stockholms Musikkonservatorium in 1908. During the period 1918-25 he was director of music at the engineering corps (ingenjörstrupperna), first in Boden and later in Karlsborg. He later left military music and worked as a civil musician and leader of several orchestras in Stockholm.



Blue and Yellow Flag

Most of a composer’s/director’s music composition were 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...*

We had a wonderful summer afternoon where we were treated with traditional Swedish Brass Band music recalling the era of popular promenade music since the 1800’s. They played various folk music selections 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 hearts during their contemporary periods. The band performed the “The Royal Ball” by Gustav Fröding, which represents a portrayal of an Oscar II Ball, and was played in honor of the wedding of Crown Princess Victoria and Daniel Westling at midsummer, 2010.



Ross Fogelqvist introduces 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 the sleeves which represent the three kingdoms of Sweden at the time—Sweden, Norway and Finland.

We hope they will come back and entertain us again!

Pomp and circumstances with the Royal Marine Band playing.



The Marin Band performing in Stockholm  
Picture: Marinens Musikkår (Royal Marine Band)

#### References:

The Sigtuna Brass Sextet;  
<http://en.sigms.se/>

“The Wind Band in the history of Swedish Music”, Leif A. Janson;  
<http://wasbe.org/resources/historical-and-national-resources/wind-band-history-swedish-music>

Wikipedia, Brass Band;  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brass\\_band](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brass_band)

“Brass Instruments in small Swedish wind ensembles during the late ninetieth century”, Ann-Marie Nilsson, Historic Brass Society Journal

Marinens Musikkår (The Royal Marine Band)  
<http://www.marinensmusikkar.se/historik.shtml>