

Examining the Professional Practice of Brass Band Conducting

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Examining the Professional Practice of Brass Band Conducting

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Music

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Abstract

After 10 National Championship wins as Musical Director of Brisbane Excelsior Brass Band, the author is often asked several questions: What does a conductor need to know to be successful on the contest stage? What needs to be done to remain at the top of the game for such a long period? What does the author do differently to others? The answers to these questions lie in understanding the various roles of the brass band conductor, and how these roles are realized in the author's professional practice.

There has been very little research done on maintaining the competitive edge over time despite other changeable factors and players. An understanding of the ongoing responsibilities of a musical director may help minimize the impact of socio-cultural changes within the band community following successive wins at a national level or a change of director.

This study investigates the role of the musical director by reflecting on the responsibilities and practices of successful directors and analyzing the personal characteristics and interpersonal relationships with band members through autoethnography and interviews with other directors. Attention has also been paid to the administrative support and team dynamics within the Brisbane Excelsior community.

For Brisbane Excelsior, the study found that the combination of the musical director's ongoing self-reflection, consistent methods over 14 years (2002–2016), and intrinsic personal characteristics created an environment where band members strove to succeed, and were challenged to maintain a very high standard of playing.

The implications of these results for the band community are that a musical director can succeed through experience but is more likely to maintain success through careful planning and inclusive practices. The band dynamic is fluid but the role of the director is to identify and mentor players within the specific cultural norm of the brass band community.

Therefore, the research seeks to answer the questions: "what is the role of the brass band musical director, and how is this reflected in professional practice?"

Introduction

The main purpose of this research project is to investigate, through a performance-led process, the role of the brass band musical director by examining the explicit and implicit nature of the complex interrelationship between the band and its director. This has been done by analysing the essential attributes of the musical direction through reflecting on personal experience and interviewing other successful conductors.

Although several books have been written which cover some of the issues in this Thesis, most are now out of print. Nevertheless, there have been articles published on several issues raised in this Thesis in magazines and periodicals. The author believes this is due to the unique circumstances in which community brass bands are formed. Evidence suggests that many successful brass band conductors have grown up within brass band ranks and that the knowledge has been passed down through generations. UK Brass Band Conductor Leonard Adams says, "I do not know of any specific research into brass band conducting and can only suggest that as it is so difficult that it has never been done, by this I mean the information has never, to my knowledge, been documented." (Email, December 2016)

This paper therefore aims to generate new knowledge to fill this gap, but also seeks to deconstruct the particularities that surround brass band conducting. The research seeks to answer these questions: what is the role of the successful brass band musical director/conductor, and how is this reflected in professional practice?

Current literature mostly draws on conductor biographies or practical conducting methods. For example, Frederick Harris (2001) was asked: "How does one create a conductor?" He responded that he didn't know, but if there was such a thing as a leadership school, "They all ought to go to it."

Boardman (2000) found that there was a disconnect between what is taught in conducting at a tertiary level and what graduates rated as important to the "development of the student conductor." Once again, this highlights the void that must be bridged between technical knowledge and the vast range of interpersonal skills required in conducting. Cox (1989) describes the abilities a conductor needs to develop in order to create a successful choral ensemble, but there is little about the unique community of brass bands or sustaining a successful ensemble. Boardman and Cox focus on becoming established in the field but do not evaluate methods of retaining a culture of excellence and proficiency in instrumental playing that is required for long-term success, despite a shift in the social and cultural backgrounds of band players.

This research is intended to fill that gap by drawing specifically on the author's own experience as a successful brass band musical director with decades of professional experience with bands at the highest levels of accomplishment in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. More specifically, this research is predominantly focused on the author's current role as Musical Director of Brisbane Excelsior Band. *Excelsior*, a Latin word often translated as "ever upward" or "still higher," (Oxford Concise Dictionary) is what the band aims to fulfil in their pursuit of excellence. This A-grade band has been Australia's leading brass band for the last decade under the author's directorship.

The musical director's role is complex. It encompasses a range of socially and culturally meaningful tasks beyond the art of musical interpretation and direction. For this project, the term "musical director" is used to indicate a working relationship with the band that goes beyond the mechanics of conducting performances. It encompasses the work in directing the band, selecting repertoire, mentoring players, organizing, and completing administrative tasks that provide a deep insight into the psyche of the band.

The framework for research is analyzed through three key responsibilities incumbent in the role of musical director:

- organization and social
- musicianship and training
- technical and artistic practice.

The research will explore the rich context of brass bands in the wider community and of conducting competitive bands. This will be followed by an autobiographical account of the author's experiences, and how they shaped his position as a brass band conductor. It will then deconstruct the range of proficiencies and attributes required for effective brass band conducting, and finally, it will provide an example of reflective practice by situating the researcher in the world of brass bands.

Many conductors have won single championships, but to continually repeat this success on a competitive stage has proven to be nearly impossible. It is of paramount importance that a musical director keeps a band consistently at the top of their game. Exactly what did the author do to become the most successful brass band conductor in Australia on the contest stage?

In Australia, there are three main brass band contests:

- **States of Australia contests:** Queensland Band Association (QBA) held at different times depending on the state of residence
- **Australian Nationals:** National Association of Brass Bands (NABB) held over Easter each year
- **Australian Open:** Federation of Brass Bands (FABB) held in October each year.

The usual scenario for an Australian contest is that a set test piece is selected by a Musical Advisory Board or by the previous year's judge for all bands at each grade, from A (highest) to D. These may be drawn from one used recently at a premier contest in the United Kingdom or, occasionally, commissioned by the host organisation. Every band then chooses a hymn, own choice test piece, and a stage march.

For the purpose of this project, discussion is focused on competition bands as opposed to community or religious bands that do not compete but perform for social or religious reasons. For these contest bands, the appointment of a musical director is pivotal in order to prepare them for competing in intrastate, interstate and international contests.

In 2005, Brisbane Excelsior won the A Grade Australian National Championship for the first time since their inception nearly 100 years before. Since then, the band has continued to be the

number one band in the Australasian brass band scene. At the time of writing, the band's most recent success was the 2016 Australian National Championships held in Adelaide.

The majority of evidence presented takes the form of reflective narrative, tables, and an analysis of the author's time with Brisbane Excelsior. This evidence is complemented by an overview of the role of a conductor in a brass band context.

This project will consider both historical and contemporary aspects of artistic practice. It will include an account of my own entry to brass banding, in order to ascertain what factors in this experience may have influenced my conducting practices. I also offer a practice-led account of my current conducting, with three key professional performances included as evaluation points for considering the effectiveness of this practice.

When approached by the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University to undertake this project, I was excited about the idea of researching a topic about which I am very passionate. This meant learning more about myself, questioning my actions over my career as a conductor, and also having a chance to pass on my results to future musical directors. It is therefore important that I provide a summary of my musical background within the brass band organization, as I believe this has been a major contributor to the events leading to the success of the last 10 years.

Although I have no formal musical qualifications, all my experience in conducting has been self-taught, so the question has to be asked—if one person can do it, what is stopping any conductor from having continual success at top-level band competitions; not just once, but consistently? Researching and preparing this paper has made me constantly question my motives, method and direction, as well as analyze what I have done over the last 10 years to achieve this remarkable run of success.

It should be stated that no consistent success is possible without the careful selection of the best personnel, not only musically but also administratively. These endeavors are always a team effort.

Before the research method and data supporting this thesis are presented, it should be stated that there are distinct differences between professional musical director/conductor and resident musical director/conductor. This has a profound effect on the overall role of the musical director. The terms musical director and conductor are used interchangeably in this paper.

Musical directors or conductors have a varied view on their involvement with the organisational duties with a brass band. The role of the musical director or conductor changes considerably depending upon whether it is a professional guest conductor or resident fulltime conductor. A professional MD / conductor will not have a presence in the band rehearsal room until usually two weeks before a contest or concert, and will prepare the band for that specific event. This person could well be involved with numerous other bands throughout the contest season. This is very common in the UK, where bands are trained by a resident conductor and invite different professional conductors to add the finishing touches of brilliance to the groundwork laid by the resident conductor. This is not a regular occurrence in Australia and New Zealand, where the resident is the fulltime conductor who rehearses and conducts the band in all events.

This author clearly defines himself as a resident conductor, along with musical directors such as Philip Harper with Cory Band, and Dr Nicholas Childs with Black Dyke Band. All of them are involved with the full complement of responsibilities and face the daily challenges of running a successful brass band. Russell Gray, however, who is purely a professional conductor, will train a band for no more than two weeks before a major competition. Both Professor David King and Dr Robert Childs were associated with Yorkshire Building Society Band and The Cory Band respectively and would consider themselves similar to the author (Resident Conductors). Bramwell Tovey, Peter Parkes, Alan Withington and others are better examples of Professional Conductors.

Conducting—a brief overview

Conducting is the art of directing a musical performance by way of visible gestures. The primary duties of the conductor are to unify performers, set the tempo, execute clear preparations and beats, and to listen critically and shape the sound of the ensemble. Conductors act as guides of the brass bands they conduct. They choose the works to be performed, and study their scores to execute the wishes of the composer and to be as true to the musical score as possible. Conductors may make certain adjustments, work out their interpretation, and relay their ideas to the performers.

Conducting is a means of communicating artistic directions to performers during a performance. Although there are many formal rules on how to conduct correctly, others are subjective, and a wide variety of different conducting styles exist, depending upon the training and sophistication of the conductor. Communication is non-verbal during a performance; however, in rehearsal, frequent interruptions allow directions as to how the music should be played.

Conducting requires an understanding of the elements of musical expression (tempo, dynamics and articulation) and the ability to communicate them effectively to an ensemble. The ability to communicate nuances of phrasing and expression through gestures is also beneficial. Conducting gestures are preferably prepared beforehand by the conductor while studying the score, but may sometimes be spontaneous.

The downbeat indicates the first beat of the bar, and the upbeat indicates the last beat of the bar. The instant at which the beat occurs is called the *ictus* (plural: *ictūs* or *ictuses*), and is usually indicated by a sudden (though not necessarily large) click of the wrist or change in baton direction.

If the tempo is slow or slowing, or if the time signature is compound, a conductor will sometimes indicate “subdivisions” of the beats. The conductor can do this by adding a smaller movement in the same direction as the movement for the beat that it belongs to. Changes to the tempo are indicated by changing the speed of the beat. To carry out and to control a *rallentando*, a conductor may introduce beat subdivisions.

While some conductors use both hands to indicate the beat, with the left hand mirroring the right, formal education discourages such an approach. The second hand is therefore used for cueing the entrances of individual players or sections, and to aid indications of dynamics, phrasing, expression, and other elements.

Dynamics are indicated in various ways. The dynamic may be communicated by the size of the conducting movements, larger shapes representing louder sounds. Changes in dynamic may be signalled with the hand that is not being used to indicate the beat: an upward motion (usually palm-up) indicates a *crescendo*; a downward motion (usually palm-down) indicates

a diminuendo. Changing the size of conducting movements frequently results in changes in the character of the music, depending upon the circumstances.

Conductors aim to maintain eye contact with the ensemble as much as possible, encouraging eye contact in return and increasing the dialogue between players/singers and conductor. Facial expressions may also be important to demonstrate the character of the music or to encourage the players.

Attributes required for brass band conducting

Conductors of school or community brass bands are seen as notional leaders of music, and public faces of the bands. But the role is more complex than that. While the public may not be aware of the extent of the conductors' responsibilities within the band community, they acknowledge the social status and authority, and have expectations for conductors' behavior. The role is open to scrutiny.

Attributes that a good conductor is expected to display include musicianship, leadership, sense of personal magnetism, a good rapport with an ensemble, time management, and an effective conducting technique. The reality goes beyond this, as Alan Gilbert, former musical director of the New York Philharmonic, notes:

A great conductor is someone who can work with musicians and stand in front of them and bring out the best in them and create a musical experience that communicates to the audience. And it's hard to say what it is because there are conductors who are very clear and show the tempo in a very precise way and help the musicians play absolutely together, but something is missing. The soul is not there; the spirit is not there. And then there will be musicians or conductors who have no obvious technique and seem scrappy and all over the place, but something happens. So what it means to conduct, actually, is sort of the basic question... It's about inspiring them and making the musicians feel that there's something in the music that they want to express.

(Interviewed by David Hirschman, 18 June 2010. <http://bigthink.com/videos/big-think-interview-with-alan-gilbert>)

The available literature for brass bands says little about the complex role of a conductor. This study is not an analysis of baton technique, nor the art of conducting, nor musical theory. It will discuss ways that the conductor creates a successful musical ensemble, including how to build a band, how to excel at a contest, and what the conductor does outside of the rehearsal room.

Conducting is a skill that a brass band player could learn on the job, or as a rite of passage for competent and experienced players. The artistic role of the brass band conductor has many similarities with conductors of any ensemble. As Gilbert describes:

As a conductor, you try to show the time as clearly as possible, but there are moments in this piece where it doesn't work simply to be precise. You have to embody the evanescence of the sound, the kind of lightness of texture... It's very interesting how just the simple quality of your body; if you hold your hands like this, or if you relax them, it affects the sound instantly. The players read that, and they sympathetically create that kind of sound. I find it very difficult. (Big Think, 2010)

Regarding the method used for communicating musical feeling, conductors generally agree on the fundamentals of their practice. Conducting is not an art of speech; it is the art of gesture, pantomime, and ballet (Harris 2001). As Harris notes, "The person upfront on the podium has

to be a genuine, honest, open, sincere, supportive, trustworthy educator/conductor who can create an environment where nobody is going to fail, nobody is going to be embarrassed” (Harris, 2001, p. 38).

Harris clearly indicates that the role goes beyond mere baton-waving technique. Indeed, the complexity of the role is indicative of the relationship between band members and even between sections. This focus on expression as a key role of the conductor is echoed in other conducting literature, for example:

When an audience hears a performance of some piece in which everything is absolutely correct, the rhythm is correct, the dynamics are clear and precise, the articulation is clear, etc., but without the musical message – they’re just monitoring a performance. Attempting to play expressively amounts to little if poor intonation, inaccurate rhythms etc. are part of a performance. Conversely, a technically perfect performance without character, expressive playing, or individuality, is equally unsatisfying (Battisti, 2001 p. 18).

While the breath is considered to be particularly important, conducting also uses gestures, facial expressions and eye movement (Harris, 2001). Bernstein (1959, p. 16) states in *The Joy of Music* that a conductor who breathes with the music has already acquired a technique. A good conductor is one who uses positive eye contact and breathes with the musicians. Harris (2001) adds that there are two principles behind the conductor’s actions:

The first principle is that the players will attack the sound the way the conductor strikes the baton on the ictus. The second principle is that the way the conductor moves through space is the way the players will move air through their instruments. These basic principles imply that a conductor needs to possess a large vocabulary of gestures. Gestures are ‘as personal as a voice’ and that the relationship between music and gesture has physiological aspects that depend on each individual. This point highlights the elusive element, the conductor’s personality (Harris, 2001).

These actions can be taught to a trainee conductor who has the expected musical knowledge, technique and style. However, the musical director’s role goes much further, regardless of whether it is in an amateur or professional context. The musical director will not succeed without other implicit personal character attributes, including:

- integrity
- a positive outlook
- strong and honest character
- humility
- discipline
- persistence
- imagination
- a sense of humor.

Conductors may not excel in certain areas but they can change their own way of thinking to fully embrace the role of musical director. Leonard Adams, a past mentor and Musical Director of Championship section Bodmin Band, once said, “There will never be anyone more

enthusiastic in a brass band than the conductor.” In addition, it has become apparent that music is only a small, though vital, component of being a successful musical director.

Other attributes to be considered apply to the community perspective. They include personal coaching, discipline, managing about 28 different personalities, as well as providing music tuition. It should be noted that many players are amateurs who receive their only real music education from the band itself or the conductor. Because orchestral conducting books do not contain this sort of information, this section has served to explain some of the complexity in the role of musical director.

Situating the researcher – an autoethnography

When asked if I would like to complete a Masters to extend studies of my passion, I readily agreed. This research paper will offer a lot to inexperienced conductors in the community band scene. It concentrates less on technique or musical theory, but instead, more on the everyday tasks involved in directing a band or choir, and the wider requirements for becoming a successful leader of a musical ensemble.

I am not the best conductor in Australia, stylistically or technically, but my conducting ability and leadership style have proven to be a successful formula for the bands I have been associated with. I will show how my experience has helped me understand the cultural practices, common values and beliefs that exist in the brass band community. The unique culture of a contest band can only be experienced from within.

I consider myself fortunate to have had great opportunities to work with so many bands, which over time have formed the basis of my understanding of my role as musical director. However, at no time was I formally trained in what I was doing. Instead, I learned by consulting top band conductors, asking for guidance, watching and listening to the best bands, and crucially, learning from my own mistakes. Through this research project, I now have the opportunity to establish a more structured formal context for my professional practice.

I grew up in a musical family. My father was a successful cornet player, and my mother a singer and pianist. When I was eight years old, I started on the cornet, and have been involved with brass ensembles in some way or another ever since. I followed our Salvation Army tradition and commenced in the Junior Band of the Plymouth Exeter Hall Salvation Army in Devon, UK.

Attached in Appendix A is table 2 summarising my conducting and playing career to date.

I have worked with almost all of the A-grade New Zealand competition bands, from Whangarei in the North Island to the world's southern-most brass band, Invercargill. During this time, I led the winning band of the New Zealand Championship and was awarded the New Zealand Shell Band of the Year (1999, 2000 and 2001). In 2002, I was appointed Director of Brisbane Excelsior, and led them to four consecutive Australian national titles (2005 to 2008), and 2010, but missed the 2009 Nationals because the band had accepted an invitation to compete at the prestigious British Open. Brisbane Excelsior created history on both sides of the Tasman by winning the 2007 and 2008 New Zealand National Championships, with a total of six consecutive victories.

The win in 2005 was one of my greatest achievements: a just reward for the time and energy expended over three years leading up to the contest. After a fourth placing in 2003, then third in 2004, the triumph in 2005—winning every section—was particularly sweet. It reinforced several adages: “Hard work does pay off. You get out only what you put in. If you are prepared, you will reap the benefits. The more I practise, the luckier I get.”

Looking back on those competitions, I know I have accumulated vast experience from working with a wide range of musical standards and with so many different personalities. Over the years, I believe I have grown not only musically, but as a people-manager too. I have learned to work

a lot smarter, rather than harder. I can get better results from a band much more efficiently today than 10 to 15 years ago.

One particular work experience I benefited greatly from was the opportunity to work in England alongside professional conductor Russell Gray in 2010. This was the chance to conduct one of the world's finest brass band ranked in the top five in the world, the Fairey Band. This band has had several names over the years; in 1937 when founded they were Fairey Aviation Band. However, they have always retained the word Fairey in their name. Although I had grown up in the British band scene, I realised that this opportunity was taking things to the highest level of music making. During my appointment, the band was often booked on 15 consecutive weekends—concerts, rehearsals or competitions. Apart from working with bands in the UK, I was also well placed to attend many contests and concerts of other world-class brass bands. I listened, absorbed, and learned, and gained a first-hand understanding of the latest musical repertoire for brass bands. This experience gave me a wealth of knowledge—both musically and with regard to every aspect of being a musical director.

I returned to Australia with a new vigour and enthusiasm. In 2011, I was invited to work with the Gunnedah Shire Band in NSW, and to conduct them in Melbourne at the 2012 National Australian Championships. Gunnedah won every category, with Brisbane Excelsior runners-up. By then a freelance conductor, I took up the position of Professional Musical Director with the Dalewood Auckland Band, who were crowned New Zealand Band of the Year in 2011 under my leadership.

On returning to Brisbane Excelsior as Musical Director in 2012, I resumed our successful relationship, winning again in 2013 (Perth), 2014 (Brisbane), and 2016 (Adelaide). In 2013, I assisted Professor David King with the inaugural National Australian Youth Band and became a playing member of the National Brass Band of Australia. This was an invaluable experience. David gained results very quickly, such as articulating exactly what he needed within the music in a way the players could respond to instantaneously. He did this by using creative imagery related to everyday life, rather than by explaining in a musical sense. For me, this was a masterclass in conducting; so much so that I invited the professor to analyse one of my rehearsals.

After adjudicating at national level in the UK, New Zealand and Australia, I extended my musical adventures to Tonga, which I visited for a fourth time in July 2016, to adjudicate school bands and run masterclasses. The first National Youth Band of Tonga was formed that year. After I auditioned 150 applicants, I regarded it as one of the best personal achievements to finally establish this group of elite players and to conduct their inaugural performance.

My competition success has opened many doors for me as a guest conductor for major concerts, competitions, workshops and other events for bands around Australia, and for my appointment as Director of Music for the National Band of New Zealand for three years (2007–09). In addition to the competitions, I have led tours accompanying legendary trumpeter James Morrison, two trips to Hong Kong and China, three tours of the UK and Europe, and numerous CD recordings. When these events are listed like this, they could easily suggest I was a full-time professional, but that is not the case. I have done it largely as an amateur while being employed in non-musical activities. It is difficult to conceive of a career solely as a conductor

of brass bands, which has implications for the perception of the professional role of the brass band conductor.

Research Method and Design

To provide the data supporting this research, information has been derived from an autoethnographical overview, performance-based practices and interviews with other successful conductors. These accounts of experiences and events are intended to situate the reader in the socio-cultural world of brass bands. This information forms the basis for this thesis, which sits alongside the analysis of three contrasting professional performances of my professional practice and reflection.

I interviewed other brass band and orchestral conductors to learn their views on their own practices, and then to draw comparisons with my own cultural and musical experiences. These interviews have an international scope, incorporating conductors Peter Luff from Australia, Philip Harper from Wales, and Russell Gray and Leonard Adams from England. I drew on a participant pool of musical directors who have had significant success conducting not only brass bands but other musical ensembles as well. Of those selected, I have used quotes throughout the research from interviewed conductors. Ethical clearance was granted for the research. The full interview transcripts can be found in Appendix F.

Conductors interviewed for research

- Leonard Adams is a freelance brass band conductor in England and President of The Cornwall Youth Band. Leonard is Managing Director of the successful music shop Trevada Music.
- Russell Gray is a freelance conductor with over twenty-five years' experience in the music business. He is currently holding posts of Adjunct Professor at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music (Australia), Principal Conductor of the Cambrian Philharmonic Orchestra (Wales), Musical Director of the National Youth Band of Scotland, Professional Conductor with the Reg Vardy Brass Band and President of the National Association of Brass Band Conductors.
- Philip Harper is Musical Director of the world-famous Cory Band, Number One World Rank by winning all four major titles in the brass band calendar: The British Nationals, the European, Brass in Concert and the British Open. Philip is also the Editor of Brass Band World magazine, the Music Editor of the Wright and Round publishing company, and in demand as a freelance conductor, educator and adjudicator with brass bands of all levels as well as being a prolific composer.
- Peter Luff is Co-Chair of Brass at Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, assistant conductor and Associate Principal Horn of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

Three professional performances

The three performances in this research aim to reflect the current breadth of brass band performance contexts, including competition, studio recording, and public concert. These topics will be discussed in detail later in the paper.

1. Australian National Brass Band Contest: Lead-up, preparation and participation in a major contest.
 - Date Easter 2013
 - Artist Brisbane Excelsior Brass Band
 - Venue Perth University
 - Repertoire Set test piece, own choice major work, hymn, and march.

2. Professional Recording of Brass Ensemble
 - Date November 2015
 - Artist Brisbane Excelsior Brass Band
 - Venue Queensland Conservatorium Theatre
 - Repertoire Varied popular music

3. Major Brass Concert: One Hundred and One Years: 1914–2015
 - Date July 2015
 - Artist Brisbane and Townsville Youth Brass Band
 - Venue Brisbane and Townsville
 - Event Queensland Music Festival

Results of Research

Based on reflection of my own practices, I propose the idea that the role of the musical director in a brass band community is framed by three key responsibilities:

1. Organizational and social responsibilities
2. Musicianship and training methods.
3. Technical and artistic practices.

My research covered different sources, including personal practice diaries and journaling; peer review from senior, influential and experienced players within the band; reviewing video recordings of concerts; and seeking constructive criticism from other conductors. A survey of the members of Brisbane Excelsior Band (Appendix E) covered a range of topics, including contest lead-up preparations, rehearsal techniques, time management, and quality of performance on the day. This research unearthed some useful findings about the three key responsibilities, as listed above, of the role of the brass band musical director.

1. *Organizational and social responsibilities*

The role of the musical director is to shape the organization of the band, contribute ideas, and ensure the smooth and efficient running of a successful community ensemble. It also requires a set of complex social administration skills that are more often about mediation and mentoring of key players than simply maintaining authority over the music delivery. Because the musical director is pivotal to the direction of the band, the role is as much about managing people as it is about creating an environment of positive reinforcement to establish a successful band.

Organizational and social responsibilities can be broken down into three main aspects explored below:

- 1.1 managing and leading personnel
- 1.2 creating a positive attitude
- 1.3 establishing a successful band.

1.1 Managing and leading personnel

The first aspect of Key Responsibility #1: Organization and Social Responsibilities is managing and leading personnel. Managing personnel plays a substantial part in the role of a musical director. A community association is a body of individuals interconnected by a specific purpose: in this case, to create music. Cohesion is encouraged through a mutual consideration and it is important that the conductor earns the respect from the whole band. This subject was of paramount importance in all interviews, which revealed ample anecdotal evidence to support the argument that conducting concentrates more on personalities and the complex social tasks of people management, as well as good communication and motivational leadership.

Leonard Adams's comment, "Personnel management is crucial, and you have to lead by example," (2016) shows that earning the respect of the band is of unparalleled importance. Similarly, Russell Gray (2015) said, "You need to have a clear picture in your head and be

totally prepared with conviction as well as knowing the right buttons to push.” In my opinion, egos are just one issue that complicates the role, and the chemistry between conductor and group is an indicator of the likelihood of success. Suggestions to assist musical directors with these complex tasks include peer reviews and player reviews to ensure that the director and players are aligned in vision and goals.

The role of the conductor is to extract the best from the ensemble on every level, from organization to training. I have learned that the most important factor is personnel management. Philip Harper, conductor of world number one brass band, the Cory Band, agrees:

Personnel management is the hardest part of being a musical director. However, I think a conductor needs to invest in creating the general culture/approach that he/she wants across the ensemble, engaging and enfranchising the musicians. This takes a while, but once in place it then becomes easier to deal with issues that arise. (2016)

Traditional wisdom that tells us that you can please some of the people some of the time, but you are never going to please all of the people all of the time. Management of individuals is not simply about agreement, but about the right to disagree and compromise for the shared purpose of the band. Professor of Conducting Craig Kirchoff said, “Music itself is about people, it’s about real life. Music is about the great tragedies in life, the great joys in life. And if one has not left oneself open and vulnerable to those experiences then the artistic product will reflect that.” (Kirchoff, 2001 p. 31).

The personality of the musical director contributes significantly to the strategies adopted in order to manage the individuals in a brass band. The type of conductor one becomes is directly related to personality. Successful musical directors apply themselves with passion. They have learned to exhibit a certain charisma, confidence, charm, magnetism, appeal, and an open character.

A conductor’s charisma is intrinsically linked to the art of conducting. Leonard Bernstein was the epitome of a charismatic conductor and considered larger than life. Harold Schonberg (Bowen, 2003, p. 253) wrote:

The conductor ... above all must have ... the mysterious thing known as projection: the ability to beam his physical and musical personality forward into the orchestra and directly backward into the lap of every listener of the audience. All great conductors have a remarkable power of projection.

Dr Donald Running’s study (2011) seeks to find quantifiable evidence of whether conductors of college musical ensembles share a common charisma that is significantly different from that of the general population. He said that charisma is commonly considered an individual’s ability and need to motivate, lead, or educe the dedication of others. From the research, charisma in the public eye directly related to the success of public speakers, politicians, actors and sales people. Each person will bring different strategies that remain true to their own personality: some are eccentric, unconventional or unusual in their ways, but by some means, they get results by exposing their own character to judgment by those whose respect they must earn.

A good musical director must also have the gift of a fertile imagination. Much more is required other than just the ability to conduct a score. One must create an overall picture, a musical story for the listeners and the musicians.

The authority of the musical director must be clear and non-negotiable within the parameters of the role. Open discussion is encouraged but there is a fine line for a leader between being too familiar and keeping one's distance. It is inevitable that, after many years, the musical director will become increasingly connected to a band. This is certainly true of Brisbane Excelsior under my directorship. In response to this observation, Vilde Gaupholm, current trombone player for Brisbane Excelsior in 2017, related that after playing in the band for two years, she noticed that:

Band members have a great amount of respect for Howard both as a conductor and for his musical choices. I also think that he is a lot more connected to the band than what I have experienced in other bands in Norway. The director is much more like a member of the band than a paid conductor, and it is clear that he is really passionate about the band. The personal connection is strong between the conductor and the band members. I consider that this is something that has greatly contributed to the band's success. (2016)

Strong leadership is not unique to the music world. Often, good business managers make good motivators, who in turn show good leadership qualities and the ability to inspire their team. This can be related to any sports coach or manager in their winning capabilities. One suitable example is Sir Alex Ferguson, the manager of English football team Manchester United. As Britain's most successful football manager, Ferguson's main goal was to build a team to be consistently successful, and to build an environment, create a culture and work with a continually changing group of players. Ferguson used the following analogy many times.

During his 26 trophy-laden years at Manchester United, Ferguson would often stop training and tell his players to look up and observe the waterfowl flying overhead. He would point out that the V-formation was a snapshot of a 4000-mile journey during which each bird would take its turn at the front, part of one perfect machine designed to achieve a single goal. Finally, he would add, "Now if they can do that, you can give me 38 games to win the league." Ferguson (2015)

"Remember the geese." As mantras for success go, it hardly sets the pulse racing, but to British football's most successful manager—and to those smart enough to listen to him—it is one of the keys to success. This simple symbol for teamwork is just part of what makes Ferguson a great leader and why his influence stretches far beyond football into other sports and the worlds of business, the military and politics. Sir Michael Moritz, venture capitalist and co-author of *Leading*, says of Ferguson: "He could be the father confessor, the motivational speaker, the priest, the judge, the jury, the Lord High Executioner, the puppet master and the inspirational figure, all in the course of one day." Moritz (2015)

In Queensland, Wayne Bennett, the most successful coach in Australian Rugby League history noted similar qualities in his memoir, *Don't Die With The Music In You*. He has experienced ongoing success with the last three teams he has coached. How did he achieve this incredible feat? During his 28-year coaching career, Bennett has been called many things, including super coach, master coach, mastermind, maestro, genius, and expert, but perhaps the best word to describe him is architect. Former St George Illawarra coach Nathan Brown believes the best coaches have close bonds with their players, but can separate the difference between being a

coach and friend. “Wayne Bennett’s got a great relationship with a lot of his players,” (2015) Brown said. Typically, Bennett countered that comment:

When it comes time to make those hard decisions, you can’t let that friendship get in the way of the hard decision. You have to be able divorce it—I can be firm with the bloke—if I have to sack him or drop him we put the friendship aside, and you have to be up front and honest.
Bennett (2015)

Bennett is the perfect man manager. He understands male footballers, and how to get the best out of them. More precisely, he understands individuals.

One may ask why sporting and coaching analogies are being used in a brass band conducting study. I can relate my own experiences to these great ambassadors—certainly not in the same league as these legends—but the same beliefs, features and characteristics. Exceptional people management is the key factor in their ongoing success. There is, of course, one major difference between sports and musical competitions. In sport, winning or losing by a certain margin is clear cut, whereas a brass band contest is won or lost from an adjudicator’s subjective opinion.

1.2 Creating a positive attitude

The next aspect of Key Responsibility #1: Organization and Social Responsibilities is creating a positive attitude.

All interviewed conductors agreed that the aim of their rehearsals was to make playing interesting, fun and rewarding. Russell Gray (2013) also confirmed that a conductor must be a good communicator, motivator and team player. Leonard Adams (2015) said that maintaining interest, involvement and motivation of the players is one of the greatest challenges within conducting.

In researching ways to create a positive attitude, I reflected on my introduction to Brisbane Excelsior. The following observations demonstrate the importance of change management in creating a positive attitude, and the importance of setting clear expectations for all players. It clearly demonstrates that the role of musical director includes direction setting and establishes the expectations of members.

In 2002, I accepted the offer to work for a couple of weekends with Brisbane Excelsior. This involved two concerts: one at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) and one at the Brisbane Riverstage. Initially, I found the band to be disciplined but friendly, and with solid musical foundations. I was also attracted to the notion of living in Brisbane. I quickly decided I could work with this band, being aware that the band was also testing my suitability for their organization. At one of the audition rehearsals, I told them of the direction I wanted to take the band, which included increasing rehearsals from once to twice a week, and entering more contests in other Australian states. Significantly, I told everyone that the band in front of me was not going to be the band that would win its first National Championship. I was preparing them for a crucial fact—there would be many changes of personnel. I stressed that they were a good community band, but they had to decide whether they wanted to continue in that same direction without me, or whether they were willing to take on a new conductor with a new direction and the possibility that many were going to fail to meet my expectations. Consequently, some would have to leave and play with other bands.

I received no negative comments. The band as a whole was ready to move in this new direction. As long as I had the majority of the group and the committee on my side, I was prepared to continue with my decision. Eventually, I accepted the position of musical director and moved to Brisbane in 2002. It wasn't long before we entered our first contest together. I had decided to not enter the national contest in my first year, but to start rebuilding this musical ensemble. We competed in the Queensland contest in Gladstone where we came out winners in all sections—a very pleasing start to my new role. However, I had also identified the band's strengths and weaknesses. Soon, the gradual replacements and casualties were mounting, and I found myself with many adversaries in a very short time. Unfortunately, this was necessary in my overall “big picture” plan of action.

I also realized that many of the band players in my early days as musical director were first-rate musicians who always attended and did many of the mundane, but necessary tasks for Brisbane Excelsior. Their playing level was below the required standard and many were just not technically capable of producing the quality of sound necessary for an elite ensemble. I had to find a way to retain these valuable members, which is how I came up with the idea of starting a second band.

At the first rehearsal, I had only four players, and we had a couple of hours playing quartets. The members I had invited in were understandably reluctant to suddenly find themselves demoted from A-grade to a potential D-grade starter band. At the next rehearsal, we had six, then 10 and, soon after, I had 24 musicians of all differing standards and ranging in age from 11 to 75. The former Excelsior members did come on board and I must say those next three years were a pleasure. I thoroughly enjoyed watching this band (now Windsor Brass) grow, winning the D-grade and then the C-grade before I passed on the baton to another conductor. Windsor Brass won the Queensland B-grade brass band championships in 2016 and I couldn't be happier or prouder of their progress after that first rehearsal with just four musicians.

Creating a place for participants and players that is commensurate with their skill, and gaining their acceptance of their limitations, sets the basis for a community in which every person is valued for what they bring to the organization. Providing opportunity for growth from D-grade band to an A-grade band sets a precedent for excellence at any level. It also allows for a more social approach to playing music and being part of brass banding without the dedicated commitment required of an A-grade player. The existence of a second band promoted performance and entertainment without the stress of high-level competition.

The new band was also an opportunity to give new players, young and old, another pathway for their musical progression, via a feeder band for Brisbane Excelsior. Windsor Brass has been running now since 2004. Already some players, through their hard work and dedication, have been invited to play in the Excelsior band.

To build a successful band, it is also imperative that a musical director has a successful committee running the administration, taking into consideration topics such as fund raising, sponsorship, and discipline on and off the stage. One must make sure that they have similar ideas and goals, and agree on the direction in which the band is heading. One simple example is ensuring the band's website is regularly updated, that social media—essential in today's market—circulates information to the organization's network. Marketing is also important; the band recently recorded a CD showcasing a wide variety of music for prospective sponsors. All of these responsibilities, ultimately, are the musical director's.

1.3 Establishing a successful band

The third aspect of Key Responsibility #1: Organization and Social Responsibilities is Establishing a Successful Band. Once the vision and goals of the band are embedded, it is crucial to be able to keep that group of musicians not only musically satisfied and stimulated, but also musically challenged. The culture of fulfilment provides its own momentum to build more success. The conductor must make rehearsals appealing and fun as well as informative and educational. There are over 28 players to keep engrossed, attentive and absorbed; even amused. It is imperative that they want to come back, and look forward to the next rehearsal, the next concert and even the next contest. Philip Harper has a particular goal. “I make sure I am always at my best. That motivates everyone else.”(2016)

Brisbane Excelsior found that one important element of its success in retaining players was the continuous dedication of five principal players over a six-year period. This created a strong bond and relationship between the players. There may be changes in the secondary instrumental makeup, but the sectional leadership and their understanding and rapport with the conductor is a determining factor in the success of the ensemble. The importance of maintaining continuity of key players cannot be understated. These players propagate an expectation from other players about the accepted standard required to be a proficient player in a top competitive band.

When starting with a new musical group, the author stresses that a musical director should create a five-year plan that provides a framework for success and a vision of what is achievable (Appendix A: Table 3 Sample five-year plan). The group has to have realistic goals, something to strive for, and has to continue to strengthen the whole association.

“Work hard, play hard” has become a mantra of a successful formula. If players generally feel like they are having a good time, it will become evident in their overall playing. These are the things that are vested in the director by the band and are considered by the executive committee when employing a musical director, trusting that they have the necessary leadership qualities to run a top section brass band. This in itself is an immense commitment for the band and director.

Change management

Under a new musical director, changes are inevitable. In Brisbane Excelsior, one of the first changes was in the committee: new president, secretary, contest secretary, and band manager. Much work went into developing relationships with players and committee members to ensure that everyone had the same goals and was prepared to change this average community band into a National Champion band. Changing culture requires the members identifying with direction and owning the changes being imposed.

Although they may sound simplistic, the following sayings remind us of the necessity of changes to establish a successful organization: “If things do not change, they stay as they are,” (from Yorkshire); and “If you do what you have always done, you’ll get what you have always got.” The musical director can gradually change rehearsal methods, increase the intensity, and increase player expectations. Such changes have the potential, of course, to foster animosity and resistance from certain personnel, which can be avoided sometimes and resolved with negotiation and compromise. But in some instances, they can result in the unfortunate removal of players from the group. It is an unpleasant but necessary task if the band is to move forward

and become successful. In my career, I have had to do this on certain occasions and it does not get any easier. It is just one of the drawbacks of being at the top of an elite ensemble.

UK freelance conductor Russell Gray supports my philosophy that the band committee gives the conductor the directive as to how to proceed, which may mean that the current culture of the band needs to change in order to progress. Sometimes players need to recognize that there might not be a role for them under a new conductor.

Another respected identity in the music industry, Bob Mulholland, once gave me some constructive advice about change. At that time, he was the editor of *Brass Band World*, the number one brass band publication. He said, “Howard, the brass band culture is very different in Australia. Bring about changes gradually. Do not try and change the world overnight. They will resent you for it and you will have additional barriers to overcome” (1997). I tried to follow this advice as best I could. To explain this statement further, it is important to understand some of the differences between brass bands in the northern and the southern hemisphere. The pool of quality players from which to choose is significantly higher in the UK than that of Australia and therefore the turnover of players between bands is higher.

Commitment levels are considerably higher in the UK in terms of willingness to sacrifice personal and family time. The cultural differences are influenced by climate, lifestyle and attitude of Australians. Although I distinctly remember thinking not long after my move to New Zealand that “there is a life outside of brass bands,” this is much more evident in Australia. Australians are usually known for their relaxed way of life. However, when it comes to sport or winning a brass band contest, I cannot fault their passion. These factors exert a strong influence on the amount of time devoted to practice and, therefore, it inevitably has an effect on the overall standard and quality of the music produced. This difference points to varying socio-cultural norms in Australia. The national identity of Australians is embedded in its history with a fond irreverence for authority that arose from convict settlement. Richard White (*Inventing Australia*, 1981) describes the characteristics that were considered to be distinctively Australian. He lists “independence, manliness, a fondness for sport, egalitarianism, a dislike of mental effort, self-confidence, a certain disrespect for authority” as characteristics that historians have accepted as accurate (p. 77). Understanding the cultural difference was perhaps the biggest mental adjustment I needed to make, both in understanding the mentality of a more relaxed lifestyle and finding a way to optimise these characteristics in pursuit of band excellence. The two appear to be a contradiction in terms but I realised there was an opportunity to use this variance to my advantage. My task was to get them to take music as seriously as sport but in this endeavour, I also had to shift from uncompromising commitment to an acceptance of the differing levels of both accountability and commitment of players. A degree of mental flexibility was essential to accommodate the cultural differences that exist in Australia and was going to be fundamental in the success or failure of creating a winning band.

1. *Musicianship and training methods*

The second key responsibility in the role of a musical director involves musicianship and training. One dictionary defines musicianship as “musical knowledge, skill and artistic sensitivity in performing music” (Random House Dictionary 2017).

2.1 Musicianship

The author grew up within the Salvation Army, and part from the obvious religious aspect of this organization, another great trait is the association with music. The Salvation Army is renowned worldwide for its brass bands and songsters (choirs). Music is an integral part of the Salvation Army Corps or church and have bands and songsters which participate in Sunday worship services. Brass bands within the Salvation Army date back to 1878 where the first was launched in Salisbury, England.

Being a member of the Salvation Army for the first 20 years of his life has had a profound effect on the author’s musicality and overall musicianship. A deep understanding of hymnal music has been engrained in his psyche and has influenced the many interpretations of this style of writing. Good hymn tune playing is an art, there is a style that is portrayed with feeling and emotion. Hymn playing is more than playing notes on a page. While it is very easy to become involved in a beautiful tune, it is often the words of the hymn that are of primary importance and determine the overall shape of the music and how they should be played and sung.

The author’s first experience of playing under a high-level conductor was in the Salvation Army, and he notes two special conductors who strongly influenced his musical career at that early stage. As a young and inexperienced 14-year-old, the author states ‘I had no clue about conducting, although I knew from an early age I wanted an avenue to express my musical ideas. My first influences were Stuart Cornie and Terry Nielsen, both Salvation Army bandmasters. Musicianship and personal discipline were qualities that I recognised early on with both of these conductors’. Leonard Adams states that “discipline is crucial on a personal level from how you turn up, your attitude and stage presence, all will help the performance and help with the team building. The respect of the baton is paramount” (2015).

Both Stuart and Terry were good brass players in their own right. Terry was an excellent euphonium soloist and was also very precise with singing technique. I was a member of his choral group, the songster brigade, for four years in which one of my main observations was the sound he was able to extract, an excellent balance of voices. He nurtured a group of very ordinary singers without a lot of natural talent who ended up touring the UK, Sweden, performing at the Royal Albert Hall and Wembley Stadium in London. This opened up to me the possibility of what can happen when a musical group of average individual talent is led by an inspirational conductor.

Stuart Cornie assisted me in my first conducting job as youth band conductor and was instrumental in building my confidence both as a player and aspiring conductor. He also invited me to play my first band-accompanied solo performance on cornet. Without realising it, Stuart had instilled that confidence and belief within me.

Terry was valuable to me through different avenues, I began to take more notice of the musicality he introduced to the ensemble, his stylistic approach and the different methods he used to achieve results and get the best out of people.

Musicianship can also be improved by exposing the band to other conductors and guest soloists. Brisbane Excelsior has benefitted from guest conductors and soloists as listed in Table 1. The musical director needs to remain humble and accept that richness in playing music comes from exposure to many styles of conducting as well as interacting with top soloists.

2.2 Knowledge

It is important to gain as much knowledge as possible, and investigate options that will assist the musical director and the band to produce the optimal musical performance. Lifelong learning is essential to keep up with worldwide trends in brass music and to improve conducting skills. Cory Band conductor Philip Harper states that he has listened critically to a lot of music of all genres to ensure roundedness. He also analyzed every aspect to understand how it works. (2015)

The author has over 40 years' experience within the brass band genre, supporting his extensive knowledge not only in playing and conducting but in brass band repertoire and training musical ensembles. UK freelance conductor Leonard Adams makes the suggestion, "get as much experience as possible by playing under, watching and listening to as many experienced conductors as possible," (2017) and adds that he has been fortunate to play under many top conductors in his musical career and have taken value from them all.

For further information regarding the author's experience, please refer to Table 2 in Appendix A: Band Career Highlights.

One of the primary roles of a musical director is to successfully communicate musicianship to the ensemble. A conductor can have all the musical knowledge, qualifications and credentials but if that wisdom cannot be imparted to the musical group then the outcome will not be a successful one.

2.3 Training Methods

Training a band needs particular skills and this only comes with practice. The more teaching and instructing that can be delivered during rehearsals the more experience gained. Mistakes are inevitable but as long as learning and resolving the issues are maintained, matters can only progress. One vital ingredient that every interviewed conductor agrees upon is that to get the best out of your ensemble, you have to be totally prepared.

Players from a community brass ensemble will be at varying levels of proficiency. It falls to the director to determine their standard and pitch to their level. It may be necessary to take individuals on a one-to-one session occasionally to ensure that they are able to cope with the expectations of playing proficiency. Some players need that gentle art of persuasion when it comes down to personal home practice and a musical director must encourage this at all times. A favourite saying of mine is, the more you practice, the better you become, the better you become the more you want to practice. If there are still problems then the director is faced with

the responsibility of finding alternative ways for the player to participate, for example joining a lower-grade group.

The author has had a vast amount of experience in teaching music, commencing his conducting career with a youth band at the early age of 17 with musicians as young as 10. He has been teaching and conducting ever since, and hence has many hours perfecting his art of training musical ensembles. In the year 2000, he was involved in establishing and directing the Auckland Brass Academy, where a training school was set up as a non-profit charitable trust whose aim was to increase the number of children being taught brass instruments within the Auckland school system.

Unlike many band training programs which take place at band rooms as an after-school activity, the aim of the Academy was to provide tuition at schools, during the normal school day. The itinerant scheme in NZ does not, in general, extend to intermediate schools and this was to be the Academy's initial target.

Ongoing training for band members includes the following topics:

- Sound, including balance, tuning, intonation, blend, colour
- Timing and sub-division
- Style and shape
- Breathing and phrasing
- Technique
- Articulation
- Dynamics
- Interpretation
- Musical expression.

I am asked on many occasions to describe the ideal sound of a brass band, or more specifically, my ideal sound. This is very difficult to put into actual words. In my opinion, the sound of a brass band is unique. Without question, the most important factor to me in relation to music making is the overall quality of sound from both the soloists and the ensemble. The unique sound sets it apart from other performing ensembles that use brass instruments. This difference is brought about by many influences, particularly instrumentation. The brass band has a more mellow and rich sound. This is due in part to the use of cornets instead of trumpets, Eb tenor horns instead of French horns and English bore baritone horns, which are only found in a brass band.

The ideal sound of a brass band involves balance, intonation, blend, the use of vibrato in musical passages to warm the sounds, differing shapes and styles of playing, e.g. breathing and phrasing, the use of legato, staccato, tonguing styles, double and triple tonguing and shaping music; the art of using mutes, and other similar topics. Communicating these ideas is vital and this can be demonstrated by singing specific parts or through gestures in the form of hands, face and body movements. The musical director must be confident in his ability to impart his full intention to the musicians. Band members should have access to music played by the world's best. They should be expected to listen to the sound, style, shaping and phrasing. This includes

CDs of the finest instrumentalist playing to encourage them to emulate and learn from other players.

Living in the UK had certain advantages over Australia in relation to inviting guest conductors to run rehearsals and workshops. Not only is there a wide choice of quality conductors, but there is also the difference in magnitude of the countries for making this possible. Richard Evans, Derek Broadbent, Professor Nick Childs and Russell Gray were all invited by me to conduct the Bodmin Brass Band whilst I was resident conductor. Other noticeable influences on my conducting career would have to be Howard Snell, Dr Robert Childs and Professor David King.

The table below lists conductors who were invited to either rehearse the Brisbane Excelsior band or to critique the musical director (the author). Guest soloists were invited to play in concerts and to provide master classes or individual instruction.

Conductors and Guest Soloists invited to Brisbane Excelsior to impart their musical skills

CONDUCTORS and COMPOSERS	Band	Country
Brian Buckley	Freelance conductor	United Kingdom
Dr Robert Childs	Grimethorpe & Cory Bands	United Kingdom
Martin Ellerby	International composer	United Kingdom
Barrie Gott	Freelance conductor and composer	Australia
Russell Gray	Freelance Conductor & cornet soloist	United Kingdom
Bryan Hurdley	Fairies Engineering Band	United Kingdom
Professor David King	Brighouse & Rastrick	United Kingdom
Peter Luff	Freelance conductor & associate principal French Horn, Queensland Symphony Orchestra	Australia
Robert Redhead	International composer	United Kingdom
GUEST SOLOISTS		
Thomas Allely	Principal Tuba, Queensland Symphony Orchestra	Australia
Jens Bjorn-Larsen	Principal Tuba, Chamber Orchestra of Europe	Denmark
Brett Baker	Principal trombone, Black Dyke Band	United Kingdom
Sergio Carolino	International Tuba artist	Portugal
David Childs	International Euphonium artist	United Kingdom

Shaun Crowther	Principal Tuba, Grimethorpe Colliery Band	United Kingdom
Wycliffe Gordon	International Jazz trombone artist	America
Randall Hawes	Bass Trombone, Detroit Symphony Orchestra	America
Tom Hutchinson	Principal cornet, World No. 1 Brass Band Cory	United Kingdom
Riki McDonnell	International Euphonium artist	New Zealand
Ron Prussing	Principal Trombone, Sydney Symphony Orchestra	Australia
Simone Rebello	International Percussion artist	United Kingdom
Rex Richardson	Trumpet professor	America
Steve Stewart	Soprano cornet Cory	United Kingdom
David Thornton	Principal Euphonium, Fodens Band	United Kingdom
Martin Winter	Principal trumpet, Bergen Filharmoniske Orkester	Norway
GUEST SINGER		
Kate Miller-Heidke	Singer, songwriter	Australia
Jason Barry-Smith	Singer	Australia

The importance of learning from the best conductors available was a central theme in the responses by all conductors interviewed for this research project. Each conductor had numerous different mentors who provided something of value. An example of this is Russell Gray speaking of his mentor Bramwell Tovey, highlighting the personal attributes that give him the edge when conducting. As mentioned many times in this paper the qualities such as charisma and humour seem to be paramount. Peter Luff seemed to concentrate more on the conducting style regarding precision and energy and the rapport with the orchestra is very apparent. He says of one of his mentors Simone Young – “her intelligence enables her to convey a complex interpretation of music with an elegant simplicity.” I can relate this to my own experiences where certain mentors of mine had different abilities that I tried to emulate. I had the pleasure of playing under British conductor Leonard Adams for five years. His ability to get a band to play together was the best I’ve encountered. He introduced me to the art of subdividing the music, something that I have used repeatedly with every band that I’ve conducted. Leonard could command the total attention of every player, a great asset that every conductor should acquire.

Some of these strategies mentioned above do not of themselves improve the playing of the band, but provide a window in the international culture of brass bands and the standards achieved overseas.

Motivational speakers have also been invited to talk to Excelsior before a major contest. I have taken care and time to choose these speakers so that they have maximum impact on the players,

and myself. I have known these speakers for many years and they have both had a big influence on my musical career, they are both musical icons who have an ability to inspire.

The first was Kevin Jarrett MBE, a Brass Band icon of New Zealand. He was a former Musical Director of the National Band of New Zealand. Kevin accepted the invitation to address Brisbane Excelsior when they were on the cusp of winning three National titles in a row – an unparalleled achievement. Another speaker who motivated the band was Bill Broughton, the legendary composer and accomplished trombone player from Hollywood, USA. Bill's inspirational talk just before our fourth consecutive National title competition left an impact with all involved. Just being in this man's presence leaves you with a sense of self-worth, excitement and success. When I cast my mind back to what was actually conversed for that 30 minutes or so, all I can remember are his words, "Don't worry about the competition or the adjudicators, just do your best, play your heart out and most of all have fun." What I do remember from the speech is the uplifting feeling that he gave the whole band. We could have taken on the world! Bill Broughton has since written and published a book on motivation and remaining positive in the disharmony of life, *Life's a Song, Sing It*. Broughton (2008)

A leader may have great musicianship skills and possess the qualities of a gifted teacher, however, this will not prove fruitful if there are no conducting abilities present. The main reason for this thesis is that there is little or no research carried out on the role of the brass band musical director. The following extract is relevant to completing the full scenario of the conductor. This next section is devoted to an overview of the basics of conducting and the important attributes required for brass band conducting.

Technical and artistic responsibilities belong with the musical director. No amount of organisational skill will assist the musical director in his or her role without sufficient knowledge and an inherent understanding of brass band music – the technical knowledge and artistic understanding.

2. *Technical and artistic practices*

Personal professional development, separate to the development of players, is a key area of responsibility. Very individual strategies have been developed over many years for maintaining competence as a conductor. For example, when travelling overseas, one can incorporate attendance at a major competition, especially for this author, in the United Kingdom. This is not only enjoyable but offers the chance to continually learn from the best bands in the world. Exposure to music at this level initiates a desire to recreate that awe-inspiring sounds at the highest level possible. In order to maintain knowledge of new and emerging repertoire, a collection of recordings of the best bands is essential. The internet is a valuable source of information about performances of new repertoire through YouTube, SoundCloud, and other social media platforms.

It is a challenge to achieve and maintain the level of accomplishment necessary to lead a top-level brass band, especially when one is not professionally engaged in music during normal working hours. Most musical directors of brass bands hold these positions as vocational interests and very few are able to secure a full-time position.

Along with personally attending, facilitating workshops and master classes on conducting and brass playing is a good strategy to improve technical ability. Within the brass band community, there is often an opportunity to guest conduct bands, which focuses ability and relates to the wider community. Judging solos, concert and brass bands regularly not only in Australia but overseas is yet another way to keep up technical responsibilities and maintaining a high personal standard.

I now offer a comprehensive study of my own practice-led account of the preparation for a major contest. This will chronicle step by step the process by which I lead my own band, Brisbane Excelsior, from rehearsal techniques to the final performance. Through personal practice diaries and journaling I explore the experiences that have influenced my decision-making process.

3.1 Technical Practice – Preparation for a major contest

Technical practice refers to a number of elements, including:

- i choosing suitable repertoire
- ii rehearsal schedule
- iii score preparation
- iv band training methods
- v performance planning and concert programming
- vi performance.

The musical director's role in choosing an appropriate piece of music and then preparing the band for a competition performance as described in the Introduction. Experience and a broad-based, current knowledge of scores are imperative in order to keep up to date with brass band trends and emerging composers. New contest and concert pieces of music that are available to the general public must be constantly researched, and professional relationships maintained with composers who may have limited edition pieces available. A successful musical director ensures that they make sure a continual stream of new world-class band performances are obtained. It entails many hours of listening to their own personal repertoire, so that they are always aware of what is out there and how it is being played.

i Choosing Suitable Repertoire

For each contest, every band chooses a hymn, own choice test piece, and a stage march. At each grade level, each band must play a chosen set piece to provide a technical comparison.

The Australian Brass Band Association rules for selecting musical choices follow a set process for each contest. The set test piece is usually announced five months before the contest date. Bands must then advise the contest organization of their choices and approval is given. For example, Brisbane Excelsior chose to play a hymn by Peter Graham that was especially written for this contest.

Choosing a hymn is very important because while it is worth only 50 points compared to a test piece score of 200, it is the first piece a judge will hear from the band. To preserve the anonymity of the band currently on stage, judges are seated behind a screen. As an experienced

adjudicator, I know it is understood that the first impressions of a group will have an impact on the rest of the performance.

Length of the piece and the band's key principal players influence the choice of hymn music. It should be about four minutes long, have a beautiful melody, and, preferably, feature some of the best soloists in the band. When a band is competing sometimes three times a year, choosing a winning hymn can be problematic because of limited availability. There are some great arrangements but once the favourites have been played at competition level, new repertoire items can be difficult to source. On occasion, composers may be asked to arrange certain hymn tunes, but this is taking a gamble that the result will be one that you like. I took the gamble and approached one of the brass band movement's most recognized composer and arranger, Peter Graham. He agreed to arrange a favourite hymn tune of mine, and after much detailed discussion, we came up with, in my opinion, a winner. That year, I conducted bands in both the Australian and New Zealand Nationals and came out champions in the hymn section playing the new arrangement.

When choosing a march, it is essential to have a piece with plenty of bounce and spirit, and with many dynamic differences to again show off the style of the band and its key players. I have certain favourites that I have used at a contest with which I have had success. They are well known within brass band circles, and are used frequently at the historical Whit Friday marches in the UK. If, within a competition in Australia or New Zealand, a band wins either the hymn, march or own choice selection, then this piece of music cannot be repeated by the winning band for the next three years.

Selecting the own choice test piece poses the greatest challenge. This piece, (along with the set test) demands the most time, effort, and research. There may be a performance on a CD or DVD that catches your attention. For example, when *Through Ancient Times* by Jan Van Der Roost played by the world-class Cory Band was first heard, it was clear to me that this piece was worthy of Brisbane Excelsior for the Australian National contest. It had everything—a beautiful melody; technically difficult to show off the bands expertise; solos and cadenzas that suited our star players; a story I could portray through the music; and an almighty climax to leave the judges and audience on a high to finish. The piece was played by Cory at the World Championships in 2009 in Belgium.

Questions to consider when choosing a piece include:

- Is the band at a standard to do it justice?
- Are the principal players capable of handling the solo passages?
- Is there sufficient time to prepare such a difficult piece along with the set test, hymn and march?

ii Rehearsal Schedule

When all pieces are chosen, it is time to put a practice schedule in place (Appendix A, Table 4), and let members know what sort of commitment is required. The earlier this can be put into place the better it will be for the musicians. It is recommended to have three weekends before the actual contest booked in for extra rehearsals and concerts.

Two months before the contest, rehearsals are on Tuesday and Thursday evenings each week. Tuesday night is a full band rehearsal. Thursday nights are split with alternate top half, cornets and horns, and the following week, baritones, trombones, euphoniums and basses. Meanwhile, each section gets together and arranges a two-hour slot with me on separate nights or weekends.

iii Preparation and Score Study

Next in the technical process is preparation and score study. The preparation of contest pieces can be summarized as follows:

- Play piece through completely
- Check notes, rhythms
- Dynamics
- Musical interpretation
- Final intonation issues
- The final additions and that extra personal touch to go from a very good performance to an outstanding and memorable showpiece.

Each of these steps will be examined below to demonstrate the complexity of preparing for a contest. The technical process alone does not engage players. The social environment is essential to build strong interpersonal relationships between the director and player as well as between sections. The band needs to be cohesive and recognize the contribution of every person.

As soon as the test is released and is with the band, a play through with the band is recommended. It is a test in itself whether the band can sight-read on first play through. This is beneficial for the conductor because it identifies immediately where the problem areas will be. While the technical parts will need looking at by the players, ensemble, timing, and rhythmic problems are all indicated on running top to bottom. The music is then left with the players for individual rehearsal outside of the band room. Normally, the band will have other concerts to work on until we are ready to commit solely to the contest repertoire.

The technical process continues with marking up the scores. This includes time signatures or time changes, *accelerando*, *rallentando*, dynamics, accents, styles, and musical meanings.

iv Band Training Methods

The goal of the conductor is to make it as easy as possible for the band to follow and to understand exactly what is transpiring within certain musical passages. Do the slower passages need to be sub-divided? Can the piece be simplified by conducting a different way?

Technical practice consists of working out complicated rhythms and rehearsing slowly, including sub-dividing bars and making sure that phrases can be played. The conductor must then be confident and competent in relaying that to the band.

Ex. 1. Bourgeois, D. (1993). Bars 33–36. In *The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, [score and parts]. London, England: Chester Music.

Secondly, it is a case of rehearsing slowly with faster passages. There is an example of some technical work below. This works well with a metronome amplified for the whole band and much repetition until we are getting close. All dynamic markings are ignored in these early stages.

Ex. 2. Bourgeois, D. (1993). Bars 188–191. In *The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, [score and parts]. London, England: Chester Music.

As the music progresses, the musical director develops a better understanding of what he wants stylistically, sound, balance and identifying the layers of music. The director then examines which details need to be emphasized and which need to be hidden.

Words are always good to describe the way certain music is to be played. For example, ‘Sing me a lullaby’ creates a word image for an excerpt from *Devil*.

Ex. 3. Bourgeois, D. (1993). Bars 315–319. In *The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, [score and parts]. London, England: Chester Music.

To have a clearer understanding, an overall picture is always good for getting the band to understand faster. The band needs to feel what it is the conductor is trying to extract in order to portray the composer’s intentions. Asking a soloist to rise from the ashes after a huge musical explosion describes the change in mood as well as musical technique.

Ex. 4. Bourgeois, D. (1993). Bars 1–6. In *The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, [score and parts]. London, England: Chester Music.

As the date of the event approaches, there are times when parts need to be rewritten for more-technical players. This is one of the complexities of knowing the music intimately and knowing the players well; the musical passages should highlight playing ability.

On technically difficult music, it is important not to dwell too long and spend too much time on certain sections. If there is no significant improvement after five minutes, it can be revisited later, or there may be another way to explain or get the passage working the way it is envisaged. Alternatively, players within a section can be challenged individually to self-correct and support each other.

The conductor must maintain a controlled environment and be professional at all times. There will be frustrating times during rehearsals, and there is a place for a conductor to exhibit passion but must always be in control. Obviously, swearing in front of the band is both unprofessional and counterproductive.

Although intonation is mentioned at nearly all rehearsals, closer to the performance there may still be problems. If so, it is time to intervene and suggest either alternate fingerings, or a compromise if there are duets, ensembles etc. Some may have to sharpen a little against others flattening certain notes in chords.

I always try to have something to add during the final week of preparations. One option that has been found to work is to have “special moments” within a work, where you capture the judges’

ear. It might be a slow, melodic passage, a couple of bars with beautiful chords or a technical “show off” section that has the “wow” factor.

v Performance Planning and Concert Programming

It has become a Brisbane Excelsior custom to stage a concert for the public in the lead-up to a major contest. Simulating contest conditions puts the players under a certain amount of pressure for the actual performance. For example, the band performed the test piece, own choice major work and hymn arrangement at the Queensland Performing Arts Complex in early October 2013 before the Federation of Brass Bands competition. This was followed by a 30-minute entertainment program to engage the audience and provide the band with social interaction.

vi Performance

On the day of the performance, there are a number of factors to be taken into consideration. Warm up is crucial before going on stage, whether that be breathing correctly, helping with the nerves or just focusing the mind on the job in hand. The rewards of a thorough technical and social preparation will facilitate this stage of the contest.

All bands get a half-hour warm up before going on stage at nearly every contest. Some conductors prefer last-minute touch ups to passages, or rehearsing certain parts. Playing parts of the test piece at this stage is often counterproductive and may serve to highlight perceived weaknesses. Instead, a good musical director can talk through the piece, reminding the players about their achievement, and reassuring them of the interpretation and their efforts. It may be valuable to play through hymn tunes to warm the sounds and focus the band on balance and intonation.

Just before the band goes on stage, it is always important to give percussionists enough time on stage to organize and prepare their kit. There is nothing more detrimental to a performance than rushing the team and getting them flustered before a major work or concert. The competition organizers allow for this as each band set-up may vary slightly.

When the band needs a confidence boost from the conductor, it is important to be calm and composed, letting nothing ruffle you. If they see that the musical director is unsettled, negative emotions and nervousness could transfer to them. There is an art in giving every player a self-belief and a faith that they will do the business on the day. This is the art of people management—a vital skill required to ensure the players are in a positive mindset before taking to the stage. Nervousness is part of human nature and is prevalent in all live musical playouts. The ability to control it can be the difference between winning and losing.

I am fully accepting of the musician’s nerves. I quite openly explain, especially to younger members or those who are going on stage for the first time, that it is natural to have this feeling. I frequently use a quote by Dr Rob Gilbert: “It is all right to have butterflies in your stomach. Just get them to fly in formation” (Laura Moncur, *Motivational Quotations*. #1926).

As a musical director, you want your band to go on stage knowing there is a great performance waiting to erupt. The author considers the ability to control anxiety to be important for all musicians, and believes most have either suffered or will suffer nerves at some time in their

career. In the following paragraphs, some of the world's best musicians give their thoughts and suggestions on how to overcome performance anxiety.

Performance anxiety can be referred to as stage fright or nerves. In real terms for performers, it is an inner fear of failure. There is much research on this subject for involvement in such acts as public speaking, athletics, test-taking, sexual relations, and artistic performance. Dr Roger Webster researched performance anxiety for his book, *Preparation, Practice, Performance* (2005). In the chapter "Psychological – Performance Anxiety – The Truth," he presents an informative guide and facilitates a plan of action to allow the performer an understanding of performance nerves, and how to lessen the impact of these demons. He further notes that performance anxiety is not a sign of weakness or inadequacy, but it can be so incapacitating that at times a seasoned performer will experience the same basic symptoms as a performance debutant.

Symptoms for a brass player could include loss of concentration, dry mouth, shortage of breath, racing heartbeat, shaking arms and legs, sweaty palms and loss of facial muscles.

In *Psychology and Practice* (2001) the author states:

The pressure of competition can pep up the athlete's performance or damage it. Most sport people associate competition with feeling alert and ready, yet they may experience apprehension, sweaty palms or fear about their performance. If we can find out why this happens, we can help performers reduce these effects as to improve their performance.

These problems are similar to those encountered by musicians. Roger Webster goes on to say: "Realisation and acceptance that this phenomenon is our constant companion can be the first step to the understanding and control of this debilitating monster."

Howard Snell notes in *The trumpet: its practice & performance* (1997) that "...for many players, the control of anxiety seems virtually impossible. As they see it, anxiety represents an impenetrable barrier to achieving full realisation of their talent. In most cases the use of straightforward routines will comfortably control anxiety." Howard suggests, and I am in complete agreement, that the most effective control for anxiety is good breathing. Breathing affects everything. He states that it is the best measure of our inner state of mind, and it is the most immediate route by which we can influence that inner state. I took this suggestion one step further. For several years, I asked everyone in the band to buy an inner bladder of a football. We did breathing exercises, not only at the beginning of every rehearsal but before going on stage at a major contest. I believe the exercises had improved each player's performance.

Once on stage, conductors should ensure they have everyone's eyes and attention. It is a good idea to always get a nod from each percussionist before commencing. At this critical point, the band will be aware of the director and each other. They will be familiar with the technical process and once the performance begins, the rewards of good preparation will become apparent.

3.2 Artistic Practice

Artistic practice allows the development of creative ideas and affords the musical director an understanding of their work through researching the field and receiving feedback from peers and mentors. Imagination, perception and memory are the key tools that recognise artistic practice as a style of thought. Artistic research is aimed directly at inspiration and innovation, from the early stages of defining the initial concept, choice of repertoire and delivering the final product or performance.

Professor of Conducting Craig Kirchhoff said, “What you bring to the podium is everything you have had in life – musical or non-musical.” (Harris, 2001, p. 34)

All life experiences, ranging from childhood to the present, influence a conductor’s musical feeling. The author’s interest in motivational books began at an early age with regular reading of inspirational stories, anecdotes, books on leadership, team spirit, loyalty and what it takes to be successful. This has contributed to his own sense of identity and has had an effect on his overall persona. In addition to personal reading, the musical director of Brisbane Excelsior has travelled extensively around the world, not only with his music career but also simply for pleasure and adventure. Life experience adds to the development of musical feeling and travel in particular expands and enhances our capacity to interpret music.

St Augustine of Hippo (354–430AD) said, “The world is a book and those who do not travel only read one page.” (2017) internet, Goodreads Inc.

This quote sums up the importance of being open to new experiences. New experiences bring about new ideas, and allow you to interpret the familiar in a new light. The biggest benefit of travel is rearranging not only your mind but the way in which it operates and creates new memories and ideas. Imagination is essential to every conductor. Travel is one thing that can unlock whole new directions for us to funnel our creative energy, more often than not ushering in entire new eras in artistic development. If you close yourself off from these experiences, you are doing not only yourself a disservice but those who you are trying to inspire.

Travel expands the emotional experience and adds a rich and multi-layered texture to perspective of musical interpretation. The sensation and appreciation of these phenomena cannot be gained or achieved from simply observing photographs. The idea of musical interpretation is to bring it to life and recreate that triumphant moment, a musical wow factor and evokes an extreme emotional response. It is the difference between actually being there, in the moment, compared with reading about it. Those special, extraordinary involvements are unique and irreplaceable.

The second part of the performance-based artistic practice will include the recording and production of a new CD. I will be diarising all events from choosing of repertoire, organising recording engineers and the detailed band preparation and final recording. In the appendices, you will find a DVD documenting the making of the CD with interviews from the author and the President of Brisbane Excelsior.

3.2.1 Recording and production of CD, and public concert

Artistic practice by the musical director refers to the process employed to enhance the artistic skills of the band and to add performance value to rehearsals. In the previous section on Technical Practice, the preparation for a contest was described, including the rehearsal process, public concert and contest performance.

In this section, a different type of artistic performance is described to reflect the current breadth of brass band practices through a studio recording. Studio recording demands a different approach because there is an understanding that any errors will be recorded for posterity but that excellence will be rewarded by the provision of exemplary playing covering a broad range of music. Brisbane Excelsior has now produced five CDs with varied works and solos for brass bands.

The preparation for recording and public concert adds to the complexity of the role of the musical director but also provides great rewards in being able to enjoy the music of the band and reflect on their level of proficiency at a point in time. The latest recording took place in November 2015 at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University Concert Theatre.

In Appendix C, the recording is described as a personal reflection of the journey undertaken as part of this project by the author.

In Appendix D, the public concert is also described as a personal reflection of the journey undertaken as part of this project by the author.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this research project has been to investigate, through a performance-led process, the role of the brass band musical director. This has been carried out by reflecting on personal experience and my desire to critically examine my own technical and artistic practice. This method included examining personal practice diaries and journaling; interviewing other conductors; reviewing video recordings of concerts; and seeking constructive criticism from other conductors.

The musical director's role is socially complex. Apart from the art of musical interpretation and direction, the role encompasses a range of socially and culturally meaningful tasks, involving psychology, motivation, teaching, leadership, communication and diplomatic skills. The author finds it surprising that despite brass bands having existed for more than 200 years, there has been little documented research on this topic. Indeed, prominent UK brass band conductor Leonard Adams is bemused by the lack of research: "I do not know of any specific research into brass band conducting and can only suggest that as it is so difficult, it has never been done. By this I mean the information has never, to my knowledge, been documented." (Email, December 2016)

This is ground-breaking research because very little insightful study has previously described the fundamental attributes of a successful musical director. Accumulated knowledge of the successful musical director comes from within the brass band community. Successful practice skills have been learned, absorbed and interpreted over many years, because musical directors often started playing in bands in their childhood.

Through a thorough investigation into my own practice and those of my fellow conductors, I have identified the three key responsibilities as:

1. Organizational and social responsibilities
2. Musicianship and training methods
3. Technical and artistic practices

The whole purpose of this study has been to answer these questions: What is the role of the brass band conductor, and how is this reflected in professional practice?

The first key factor, organizational and social responsibilities, requires a set of complex social administration skills that are more often about mediation and mentoring of key players than simply maintaining control over the delivery of music. Because the musical director is pivotal to the direction of the band, the role is as much about managing people as it is about creating an environment of positive reinforcement to establish a successful band. The musical director leads and manages while simultaneously communicating and motivating.

Leonard Adams' comment, "Personnel management is crucial, and you have to lead by example," (email, Dec 2015) shows that earning the respect of the band is vitally important. I have found that although it's one of the most difficult tasks to master, the process is more

efficient when the entire band is with you. All conductors agreed on the importance of managing people effectively. Frederick Harris (2001) even suggests that all conductors should attend a leadership school.

Within the ensemble, the conductor needs to create a willingness to succeed. Ideally, the whole team would embrace the leader's vision. To help achieve this aim, Leonard Adams emphasizes the importance of maintaining interest, involvement and motivation of the players. Once the ensemble has a positive attitude, it has to be maintained and nurtured. Philip Harper ensures he is always at his best, which in turn, motivates his musicians. A conductor's passion and enthusiasm can be infectious, which contributes substantially towards creating a willingness to succeed.

The second key factor, musicianship and training methods, incorporates musical knowledge, skill and artistic sensitivity in performance. While charisma, enthusiasm and hunger to win are almost impossible to learn, musicianship and training can be mastered through study and dedication. As with musicianship, teaching skills can be learned. Even the most brilliant musicians and conductors will not be able to impart their knowledge successfully unless they have basic teaching skills. Total preparation is the key to identifying problem areas and the ability to break down this information. Conductors with a clear idea of what they want to achieve must be totally prepared if they want to be able to impart knowledge.

The third factor, technical practice, can be summed up as personal professional development. To successfully lead a contest-winning band, musical directors must continually challenge their skillset. Even though I have detailed my own practice-led account in this thesis, every musical director will be different. They have to seek their own methods for rehearsal techniques and strategies for success.

Artistic practice is the musical director's vision, leadership, planning and programming. The musical director must have forward-thinking ideas to be continually stretching the band toward new goals. If there is one characteristic essential to the success of a musical director that does not have to be apparent in a player, it is artistic vision, coupled with the ability to effectively communicate that vision to players and, ultimately, to the audience.

In my experience, the three key responsibilities are equally important. All elements must co-exist and work to their fullest potential for the band to be successful. I have had personal experience of what happens when the three key responsibilities are out of balance. The first example occurred when a composer attended a rehearsal to conduct his own work. His musical knowledge was excellent and he had every player's full attention and expectation. Unfortunately, he lacked the necessary technical or artistic practice skills to produce the results.

Another time, an elite conductor brought unparalleled enthusiasm, energy, and the ability to generate passion in the ensemble. The rehearsals were always exciting and inspiring, but due to major personnel problems, the band became unstable. The final example was of a conductor with adequate rehearsal skills and sound musical knowledge but who tried to be everyone's friend. Unfortunately, when the whole skillset is absent, favourable results will not be forthcoming. Besides the three key responsibilities, charisma and the desire to win are the other major influences on a contesting band. They cannot be taught—they are innate.

What have I learned from doing this research? Evidence suggests that if all areas are adhered to then success will follow. The fundamentals of my success over the last 20 years have been gained purely through experience. Without a solid background in the brass band community and professional practice experience, I would not have achieved my level of success. The musical director's responsibilities described here are within anyone's capabilities to acquire with practice and dedication. They are the mechanics of the trade.

For future discussion about the role of the musical director, the following quote by Arthur A Clappe (1912) provides an excellent start: "Bandmasters, like poets are born, not made." There is scope for further investigation into the traditions of brass bands as a unique sub-culture in the world of musical performance. This project has only touched on the peripheral of similarities and differences between orchestral and brass band ensembles. It is hoped that future discussion will promote the unique position of the brass band conductor, and enable the author's success as a musical director to be more widely associated in the world of artistic performances.

In 1159, John of Salisbury wrote in his *Metalogicon* that philosopher "Bernard of Chartres used to compare us to dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants. He pointed out that we see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and born aloft on their gigantic stature". It is hoped that the findings of this research assist a future generation of conductors to be lifted even one step higher.

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Appendix A: Tables

Table 1: Basic set up of brass bands in the British tradition

No. Players	Instrument	Notes
1	Soprano cornet, Eb	
8–10	Cornets, Bb	4–5 Solo 1 Repiano 2 Second Cornets 2 Third Cornets
1	Flugelhorn, Bb	
3	Horns, Eb	solo, 1 st , 2 nd
2	Baritone Horns, Bb	each with separate parts
2	Tenor trombones, Bb	
1	Bass trombone	the only brass instrument notated in Concert Pitch (C) on Bass Clef rather than Bb or Eb on Treble Clef. Historically, the instrument was pitched in G.
2	Euphoniums, Bb	usually playing the same part with divisi sections
4	Tubas	2 x Eb 2 x Bb
2	Percussion	including: 2 or more timpani, glockenspiel, snare drum, triangle, cymbals, drum kit
Total: 28	4-part vocal harmony	Soprano: Soprano, Solo cornets, repiano, flugel Alto: 2nd and 3rd cornets, solo horn Tenor: 1st and 2nd horns, baritones, tenor trombone Bass: Bass trombone, Eb and Bb basses

Table 2: Band career highlights of Howard Taylor

YEAR	POSITION	RESULTS
1979	First conducting role, at the age of 17, with the Salvation Army Youth Band	
1980	Principal cornet, Plymouth Salvation Army	
1985	Bodmin Band, Assistant Principal Cornet and Bandmaster & MD Bodmin Youth Band	
1989	MD Plymouth RBL Brass (2 nd Section West of England UK)	Winner Pontins Championship 1989
1991	MD Torbay Brass (1 st Section West of England UK)	Winner West of England 1990
1993	MD Bodmin Band (Championship Section West of England UK)	Winner West of England 1993, 94, 95
1996	Cornet player with Tredegar Band (Wales)	British Nationals
1997	MD TVNZ Waitakere City Brass (A Grade Auckland NZ)	Winner NZ Nationals 1999
1998	MD Waitakere Youth & North Shore Band	1998–2002
1999	Professional Conductor St Marys Sydney (A Grade AUS)	Winners NSW State Contest
2000	Professional Conductor Napier Brass (B Grade NZ)	Runner-up B Grade NZ Championship
2002	MD Brisbane Excelsior (A Grade QLD AUS) – 10 years	Winner Australian Championships 2005–08, 2010
2002	MD Qld Youth Band	2002–2005 music camps
2005	Professional Conductor Waratah Brass (A Grade NSW AUS)	Winner Ern Keller contest NSW
2006	Professional Conductor Gunnedah Brass (A Grade NSW AUS)	Winner Ern Keller contest NSW
2007	MD National Band of New Zealand	2007–2009 European Tour
2007	Professional Conductor Invercargill Brass (A Grade NZ)	3 rd place A Grade NZ Championships
2008	Professional Conductor Dalewool Auckland Brass (A Grade NZ)	Winner NZ Band of the Year
2008	Professional Conductor Kirkintilloch (Championship Scotland)	Scottish Open & European Championships
2010	Resident Conductor Fairies (Championship UK)	
2011	Professional Conductor Willoughby Brass (A Grade NSW AUS)	Winner NSW State Contest
2012	Professional Conductor Gunnedah Brass (A Grade NSW AUS)	Winner Australian National Championships
2012	Professional Conductor Kensington & Norwood Brass (A Grade South A AUS)	Runner-up SA Championships
2012	MD Brisbane Excelsior (A Grade QLD AUS) – 2017	Winner Australian National Championships 2013, 14, 16
2014	MD Brisbane & Townsville Youth Bands, QLD	
2016	MD Tonga National Youth Band (Tonga)	

Table 3: Sample of a five-year plan

Brisbane XLCR Five-Year Plan												
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
2003	March - Aus Day			AUS Contest - Newcastle March-Anzac Day	<i>New Farm</i> March - Labor Day	QLD Contest Maryborgh Sheraton Showground <i>Ithacca Rms</i>	<i>Mastrclass</i> <i>Mt Coot-</i>	<i>Ithacca Rms</i>	NSW Contest - Sydney	Gilbert & S <i>Italian Fest</i>	Eric Ball <i>Audition day</i> <i>Riverlakes</i>	TV Xmas Xmas Pub <i>Carols City</i>
2004	March - Aus Day	CD Recording Cabaret	Band Camp Brett Baker Concert	AUS Contest - Tasmania March-Anzac Day		Concert	QLD Contest - Maryborgh	VIC Contest Melbourne		Concert	Concert	Xmas Concert
2005	March - Aus Day	Mini Tour	Band Camp Pre Contest Contest	AUS Adelaide Contest ?? Easter		Concert	NZ Wellington Contest	Concert	QLD Contest - Maryborgh		Concert	Xmas Concert
2006	March - Aus Day		Band Camp Pre Contest Contest	AUS Brisbane Contest Easter		Concert	Concert	Concert	QLD Contest - Maryborgh	* Tour UK & USA		Xmas Concert
2007	March - Aus Day		Band Camp Pre Contest Contest	WA or Sydney Contest Auckland Contest		Concert	Concert	Concert	QLD Contest - Maryborgh		Major Concert Town Hall	Xmas Concert

Table 4: Sample of Rehearsal Schedule – 2013 Australian National Contest

Full Practice	7.30 – 9.30	Tues	12 Feb	
Top End	7.30 – 9.30	Thurs	14 Feb	
Full Practice	7.30 – 9.30	Tues	19 Feb	
Bottom End	7.30 – 9.30	Thurs	21 Feb	
Full Practice	7.30 – 9.30	Tues	26 Feb	
Top End	7.30 – 9.30	Thurs	28 Feb	
Full Practice	7.30 – 9.30	Tues	5 Mar	
Full Practice	7.30 – 9.30	Thurs	7 Mar	
Full Practice	10–12.30, 1.30–5.00	Sun	10 Mar	David King
Full Practice	7.30–9.30	Tues	12 Mar	
Full Practice	7.30–9.30	Fri	15 Mar	
Full Practice	10–12, 1–3	Sat	16 Mar	
Concert	2.00–4.00	Sun	17 Mar	
Full Practice	7.30–9.30	Tues	19 Mar	
Full Practice	7.30–9.30	Fri	22 Mar	
Full Practice	10–12, 1–3	Sat	23 Mar	Barrie Gott
Full Practice	10–12, 1–3	Sun	24 Mar	
Full Practice	7.30–9.30	Mon	25 Mar	
Full Practice	7.30–9.30	Tues	26 Mar	
Travel & Rehearsal		Wed	27 Mar	
Contest			29–31 March	

Appendix B: Brass Bands in Context

There is no shortage of literature on the history of brass bands. For example, *The British Brass Band* (Herbert, 2000) is based on the Popular Music in Britain Series. It was hailed as the most detailed and scholarly treatment of its subject. The material includes studies on brass band repertoire, performance practices, and the bands of the Salvation Army. The work as a whole can be taken as a study of both a unique (and often misunderstood) aspect of British music, and its interaction with broader spheres of social and cultural history. It is the most detailed and definitive study of the subject.

Alternatively, Dennis Taylor (2011) chose to research the period of the brass band movement's history between the periods of 1860–1930, which includes the peak in the 1890s, followed by the decline in numbers from the First World War. Despite this later decline in numbers, the standard of musicianship was not affected, and has happily continued to make progress up to the present day. Meanwhile, Hind (1934) provided an early example of instrumentation, composition and arrangement advice for band.

Bands structured around western wind instruments are among the most widespread instrumental ensembles in the world. Although these ensembles draw upon European military traditions, local musicians have adapted the brass band prototypes, and today these ensembles are found in religious processions and funerals, military manoeuvres and parades, and popular music genres throughout the world.

A brass band is a musical ensemble consisting of 25-plus brass instruments and varying percussion. Brass bands have a long tradition of competition, often based around local industry and communities. In the 1930s, the movement thrived, with around 20,000 British-style brass bands widespread throughout Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and continental Europe and smaller numbers also found in North America and other parts of the world. Annual competitions are held in these countries to select champion bands at various levels of musical competence.

Brass Bands and the Community

Since their inception in the nineteenth century, brass bands have been situated as community musicians, as civic institutions, as recreational pursuits for factory workers, even as organized musical structures for worship. For example, The Salvation Army has employed brass bands since 1878 to convey their mission message, and they continue to be an integral part of that organization.

In Australia, community concerts sponsored by many city councils are a very important part of a brass band's calendar. An example of this is the Brisbane Metropolitan Bands Association, which has been promoting community concerts for over 100 years. Bands also perform music in a wide variety of styles for many occasions, and most bands will present music programs on Australia Day. Probably they are best known in Australia for their marches and are seen at commemorative services, such as Anzac Day.

In Dr Roy Newsome's book, *The Modern Brass Band* (2006), Newsome points out that:

The continued importance of Brass Bands within the community [is reflected in their participation] in parades, fetes, sports days, religious services and other events... For the benefit of young musicians with their search for the meaning of musicianship as well as technical development [and] requiring suitable music, well-rehearsed and with dress and deportment given due attention. (p. 60)

The years between 1970 and the 80s produced good times for some bands and disastrous ones for others. Bands which during their respective 'heyday' had enjoyed the fullest of sponsorship were hit worst with industry going through troubled times. Partnerships in engineering and mining faced the greatest dangers. (p. 61)

Companies recruited their own bands in which workers were paid to play. They practised in work hours and sometimes members spent whole days rehearsing. Examples of this are Black Dyke Mills, Fodens Motors, Williams Fairey Engineering, Leyland Daf, Yorkshire Imperial Metals, and Carlton Main but probably the most famous brought about by mine closures was the Grimethorpe Band, made popular by the film *Brassed Off*. Another film, *Full Monty*, featured the British Steel Stocksbridge Band.

Other bands survived as civic institutions. For example, the National Australian Band website views the role of the band as:

- Promoting brass banding as a cultural entity at the highest level within the wider community
- Nurturing public awareness of the Australian brass band movement's community focus
- Expanding the global recognition of Australia's brass band heritage as an internationally profiled musical ensemble uniting leading brass musicians as ambassadors for Australia at the highest artistic level of attainment. (National Australia Brass, 2013) www.nationalaustraliabrass.com

The brass band community is extremely well networked across the nation and indeed around the world due to specialized websites such as "4barsrest," "Brass Banned" and the "Mouthpiece." There are always opportunities to grow and strengthen the links with other bands. The basis of brass bands has remained constant since the 1930s. A brief look at the history of brass bands provides a worldwide context and further illustrates the complex nature of the role of musical director.

The brass band dates back to the early nineteenth century and England's Industrial Revolution as an outgrowth of the medieval waits. With increasing urbanization, employers began to finance work bands to decrease the political activity with which the working classes seemed preoccupied during their leisure time. Thus, the brass band tradition was founded. Fervent discussion has always ensued as to which band was founded first. Certainly, the two bands with the longest traditions are the Besses O' Th' Barn Band and the Black Dyke Mills Brass Band.

As bands took advantage of improved mechanical skills and the rise of conservatories and music departments at universities, the standards of instrumental technology and performance quickly improved. By 1860, there were over 750 brass bands in England alone. Although these bands were not fully comprised of brass instruments until the second half of the nineteenth century, the tradition developed to the present day current instrumentation of cornets, flugelhorn, tenor horns, baritones, trombones, euphoniums, B flat and E flat basses and percussion. Because contests are the lifeblood of the brass band world, rivalry has always been strong, with cash prizes providing additional incentive.

Appendix C: CD Recording

Part 1: Nov 2015

As part of my Masters project, a CD recording is to be submitted as an example of just one of the many duties of a Brass Band Musical Director. The narrative below is a personal journal that I kept whilst engaged in the CD recording project. It is offered in its original format as a first-hand resource for the purpose of this study.

Since taking on the role of Musical Director in 2002, I have now recorded five CDs with the Brisbane Excelsior Band; this recording will be the fifth.

With any new musical group I initially gave myself two years to build and shape a band and so in 2005, I felt we were ready for our first recording together.

Since our first National win in 2005 Brisbane Excelsior have experienced a very successful run in making history with multiple National wins both sides of the Tasman prior to my departure in 2010. Upon my return in 2013, (after winning the 2012 Australian Nationals with a NSW Band), I have tried to pick up where I left off in continuing the successful formula by winning 2013, 2014 Australia National titles, Queensland Champions and the FABB Australasian Open Entertainment awards.

My goal was to record a CD in 2015 capturing some of the ten-year highlights. I set about choosing suitable music relevant to those years. The difficulty in deciding on music for a CD is that it must be challenging and exciting for the band and must also be attractive music to the general public for purchasing. When you have so many talented players, the decision of choosing soloists for the CD becomes very difficult. I asked six of the principal players to come back to me with ideas for their solo contributions, making it very clear that it was probable that only four would actually make the CD recording.

Timing of this project started after recording an Anzac CD in July of 2015, and so the start of August saw the introduction of a wide range of music for the band to run through to finally get to a stage where there was a choice of 70–80 minutes of music. Two months was assigned to rehearsal of the music dedicated to the CD.

Repertoire

There are certain favourite composers and arrangers I have used in my banding career with nearly every ensemble I have conducted. These have brought so much success to me as a conductor in concerts and contests with not only Brisbane Excelsior but with so many more brass bands. I wanted to feature these on the CD.

Goff Richards, a personal favourite, is one of the most prolific composers for Brass Bands. He was a personal friend with whom I had worked regularly in the UK. I was fortunate, along with Brisbane Excelsior to play a tribute concert to this great musician before he died in 2010 while touring the United Kingdom. With Goff in attendance, the concert was held in Warrington featuring the *Best of Goff Richards' music*. It was a natural choice to include a piece by Goff.

Peter Graham is the second composer. I asked Peter to commission a hymn for the Brisbane Excelsior band and me, and will include this world premiere in our recording along with two other compositions. These pieces were a part of our winning entertainment program in 2013.

The third composer who is in the favourite group is Philip Sparke. We have probably had more wins at National and Regional contests using his music than any other composer. I have chosen his Euphonium solo *Pantomime*.

Benjamin Tubb, the solo horn player of Brisbane Excelsior, has composed a new suite entitled *Australian Odyssey, Glasshouse Whispers* (Glasshouse Mountains). This is another world premiere recording performed on the soprano cornet and is one movement of six out of the major work of music describing Australia's iconic landscape wonders.

Eric Ball, a composer within the Salvation Army had a great influence on my early musical life. I hope this is evident in the interpretation of this simple yet beautiful hymn arrangement *Pilgrims Prayer*.

Last year the band was involved in the G20 celebrations with a concert in Brisbane called The World According to Brass with legendary trumpet player James Morrison. One piece featured was with a vocal singer and I have chosen to feature *Skyfall* on the CD arranged by Steve Newcomb.

Music has also been chosen from our concert celebrating *100 years of Brisbane Excelsior* in 2012. The final track of the CD was always going to be one of our live winning contest performances. This was a difficult choice as there are so many I would have liked to use, but eventually chose our Perth prize-winning performance of *From Ancient Times* by Jan Van der Roost.

So the music has been chosen, the date and time set and the venue organised. It is one of the best recording studios in Queensland, used with kind permission of Queensland Griffith University.

To be able to arrange three days in a calendar when 30 musicians are all available and freely give up their time is no easy task. The Brisbane Excelsior Band is a committed group of semi-professional musicians and I never take that for granted.

I have chosen Brad Hosking of Blind Boy Studios (and an ex-student of the university) as the recording engineer. Brad, a past player of Brisbane Excelsior, has worked with me on all previous CD recordings. I have also booked Greg Harm of Tangible Media to come in and video the whole proceedings with the aim of making a documentary to submit alongside the actual recording as part of my Masters.

I am writing this narrative the week before the event and will continue in Part 2 after the recording. Further work for this project includes a name for the CD, ideas for the artwork and design, sleeve layout, notes for the music, etc.

CD Recording – Part 2: Nov 2015

So the lead-up preparations are complete, the weekend is finally here and we are ready to go! An unwanted early set-back is our assistant principal cornet has gone down with Glandular Fever and is out of action. The Committee has asked me to source someone from Brisbane if possible. These are the issues facing me as a conductor. I require:

- an excellent sight reader
- a player with experience of Brisbane Excelsior Band
- someone who is available at last minute and can spend all weekend in the recording studio for no monetary reward.

Plan B was to step up a cornet replacement player from New Zealand who has played at every contest with Brisbane Excelsior since 2006. He knows me and the band so well and I know he will have no problems with mastering the parts. With the approval of the committee, we quickly organize flights to arrive Friday afternoon and leave Sunday evening. All is perfect.

This is by no means the most technical of music for the CD recording, however when spending over five hours in the studio, stamina does become a factor and therefore requires fit players all around the stand.

Sometimes I have no control over events during the all-important lead up to a full weekend. Set-back number two arose and it was one that I had no idea would be such a problem to a recording. Traffic! Friday late afternoon, peak hour traffic and a major fatal road incident just outside Brisbane caused issues with the majority of the band arriving on time. Predominantly, our soprano cornet player was stranded at the Sunshine Coast going nowhere on the motorway. The earliest expected time of arrival was sometime after 8 pm.

As a musical director, I try and plan the whole weekend down to the timing of each piece, as much as I can. Liaising with all areas of responsibility well before an event is a must. Making sure the Sound Engineer is kept up-to-date with all necessities, access to the theatre, over 30 music stands ready, enough chairs, and the biggest problem in any event such as this: availability of percussion. With assistance from friends within the university, the larger percussion – timpani, vibraphone, tubular bells, xylophone etc. were borrowed, saving a huge amount of work and effort transporting our own gear. Just a small example of the jobs of a musical director outside of his conducting duties.

In the past, I have recorded as a player, soloist and conductor as well as being asked many times as ‘another set of ears’ for musical ensembles. My aim for all recordings is to take on a similar attitude as on all previous sessions. I have found this to work very well, and will go into more detail in the next sections of the narrative.

With two pieces of music previously recorded, we have 13 charts to lay down in approximately 12 hours of recording. With the right planning and preparation, I am sure we can comfortably complete this schedule, providing we have no major issues along the way. The plan is to complete two pieces on the Friday, six on the Saturday and the remaining five on the Sunday. A very busy weekend for all involved! Each of these sessions will be described by personal reflection.

Friday Evening Session – Day 1

Well beforehand, a meeting with the sound and recording engineer is always a “must” for me. This is to make sure he knows exactly what results I am looking for in regards to overall sound, reverb, balance, soloists’ sounds, level of percussion, etc. I had a definite sound of the brass band in my head and as to how the finished product should be. As an avid listener to the best of brass band music for many years, I certainly had my favourites, not only in the technical brilliance of playing but also in all the above sound qualities. The best of these CDs were given to the engineer well in advance so he would understand and get a good idea of what I was after before even thinking of microphone placements, how many and to what type he wishes to use.

My Friday night agenda was all mapped out:

7.30–8.30 pm sound check, microphone positioning, tuning, balancing etc.

8.30–10.00 pm complete recordings of two charts

Be prepared for any mishaps during the recording session, (examples below).

As 7.30 pm arrives, we are down six players, and there is no video to record the sessions for my Masters Project. Minor issues to test the patience of a director!

I was given notice that my principal percussionist was on a pre-booked school concert that Friday evening, hence my plan to try and record two slow hymn tune arrangements by close of session. The way I have worked through before is to record two complete run-throughs of each piece of music. Then work on each section with an overlap for editing purposes.

It is at this time a conductor must have complete confidence in his recording engineer. As mentioned previously, using the same engineer for the last four recordings and having discussed in detail my requirements, I did feel at ease and very comfortable with the working relationship. These complex social interactions require clarity of communication and then trust in the outcome. I believe previous successful recordings are due to the fact that whatever I may have missed, the engineer will pick it up and he is certainly direct and right to the point if he is not happy with something. On occasions when I think all is good, he will pick something up and I have no hesitation in running the section again. I also have complete confidence in all of the players to speak up if anything they feel within their own playing goes awry.

Despite the best-laid plans, set back number three arose. The motor was not working on the vibraphone. Luckily, this is not needed for the music we were intending to record that evening; however, a replacement would have to be picked up and transported before proceedings were underway on day two.

Friday night was completed and despite all unforeseen obstacles, it was a successful start to the project. *Pilgrims Prayer* and *Abide With Me* were in the bag,

Saturday Session – Day 2

Saturday morning: it is a full band at 9.30 am to start proceedings. Video is set up and ready to go, I go through the warm up process. We then have a drama: setback number four. The engineer tells me there is no power to any of the recording decks. Twenty minutes later and we are back on track, disaster averted. I decide it is good to get a few shorter and somewhat easier charts out of the way and we record a march that is a light entertainment number. All goes to plan.

I am always conscious of soloists. They can be very precious and I need them to be well warmed up but not fatigued in any way. Out of the six possible soloists, I finally chose four to perform on the disc, making it very clear that it was in no way guaranteed to make the final cut, which will be decided by me with some input from the individual.

All solo performers, as you would expect, requested an early recording session to get it out of the way as soon as they could. It certainly can be stressful and with some, it can have an effect mentally on their performances within other band pieces. I chose Soprano and Solo Cornet for morning of day 1, and Flugel and Euphonium for morning of day 2. I had given myself an hour per solo; maybe a little longer for Euphonium as it is a little more technical and a longer piece of music. As it worked out, my estimations were not far off.

I had arranged for our guest vocalist to make an appearance on the Saturday afternoon. I would have to certainly plan this carefully during the day's session. A grand piano would need to be available with thanks to another generous gesture by the university. Time out for the band was available while new microphone positions and sound checks with the singer were achieved.

There were a couple of numbers that I had earmarked as possible problem pieces. I knew they were going to take longer and could be a little frustrating as in, much longer charts, seven to eight minutes each, a mixture of slow and technical, where intonation and balance etc. could have been an issue. I purposefully allocated more time to these charts and it was my intention to get each completed right after lunch on the two consecutive days. I, of course, kept to the same plan conducting two complete run-throughs. The purpose of this is the best complete take is chosen, and edited accordingly. Again as per shorter pieces, each section (A – B, B – C, etc.) is recorded separately. The idea is to have every note of the music covered multiple times to account for any possible oversight.

As musical director and people manager, I have to be aware of certain situations that can have a negative impact on the session, these can include, tired lips, energy levels low and basic concentration levels fading fast. There gets to a point when there is no benefit in continuing, after five or six hours in the studio, there comes a time to call it a day and start afresh the next morning.

A further thought on this from a Conductor's perspective: a full day of recording is exhausting for all concerned, especially for a musical director. I cannot show this to the musical ensemble or at least I try my best not to. My aim is to have plenty of small breaks during recordings. Having said that, the breaks are a welcome respite for the band; these are the times I am running in and out of the sound engineers' box to listen to the recorded musical extracts. I make a point of inviting different principals to listen at certain times and, of course the soloists to sample their end results. Above all, I try my best to make all sessions fun!

After 14 hours in a recording studio, it is only natural that some of that time is tedious, repetitive, irritating, or just plain exasperating. It is my job as a conductor to make them play their best at all times. If they are in good spirits then this will definitely come across in their music. If they are tired, irritable and unmotivated, then this will have a negative effect on the result. It will become apparent where no further progress is possible and at that point the session comes to an end.

Another successful day of recording finished. We are on Schedule with the following charts recorded:

- March – *Jaguar*
- Soprano solo – *Glasshouse Whispers*
- Cornet Solo – *Virtuosity*
- *Skyfall*
- *Nightingale Dances Phoenix*

Sunday Session – Day 3

Sunday morning began with a lively upbeat number, *Another Opening, Another Show*, to get them in the mood and ready for a big last day in the studios. Flugel and Euphonium solo followed and both of these took a little more time than I envisaged but hopefully both turn out well enough for the final CD selections. Lunch followed and I am a little concerned with only a limited time this afternoon. There are tired lips and minds but we have two more to complete the session.

As mentioned in Part 1 of this report, the difficulties of arranging 30 players all with the availability for three days recording is by no means an easy task. Although not particularly happy and all was pre-arranged well in advance, I was to lose half of the percussion team who

were involved in an orchestral concert later that afternoon. They asked to leave no later than 2 pm. This is just another small dilemma for me, as a director, to overcome. Luckily, I was prepared with the final items requiring less percussion.

It is now 2.30 pm and we have one more to record. I ask the band how they are feeling and whether they are up for one more. We already have more than enough music to complete the CD. To my surprise, everyone was ready and up for one more session. And so another hour of hard work and we are finished, weary, fatigued, and exhausted, but what I believe to be another very successful day with the following items recorded:

- *Another Opening*
- Flugel Solo – *Tango*
- Euphonium Solo – *Pantomime*
- *Catskills*
- *Melody Shop*

A full weekend of committed musicians working extremely hard to record what I believe will result in one of the best CD recording I have been involved with. The outcome remains to be seen. There is still plenty to be done. Editing is a long and tedious job and I will be heavily involved with this over the next few months.

As previously stated, my goal was to record a CD in 2015 capturing some of the 10-year highlights. As a band and with a little direction from myself, we now decide on a name for the new CD. The artwork and design of the CD cover has to be finalised and of course what we information should be included in the sleeve notes, photographs, etc. My idea, because of the 10 years' success and using Brisbane Excelsior's logo as illustrated in Figure 1, is to combine the two design elements to come up with a great CD name and artwork for the cover.



Figure 1: Brisbane Excelsior logo

The Concert CD release date was set for Nov 2016 at a Brass Concert celebrating 10 Years of Brisbane Excelsior at the top.

Appendix D: Public Concert

Although Brisbane Excelsior perform around 20–30 concerts a year, for this paper I have chosen a major project where I was invited by the Queensland Music Festival to establish two separate youth brass bands in Brisbane and Townsville. This entailed advertising, auditions, creating two ensembles, music selection, rehearsing and conducting the final performances.

Brass Concert	One Hundred and One Years: 1914–2015
Date	16, 17 and 19 July 2015
Venue	Brisbane and Townsville
Events	Queensland Music Festival

Queensland Music Festival worked closely with the State Library of Queensland on the development of *One Hundred and One Years* to gather letters, diary entries, pictures and stories from soldiers in Australia and Germany during World War 1. These concerts in Townsville and Brisbane featured musicians drawn from local communities, Australian Defence Force bands and the Australian debut of the Saxon Wind Philharmonic ensemble from Germany. The concert under my musical directorship consisted of popular songs from the wartime era and evocative readings from wartime correspondence intertwined with archival footage and recordings.

The planning of this major event for me started some 9 months beforehand and for the Queensland Music Festival much earlier. After countless meetings, deciding on suitable music to perform, it was time to set the criteria for selecting the two community youth brass bands. Brass players under the age of 21 were sought from schools, local brass, concert bands and orchestras to make up the two 25 plus musical ensembles.

Audition music was sent to all prospective young musicians, which consisted of a slow melody, technical chart and sight-reading to be held on the day. Auditions were held in Brisbane & Townsville over two days. I was not looking for a band of champions here, completely different to my everyday role with Brisbane Excelsior, this was selecting as many as was possible to be a part of something special and that would remain with these young musicians for many years to come. Another major factor in the selection was that they had to attend every rehearsal. The result was that very few applicants were turned away. There were 28 players for both the Brisbane and Townsville bands.

The process for achieving the best results for these young musicians was not easy, from as young as 10 and never being a part of such a large production as this, I had a very different strategy in directing this concert than in the previous performances and CD recordings mentioned in this paper. Having been involved with many youth bands in my career, I was well aware of the difficulties and hurdles to overcome. I ensured that older, more experienced members sat alongside the novices, assisting wherever necessary. The rehearsal techniques used were very different: repetition was the key, and the re-writing of musical parts to suit the standard of the players. After three rehearsals at each location, we were ready to take on the full-dress rehearsals with the remaining artist.

My job as Musical Director included numerous meetings with the Army band conductors, the Saxon Philharmonic conductor, guest soloist and in depth consultation and continual liaising with the creative director and production manager.

All performances of *One Hundred and One Years* produced excellent results and the show was a resounding success. A live recording can be accessed from the link below.



One Hundred & One Years



Dear Howard,

Queensland Music Festival is pleased to announce that the *One Hundred & One Years* full performance video is now available to view and download. To view or download the video, you will need to go to the link and use the password provided below.

Vimeo

Link: <https://vimeo.com/148982066>

Password: QMF2015

Duration: 1 Hour 28 Minutes

Credit: Atmosphere Photography

One Hundred & One Years is presented by Queensland Music Festival, the Queensland Government, Brisbane City Council and Townsville City Council, and proudly supported by Seymour Whyte, QUT Creative Industries, The Goethe-Institut, State Library of Queensland, Wingate Properties, Townsville Bulletin, Seven Local News, 630 ABC North Queensland & ABC Local Radio.

Appendix E: Survey – Brisbane Excelsior Band

Question 1: *Do you think there was sufficient rehearsal time on all pieces leading up to the contest?*

Yes: 21 (87.5%)

No: 3 (12.5%)

Comments:

1. The march definitely could have used more rehearsal – it didn't feel comfortable to play on stage, as I felt the band wasn't 100% rehearsed.
2. More rehearsal on the march.
3. End of the march was not rehearsed well.

Question 2: *Do you think rehearsing 3 weekends before was good, too much or too little?*

Good: 20 (83.33%)

Too much: 3 (12.5%)

Too little: 1 (4.17%)

Comments:

1. The difficulty is not having a full contingent, yeah this is hard to achieve, but I think the commitment can be better by the players. It isn't something new...!
2. Good way to catch up the late start in rehearsals for the year
3. I personally didn't mind it. I know it's tricky with families, etc, but from a musical point of view, it added to the continual improvement of the pieces.
4. I think instead of such a heavy weekend load, rehearsals should start earlier - perhaps in November.
5. Although good I do think it is very tough on those of us who rely on weekends to spend time with family.
6. Just speaking personally - very hard to manage with a young family, but appreciating that it is rehearsal the band needs. In terms of band preparation, two or three weekends is about right.

Question 3: *Do you support the top/bottom rehearsals 2 months before?*

Yes: 22 (91.67%)

No: 2 (8.33%)

Comments:

1. Perhaps occasionally these would be ok, but they can start to affect work commitments (especially for teachers or other people who have to work late)
2. Percussion should also be included.
3. I believe sectionals from day one before bottom/top. My experience is that at bottom/top rehearsals we are told that we played well. At sectionals we are told we played well. At full rehearsals we are told that we are shit. I think basics first.
4. I think these would also be useful two/three weeks before the contest too.

Question 4: *Do you think two practices a week, a month before the contest is sufficient or should they start earlier?*

A month out is enough: 17 (70.83%)

Earlier would be better: 7 (29.17%)

Comments:

1. I can see value in enforcing that there be 2 rehearsals a week and make the Thursday a section only rehearsal, probably for the month before upper and bottom halves.
2. Two months
3. 5-6 weeks
4. Two months out is best i.e. February and include top and bottom section rehearsals.

Question 5: *How do you feel about the timing/quantity of sectionals? (Select all answers that are applicable.)*

I liked the timing/quantity: 18 (75%)

I think they should have started earlier: 3 (12.5%)

I would like to have more: 8 (33.33%)

I don't think sectionals are important: 1 (4.17%)

Comments:

1. I think we should have more sectionals, and that each section leader should take more responsibility to arrange them. I also feel that we can have some of the sectionals without Howard and focus on getting better as a group.
2. This should be a responsibility led by the section leaders a bit more. At the start of the lead up, they should arrange their own teams and lock it in.
3. I think that all the sections should have more sectionals. All of them don't have to be with Howard, but I feel that the sections need to play together more, to fix issues like intonation and different phrasings.

4. It was fine. Sectionals should be left late enough that all the players can play 90% of the music and it's just about getting it together and finding out parts that your section has different or the same as you. I thought ours went well this year.
5. We only had 1 sectional quite late in the game. Earlier and more often could have meant we needed less rehearsals as a band.
6. I think a preliminary one, then another one would have been useful closer to the contest.
7. Sectionals were appropriate to the difficulties and strengths of each section, good common sense.

Question 6: *What was your opinion of the band levy to go to the contest?*

Right amount: 17 (70.83%)

Too high: 6 (25%)

Too low: 1 (4.17%)

Comments:

1. We should do more fundraising to get the levy down. The band could also look at travelling cheaper and find less expensive accommodation.
2. Everyone would want it cheaper or none at all, however I fully believe that there needs to be a reward or recognition for the players, whether paying full tilt or nothing. Even if a party/bbq was funded for the members, it's a small price to pay for acknowledgement. On the levy side, I'd be more than happy to pay for accommodation and flights, I think if the band was to contribute with a subsidy it should be to the basics ie buses, rehearsal halls... not a percentage off the players levy.
3. Should be funded by the band, we need a sponsor.
4. I think that the band could have done a lot more to raise funds to go to the contest.
5. \$500 was bang on the money for me. I think that the band should be looking into more fundraising to keep the levy at this level. Bunnings BBQs are a great source and easy.
6. A lower levy is always good.
7. I'm poor.
8. I wasn't aware.
9. I think a concert series is a move in the right direction to raising more money. Also, Gawler (Adelaide contest 2015) was a terrible venue, which created a whole lot more expenses for the band with additional transport costs.
10. A nice luxury for players, and some players (including me!) still had difficulty paying, but I know the band finances cannot support these subsidies currently, so the levy must go up.

Question 7: *Where you happy with the organisation of the travel, accommodation, and social aspects of the contest?*

Travel:

Yes: 24 (100%)

No: 0 (0%)

Accommodation:

Yes: 24 (100%)

No: 0 (0%)

Social Events:

Yes: 22 (91.67%)

No: 2 (8.33%)

Comments:

1. I would like others to get more involved in organising social events, which should happen a bit more proactively from the members
2. Had a thoroughly great time in Adelaide this year.
3. Only comment is that we should schedule a post-contest dinner before the contest to keep weekends free.
4. Perhaps a band-organized after-contest party would be nice (directly after the results)

Question 8: *Do you think we had sufficient rehearsal time at the contest?*

Yes: 23 (95.83%)

No: 1 (4.17%)

Comments:

1. Yes, I think there was sufficient rehearsal time.
2. Yes everything was well organised and rehearsal time was very productive.

Question 9: *If the Solos were on the Thursday, would you have competed?*

Yes: 13 (54.17%)

No: 11 (45.83%)

Comments:

1. Yes, definitely.
2. No, it would be a distraction from the main event.
3. Solos before would be optimal, although the overall organization could have been better.
4. It always feels like an afterthought to have it at the end of the weekend when everyone has left the venue. It never feels supported.
5. I'm always keen to show off, but I had to get back to work!
6. I don't think I have the confidence at the moment to solo.
7. Not this contest but would be more interested in entering in the future if before contest.

Question 10: *If you have any other comments you would like to make regarding the whole contest experience, please include them below.*

1. More social events prior to the contest could enhance the teamwork and make us even better as a group.
2. I would like to have maybe one social gathering before the contest, perhaps after a Saturday rehearsal. I think this would help bring the band closer together, and get people more excited for the rehearsals and also the contest itself.
3. I had a great time and it's great to be the Champions again!
4. Just love being part of the band. The atmosphere and friendship when we are away together is amazing.
5. I had a great time, but I will say the heavy rehearsal schedule took a noticeable toll on my work and family. One solution would be to start rehearsals earlier or make parts available much earlier next time.^[L]_[SEP]
6. I thought at the time of preparation that we weren't doing enough/as much as usual but turned out to be perfect.
7. Would be happy to stay in less quality apartments similar to Maryborough.
8. Overall it was a great experience. I thought we needed more rehearsals but our results proved we were successful.
9. The lead up was intense because the contest was early, and I think the effect was felt by the number of people who needed nights off or fell ill in the lead-up. But I don't think it would make sense to start preparation earlier and have a break over Christmas.
10. Logistically, and from a music preparation point of view, I think this was the best contest the band has done.
11. I was expecting a decent contest venue for brass bands but was horribly disappointed. Some of the local organisation was also most disappointing. Perhaps we need to check out proposed venues and ask a few more organisational questions before committing to attend a national contest in the future.
12. With reference to question 7 I have assumed that it relates to internal organisation which was terrific. The event itself however was held in an inadequate location with respect to long distances from available accommodation. The playing venue was very suitable for school organisations but not a national event.
13. The band is very well organised compared to most bands I have performed with. The band gets fit and plays well when the pressure is on.

Appendix F: Interviews

1. Interview with Russell Gray, freelance conductor, UK

Interview conducted April 18, 2015. 17.00 hours Duration 2.00 hours

Russell Gray is a freelance conductor with over 25 years' experience in the music business. He is currently holding posts of Adjunct Professor at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music (Australia), Principal Conductor of the Cambrian Philharmonic Orchestra (Wales), Musical Director of the National Youth Band of Scotland, Professional Conductor with the Reg Vardy Brass Band and President of the National Association of Brass Band Conductors.

The interview with Russell again highlighted the complexity of conducting an ensemble with social administration and retaining the integrity of music through education adding complex levels to the role.

Interviewer: What first attracted you to conducting? How did you make your first break through? How did you start in your career?

Russell: At the age of 14, when a couple of players organized a band for a charity concert, I offered to conduct. It seemed a natural thing to do; I had no pre-conceived ideas or inhibitions. I didn't know it was difficult, it didn't seem odd or strange and the concert was a success. It was then back to playing. Only years later when embarking on a Masters degree did I realize how difficult it was to get into conducting within the orchestral field.

[Russell wished back at that time that he had continued with conducting from the first experimentation at 14. It could have been a completely different picture. But he may not have become the renowned cornet soloist and top brass principal cornet and achieved all he has in that field.]

Interviewer: Do the best players always make the best conductors?

Russell: Simple answer is no. Conducting and playing are so different, very different subjects. Conducting is more about personalities, man management, and a good communicator. When performing as a soloist, you are it, you do not have to co-operate, people co-operate with you, a totally different line with conducting. Also, the best teachers do not make the best conductors; it is a different art form. Again, you have to be a good communicator, a good motivator, and team player.

[This response shows the social complexity of the role even for conducting. The role of musical director exponentially compounds the demands of the incumbent and embedded traditional culture of brass bands.]

Interviewer: Who are some of the top brass soloists who have been successful conductors as you have?

[Russell Gray mentioned Nicolas Childs, Alan Whittington and Robert Childs who are successful at both. Others soloists were named in the search for those who have mastered the socially complex role of conducting. Many more brass band personalities were mentioned who were good at either the playing or conducting. This supports the importance of organisational and social responsibilities that are unique to the role of musical director.]

Interviewer: What qualifications do you think a conductor needs?

Russell: The best teachers do not make the best conductors; it is a different art form. Again, I come back to the same attributes—someone who inspires and has qualities in leadership.

[Leonard Bernstein was then brought up and discussed. To demonstrate the differing styles of leadership, we watched a video of Leonard conducting with facial expressions only, no hand gestures with remarkable effect.

[Musical training was also discussed. Russell expressed the opinion that a conductor needed to be an instrumentalist in order to understand the orchestral culture and technicalities of multiple clefs or transposing. Russell concluded that many musicians have the theory but cannot drive the bus. He questioned whether qualifications alone would give a conductor the required skills.]

Interviewer: What is your view on dealing with so many different personalities within an ensemble?

Russell: Egos within either brass bands or orchestras will always be there. Conductors need a certain ego within an ensemble because it enables them to perform well and bring out the best in others. It is my opinion that it is much more delicate within the orchestral world—much bigger egos!

Interviewer: How do you get the best out of your ensemble?

[Russell talked about differing rehearsal techniques within brass bands and orchestras and gave the example of conducting the Royal Scottish Orchestra to explain. He found that professional musicians want you to conduct them and let them get on with it. The technique is more gesture driven rather than telling them how to play, which is totally different to a brass band where a more complex role requires that the conductor interpret the piece clearly and articulate to each player what is required.

[Russell confirmed that a conductor must have a clear picture in their head and be totally prepared with conviction. Psychology was mentioned and being able to press the right buttons. As in the usual case of brass bands, amateur musicians do it for fun and leave the professional thought process of music making to the conductor.

[Each band also presented unique criteria for the musical director that aligned with the traditions and vision of the organisation behind the band. Sometimes, this culture needed to

change in order to progress the playing of the band, and sometimes, players needed to recognise that there might not be a role for them under a new conductor.

[Russell then raised the example of “Coffee and Coke bands” who wanted more of an entertainer in front of them. They still had great fun making music and were very successful in making a significant profit from an event in one night even though the standard was very low. These bands expected their musical directors to also engage at a personal level with audiences.]

Interviewer: Who are your mentors?

[Russell talked about just one mentor—Bramwell Tovey, a “normal guy” who came out of the brass band genre. Bramwell was one of only a few who have made the successful transition from brass bands to orchestra. He is currently conducting the Vancouver Symphony and guests all over the world. He is a Grammy Award-winning conductor and a renowned composer who had his origins in the Salvation Army of East London. Bramwell is an accomplished tuba player, piano player, and a composer who is also an entertainer offering amusing, intellectually witty, and delightfully irreverent remarks from the stage. Russell highlighted that it is his personal attributes that give him the edge when conducting; his warmth and charisma are as important as his talent. He is in great demand as a guest conductor and recently conducted the Sydney Symphony at the Opera House.

[Russell spoke briefly about payments within the music industry for conductors. As a professional conductor, he told me that he is paid only what individual brass bands can afford. He said that he would probably be earning 10 times what he now earns if he was conducting top orchestras. Within brass banding, the more successful you become by winning contests, the more you can demand. Russell’s way is to submit his fee and then ask what can you afford; they normally meet somewhere in the middle. Grants and sponsorships are important support mechanisms for brass bands and he has to be realistic when working with the different bands around the world.]

Interviewer: Do you think a good brass band conductor would make a good orchestra maestro and vice versa?

Russell: Winning a brass band contest is a sport—it is very competitive. You have to have that killer instinct.

Interviewer: Many orchestral conductors try to win brass band contests, but not that many are successful. Why do you think that is?

[Russell’s view was that most orchestra maestros are not out to win the contest because it is not a high priority for them. They sometimes have to “sell their soul” to deviate from the traditional musical options; interpretations are doubted, and competitiveness is a real complication to the role of conducting. There are few who actually make it in the contesting arena.]

Interviewer: How did you break into the orchestral field?

[He explained that felt that for a while he was trying to go the wrong way up a one-way street; he was continually swimming upstream. There is a big resistance going from brass bands to

orchestra, with the perception that brass bands are not “real” ensembles. When he first tried to break through, Russell explained that he was “drowning” for the first six months, with the different clefs, transposition, score reading etc. His study time was increased, he needed to memorize more and had so many more parts to cue. He had to rethink and start directing in a very different manner. He found that the set of skills are very different and the transition from brass band to orchestra was a huge learning curve.]

Interviewer: What is the importance of composition to a conductor?

Russell: A simple answer to this is that you are talking to the wrong person; I have never composed anything in my life.

Interviewer: On the subject of theory, how much is enough before taking on directing?

[Russell explained that more often than not, many players in ensembles have more musical theory than the conductor, and they know it. Sometimes this is not a bad thing but the conductors need to be aware of their own ignorance and be willing to listen to the players. The difficulty lies in using that knowledge to good effect, to get the player to be a positive influence within the band so that the role of conductor is not undermined.]

Interviewer: What advice do you have for up-and-coming young conductors?

Observe as many conductors as possible, good and bad. There is no shortage of opportunity now with social media videos like YouTube and the internet in general. Be open to learning; be inquisitive and curious.

2. Interview with Peter Luff, Associate Principal French Horn, Queensland Symphony Orchestra. AUS

Interview conducted December 18, 2013. 14.00 hours Duration 1 hour

Peter Luff is Co-Chair of Brass at Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, Assistant Conductor and Associate Principal Horn of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

The interview below is extracted from over an hour of discussion and excludes some information that was introduced as asides to the conversation. The questions ventured a little into the general problems with brass bands, competitions, how brass bands are perceived by some orchestral players, and many other personal experiences. It is provided as support for the argument that the role of musical director goes beyond conducting to involve complex tasks required to shape a successful band.

Interviewer: The role of Musical Director can be broken down into three sections:

*Organization and Social Management
Musicianship and Training
Technical and Artistic Practices.*

What is your experience in this, and is this the case for you?

Peter: I agree with these aspects and even though we are talking brass bands, I can affirm that there is a similarity across the board to other ensembles.

I conduct many different musical groups, from orchestras, ensembles, chamber groups to brass bands. I spend a minimum of four to six weeks a year conducting the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and the majority of his time is spent teaching at the Conservatorium of Music. For certain projects within the orchestra, sometimes I am called in to be assistant conductor to prepare for professionals.

Interviewer: How did you make your first break through? How did you start conducting?

Peter: My breakthrough came when teaching Horn at the University of Queensland. During the early 90s when in Adelaide, I was playing in a brass ensemble. I thought a similar ensemble would be fantastic in Queensland. After approaching the Director, I got the go-ahead to set it up but on the proviso, it cost no money!

I started as a conductor with a small group of eight, and before too long grew to 40 players and proved to be very successful. This was just the beginning, and after conducting classes at University, and basically, getting as much training from musicians such as Ralph Hultgren.

In the late 90s, there was a concert with the ABC Orchestra in which the conductor was not available for the rehearsal. I was asked to beat them through the practice, and the result was an invitation to audition for the conductor of the ABC Orchestra. I passed and became the conductor of Education concerts for the Qld Orchestra.

Interviewer: Peter, you are a successful player. Is there any ambition to take on full-time conducting?

Peter: As a soloist with the Southern Cross, Principal French Horn with the Qld Orchestra, playing and practicing takes up a lot of time. Because of full time teaching, I have no real ambition to take on full time conducting at this time. I am happy to take on the occasional professional gig with different ensembles around Australia.

[Peter has very firm views about conducting and is under no illusion that there is a massive difference between the elite level and the average conductor. The X factor that certain directors have cannot be copied is one of the intangibles of being a high-level conductor.]

[We talked briefly about baton techniques. Peter talked about favourite conductors he has played under, many with great technique combined with great musicianship. He mentioned professional conductors he has worked with, and their different techniques. He said that some had an incredible work ethic but not always the best technique.]

[Peter talked about continual research on conductors. He affirmed that it is an interest for him, especially gender issues for woman directors. This in itself leaves room for further research, especially as more women join brass bands and play a range of instruments.]

Interviewer: Who are your mentors?

Peter: Johannes Fritsch and Simone Young. Johannes is a German conductor who plays piano and organ, and also studied violin and trumpet. His conducting style is delivered with great precision and energy and his rapport with the orchestra is apparent. Simone is an extraordinary Australian conductor who has spent some of her career in Hamburg. Her intelligence enables her to convey a complex interpretation of music with an elegant simplicity. Both of these conductors have worked so well with one ensemble and not clicked at all with another. The same is true for myself as I am sure it has for you.

Interviewer: After a run-in with a particular member, how do you get on side again right away? Is it done subconsciously? Do you jump on them or seek their advice?

Peter: Egos enter the ensemble at any level within orchestras and brass bands. I think that there is a similar percentage within all types of music ensemble but there is a big difference between ego and arrogance! And it's not always the conductor. I always keep the big picture in mind and consider what is best for the band, not the individual.

Interviewer: What experience have you had of conductor reviews?

[Peter responded that every single performance by the Queensland Orchestra gets a rating from the members of the orchestra. This is done by an online survey, and although the conductor is well aware of this, it is anonymous. For example, a consistent review is given on technique, use of rehearsal time and musicianship. The question is also asked whether he or she should be re-engaged. The conductors are then rated on the genre they are suitable for Romantic, Baroque, Classical, Renaissance, 20th Century, Pops and Education. These reports are then passed to the Artistic Committee.]

Interviewer: Would it work for brass bands?

[Peter's response is a resounding yes. For top-level bands, a player review will help a conductor, and bring great benefits from a consultative process. It opens up positive communication and a shared vision for the band. A peer review, completely anonymous with just data to start with, no comments would be a non-threatening way to introduce the concept. This could be done after a lead up to a major contest and again after a major contest.]

Interviewer: Do the best players always make the best conductors?

Peter: No, definitely not. It's a different game entirely.

Interviewer: Do you think a good brass band conductor would make a good orchestra maestro and vice versa?

[Peter said that he has not seen too many in front of an orchestra so he opined that it is very rare. For Peter, there was a steep learning curve venturing into conducting brass bands. The main differences were in the articulation; it's completely different. He drew an analogy to guiding different vessels, saying that conducting an orchestra was like steering the Titanic whereas conducting a brass band was more like driving a speedboat.

[We talked for a while on playing on the down beat, which orchestras tend to be well behind compared with a brass band. He went on to say that it is a difficult skill to master and a great advantage of being a regular player.

[Clearly, there are complexities to the role that need further investigation and a possible future discussion.]

Interviewer: How important is composition to a conductor?

[Peter did not think it was an important factor at all. It is an appreciation of art and conversely, a good composer does not necessarily make a good player.]

Interviewer: What do you see as the greatest challenges within conducting?

Peter: There are different challenges depending on what ensemble you are taking. For instance with orchestras, one of the problems is becoming too emotionally invested in what you are doing; your responsibility is primarily to the musicians. Your priority is the ability to show it and allow them to play it. Some conductors think that they are being musical and are not. They actually come across as totally unmusical to the ensemble—you cannot underestimate how perceptive an orchestra is.

Being prepared is a very important aspect in front of any ensemble and when guest conducting, that can be a challenge. Another big challenge when conducting brass bands is dealing with hierarchy as there can be some arrogance that creeps in here and autocratic notions of administrators over conductors.

Interviewer: Tell me about your successes, highlights and most memorable moments.

[Peter has so many memorable moments, mainly with orchestras. As one of them, he recalled conducting Beethoven at the Bangalow NSW Music Festival. Another was conducting Stravinsky's *Soldiers Tales* with a small ensemble. He also said that there have been a couple of brass band highlights, such as conducting Brisbane Brass at a recent Queensland contest. He said that this was mainly due to the giant leap they had made in standard in such a short time. Another big highlight was conducting Brisbane Excelsior, and his appreciation of the professionalism of the players and their willingness to heed the comments of another conductor.]

3. Interview with Leonard Adams, freelance conductor, UK

Interview conducted via email 19 October 2015.

Leonard Adams is a freelance brass band conductor in England, and President of The Cornwall Youth Band. Leonard is Managing Director of the successful music shop Trevada Music.

Interviewer: The role of Musical Director can be broken down into three sections:

*Organisation and Social Management
Musicianship and Training
Technical and Artistic Practices.*

What is your experience in this, and is this the case for you?

Leonard: I am not sure that I agree with the order of those three categories dealing with the MD duties.

Perhaps first duty is to get everyone to watch, listen and work together. Encourage home practice and effort. Build team spirit. Depending on the group, offer guidance on practice. Pick music that will be enjoyed, varied, challenging but rewarding. Offer experience to assist in the organisational setup.

In the early stages of my conducting career, I taught a large proportion of the players and this helped when trying to get the band to play in a specific way. I would start the evening with the youngsters and then move on to full band. In between rehearsals, twice a week, I would teach individuals. The band made rapid progress, however the structure was not in place to support it. The organizing committee was small, revenue minimal, instruments poor, making life difficult. My motivational drive and leadership helped to improve the setup, and great things were achieved with replacement of instruments, greater parental support and involvement in committees, more local activity, creating more revenue. There followed a very successful period in the history of that band.

Conducting a top-grade band can be very time consuming. There is a lot of work involved in the planning of rehearsals and concerts and ensuring players maintain interest. It would be great if an MD were to concentrate on these aspects alone, however as I was advised early in my career, “Bear in mind that nobody is ever as motivated as you are,” and another saying of “You only get out what you put in” helps in keeping your feet on the ground.

Organisation, motivation and discipline are key to success. Discipline is crucial from how you turn up, attitude, stage presence, all will help the performance and help with the team building. The respect of the baton is paramount.

Interviewer: What are your greatest challenges within conducting?

Leonard: Probably maintaining interest, involvement and motivation of the players. If a player has a bad day at the office, I will know it; if I have a bad day, they must not know it.

Interviewer: Tell me about your successes, highlights, and memorable moments.

Leonard: In 1977, as a player getting 4th at RAH on Connotations, first time on principal cornet with Camborne. Probably 1992, achieving 7th place at the Nationals with Bodmin on *New Jerusalem*, especially playing in between 1st (Grimethorpe) and 2nd (Desford) placed bands. Playing in the square at Bugle after lifting the Royal Trophy. Many memorable moments when conducting Bodmin at Whit walks and even Padstow.

Interviewer: How did you make your first break through? How did you start?

Leonard: When young I got involved in teaching beginners and conducting small ensembles. I enjoyed this and developed it over the years, teaching youngsters whilst playing. When a conducting post came up in my home town, I applied and was successful. I was lucky also to have a retired army bandmaster in the band who guided me.

Interviewer: What qualifications do you think a conductor needs?

Leonard: I would say that the number of qualifications is not paramount, however the more the better.

Interviewer: What is your view on dealing with so many different personalities within an ensemble?

Leonard: Personnel management is crucial. Lead by example.

Interviewer: How do you get the best out of your ensemble?

Leonard: Get them to watch and listen. Try to always change the way you conduct to keep them on their toes. Make playing interesting, fun and rewarding.

Interviewer: Who are your mentors?

Leonard: I have been fortunate to play under many top conductors and have taken from them all.

Interviewer: Theory—how much is enough before taking on directing?

Leonard: A broad basic knowledge is required but you can never have too much.

Interviewer: Advice for up and coming young conductors?

Leonard: Get as much experience as possible by playing under, watching and listening to as many experienced conductors as possible.

4. Interview with Philip Harper, Musical Director of The Cory Band, UK

Interview conducted via email September 14, 2016

Philip Harper is Musical Director of the world-famous Cory Band, Number One World Rank by winning all four major titles in the brass band calendar: The British Nationals, the European, Brass in Concert, and the British Open. Philip is also the Editor of *Brass Band World* magazine, the Music Editor of the Wright and Round publishing company, and in demand as a freelance conductor, educator and adjudicator with brass bands of all levels, as well as being a prolific composer.

Interviewer: What first attracted you to conducting?

Philip: I felt an “inner-calling,” if you like. I played the tenor horn, and at the time I felt that I had taken this to the limit of my ability, and I needed a new challenge. I had a lot of musical ideas in my head.

Interviewer: How did you make your first break through? How did you start?

Philip: Get a position with a lesser-known band and learn on the job. Did a lot of practice in front of the mirror to get my body working with the gestures I wanted to use.

Interviewer: Do the best players always make the best conductors?

Philip: No. Conducting requires musical vision. You don’t need that to be a superb player.

Interviewer: What qualifications do you think a conductor needs?

Philip: Knows a lot of music, has listened critically to a lot (of all sort of genres to ensure roundedness), analysed a lot, and knows how it works.

Interviewer: What is your view on dealing with so many different personalities within an ensemble?

Philip: The hardest part of the job. However, I think a conductor needs to invest in creating the general culture/approach that he/she wants across the ensemble, engaging and enfranchising the musicians. This takes a while, but once in place, it then becomes easier to deal with issues that arise.

Interviewer: How do you get the best out of your ensemble?

Philip: Make sure I am always at my best. That motivates everyone else.

Interviewer: Who are your mentors?

Philip: Biggest influence is probably Roy Newsome.

Interviewer: Do you think a good brass band conductor would make a good orchestra maestro and vice versa?

Philip: Aside from the snobbery in the orchestral world which would prevent any brass band conductor ever getting close to an orchestral podium, I think there's nothing to stop them (but see answer above about qualifications of a conductor).

Interviewer: The importance of composition to a conductor?

Philip: Not really important, but helps to know how music works.

Interviewer: Theory—how much is enough before taking on directing?

Philip: I learn new things every day. As soon as you feel confident about such things is when you have enough.

Interviewer: Advice for up and coming young conductors

Philip: Listen, listen, listen.

Interviewer: Greatest challenges within conducting?

Philip: Working with a large group of people to achieve your own artistic vision.

Appendix G: DVD

Documentary of the making of the CD, including rehearsal footage and interviews can be viewed at the link below.

<https://youtu.be/p5Gu7zXYRrY>