

# THE Musical Times ESTABLISHED IN 1844

---

The Solo Tuba

Author(s): George Dixon

Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 77, No. 1121 (Jul., 1936), p. 643

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/918426>

Accessed: 21/03/2014 11:10

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Musical Times Publications Ltd.* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

## Letters to the Editor

### The Solo Tuba

SIR,—With most of Mr. Willis's interesting letter I agree, though, given first-class voicing, I believe Mr. Woodcock's contention with regard to the use of the British Tuba is sound. Such stops are far more effective when used in contrast with the Great organ than when coupled. The first time I attended one of Best's recitals at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, was in the early 'nineties. I was then little more than a boy and had not previously heard heavy pressure Solo reeds. I shall never forget the thrill experienced when he played these in full chords against the Great organ. I had not before realised that reeds could be made so fine as not to require a flue-work backing to give them the necessary body. Subsequent experience of Willis's heavy pressure reed work did but confirm the impression that, where pure tone quality is required combined with great brilliance and adequate power, especially in the treble, low pressure voicing is not worth serious consideration. In short, Willis reeds spoiled me at that time for all others.

It is known that among other improvements instigated by Best about 1867, after he had gone to St. George's Hall, was raising the wind pressure on the Solo reeds from about 9-ins. to 22-ins. This was the first instance of stops of such a commanding nature as to stand out effectively against big Great organ combinations, being voiced on so high a pressure. One has only to look at the registration directed in Best's arrangements and original compositions to realise what he had in mind. If an instrument with reed work so far ahead of its time had not been available, it is unlikely that he could have adopted such striking methods.

Unfortunately, distinguished continental visitors do not always understand what splendid use can be made of our solo Tubas *alone*. Of such effects French Trompettes are from their nature quite incapable. In large instruments both are useful: a family of open reed Trumpets on heavy wood together with a big mixture enclosed in a box—a sort of super full Swell—and one or more closer toned Tubas outside on at least 15-ins. wind. It should seldom be necessary to couple the latter, and then only for a short time for special effects. Anyone who has heard those superb 8-ft. and 4-ft. Tubas on 20-ins. wind at Durham Cathedral will appreciate what I mean. They are the finest specimens known to me, but their function could not be adequately fulfilled by open reeds of the French type.—Yours, &c.,

GEORGE DIXON  
(Lieut.-Colonel).

St. Bees, Cumberland.

### Where Pupils are going

SIR,—I take it your columns are open to any evidence as to the trend of music teaching. The other day I saw in the window of a music shop in Praed Street a notice about accordion classes, which were, if I remember rightly, in three grades. It was added that, as so many had applied for Grade 1 who were unable to read music at all, a special class would be opened for them. What number the 'so many' implies I cannot tell; but it seems likely that this is where numbers are going who in other days would have been *our* pupils. The notice held out the hope of advanced pupils going into bands and coming out as band leaders. Can anyone tell us whether such classes teach serious music, or confine themselves to dance music? From the suggestion last quoted, I presume that a good part at least of the tuition must keep to jazz and the like. I

should be interested to know whether any reader sees in this accordion class movement (which is obviously of some size) a chance for impoverished music teachers to take up a new line, with any hope of success—that is, as to leading pupils to play good music? I noticed one of your correspondents spoke of the Rhythm Clubs (so-called) having somewhere about four thousand members. I see that there is now an encyclopædia of dance records and band members; and it is significantly remarked, in another journal, that the Rhythm Clubs are more numerous even than the older gramophone societies: from my own observations, I should say they are very much more numerous. Not all of the already established gramophone societies devote themselves entirely to serious music, but I gather that a good deal of their time is, or used to be, given to that. I also notice that Mr. Forbes Milne, from his valuable experience as a public school music master, recently raised, in the *Music Teacher*, the problem of boys who have taken to jazz. I wonder what writers on Appreciation can suggest about this? The largest and latest of such books, Mr. Milne tells us, says nothing. The entry of rubbish into even the broadcast Children's Hour has been noted by your wireless correspondent. What can we do? The old idea appeared to be that if we left the bad alone, and pushed the good, all would be well. I was talking to a gentleman (not a musician) who inspects evening classes for the Board of Education, and he strongly objected to a teacher dealing with anything but good music (he drew an analogy with literature classes). Yet here we are, after all these years of Appreciation, apparently faced with an enormous deterioration in the taste of an overwhelming mass of people. Is it as bad as that, or is it not? Some leaders seem to think not. Is the present position in any way the result of that old policy of ignoring bad music? Or is it never any good to oppose it? Have music masters anything to tell us about their experiences? I fear that attempts to speak or write against dance music will only antagonise people to our serious music. The temper of the public to-day seems to be strengthening against any interference with its amusements, and the commercial world (as regards numbers) is infinitely more against than for us. Would it not be a good thing if the I.S.M. made this urgent subject a matter for its next Conference? Yours, &c.

WAYFARER.

### B natural and C sharp

SIR,—In Dr. Borland's article in your issue for May he states that it is wrong to suppose that B natural is a sharper note than C flat according to just intonation. Has he not made a slip here? Tuning by fifths the frequency of B<sup>1</sup> is equal to  $522 \times .9492$  (i.e.,  $\frac{522}{23} \times \frac{35}{25}$ ) and that of C<sup>11</sup> flat equals  $522 \times .9364$  (i.e.,  $522 \times \frac{27}{37} \times 24$ ).

Surely the best system of tuning is equal temperament combined with a mild discrimination between B natural and C flat, G sharp and A flat, and so on. This is the practice of string quartet players. Keyboard performers are at a decided disadvantage, for a progression such as that in the third bar of Brahms's *Intermezzo*, Op. 116, No. 6 (where an E natural and E sharp are sounded together), can never sound satisfactory in an equal tempered system.—Yours, &c.,

JOHN CLAPHAM.

Letchworth.