

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

Perspective gained by this study on the compiling of a syllabus clearly indicates that this is an ongoing process, one which must adapt itself to the socio-economic character of – and the cultural milieu surrounding – the service bands of the country concerned.

While it would be unrealistic to expect an immediate enhancement of musical standards to the level of those of the United Kingdom or the USA, observers within the IDMAC bands and in the private sector have noted a groundswell of heightened musical awareness among South African band musicians in the past five years. This is the first tangible dividend paid by the new syllabus. Indistinct areas have been clarified and band members – many of them previously disadvantaged – have gained a fresh insight into the standards of instrumental performance that are taken almost for granted in the developed world. It is quite possible that, for the first time in their chosen career, the majority of the members of South African service bands see a clear path towards the personal attainment of those standards.

In keeping with the policy of South Africa's new constitution, maximum transparency is a management goal; there is little room for ambiguity. As De Wachter (1995c: 23) and others have put it, "cultural diversity" is a catchphrase in the New South Africa. "However, the process of development is akin to the nurturing of children – time-consuming and requiring specific competencies on the part of the leader/parent". Further development of band members' skills – itself a "specific competency" – is urgently required, not merely to meet the exigencies of the new syllabus, but simply to bring the performers up to the consistent level of competency for which they are

currently being remunerated. Clearly, one cannot "confer" culture; even less creativity. One *can*, however, promote, encourage and train, while inculcating an awareness of the musical standards that obtain in the First World.

7.2 Response to the first sub-question

The first sub-question was:

What factors need to be taken into account in order to ensure that *Syllabus 2000* remains a relevant and "living" document?

(discussed in Chapter 3).

In Chapter 3 of this thesis the writer endeavours to make it clear that the philosophy of the syllabus team was not to impose but to *share* their knowledge of repertoire, style and pedagogy with all their colleagues who were willing to make the effort to acquire the improved skills being offered them, and who were eager to embrace the new paradigm. The compilers' approach was not only to disseminate and share the knowledge personally and jointly attained, but to adopt and maintain an attitude of encouragement among fellow instrumentalists. The practice of inviting well-argued input from band members is an on-going part of that encouragement; this, it may be argued, is the productive side of democracy.

Designing a repertoire for each instrument of the concert band that would not only stand comparison with international norms, but satisfy the widest possible tastes of the service band musicians themselves, was the major challenge. The success of this was limited by the lack of published material outside the core syllabi of Western Art Music, thus it was deemed that *Syllabus 2000* should be subject to ongoing additions and modifications in order to be – and to be perceived to be – a "living document" in that respect.

7.3 Response to the second sub-question

The second sub-question was:

To what extent do previous IDMAC evaluation systems need to be taken into account in order to develop an improved [evaluation system]?

(discussed in Chapter 4).

The answer to this was found to lie in making a choice of which individual items in the repertoire were to be retained, and which to phase out. The previous evaluation process *per se* was not carried over in an indiscriminate manner into the new syllabus, as parts of it were judged to be flawed in terms of balance and repertoire.

Consequently, approximately 25% of the band extracts were retained, and a slightly smaller percentage of the accompanied works. Omissions (rather than inclusions) inherent in the previous evaluation systems acted as a *caveat*: technical work in the form of scales and arpeggios had been absent, aural tests were inadequate and sight-reading tests inconsistent. The accompanied works from which the candidate could choose were in many cases deemed to be unsatisfactory in musical content as well as in technical demands. A major omission was the absence of discrete repertoire lists for the "secondary" woodwind and brass instruments, as has been discussed.

7.4 Response to the third sub-question

The third sub-question was the enquiry:

To what degree do the qualities and characteristics of the instrumental groups within the symphonic and concert band need to be reviewed in the process of compiling adequate and representative repertoires for all instruments?

(discussed in Chapter 5).

It was in this area that the major amount of research into repertoire had to take place. The existence and usage of the "secondary" wind instruments referred to in 7.3 had by 1998 become an established reality – which had not been the case when the previous syllabuses had been compiled – and these ancillary instruments urgently needed to find accommodation within the official SANDF and SAPS evaluation systems.

A number of published transcriptions was incorporated into the repertoire lists, along with whatever original compositions could be accessed *via* the publishers' catalogues. Supplementing a number of the lists for "secondary" instruments are the writer's original compositions (Appendix B).

7.5 Response to the fourth sub-question

The fourth sub-question was:

What procedures need to be followed in order to arrive at a clear understanding of the desired outcomes at each level?

(discussed in Chapter 6).

The various teams and panels engaged in the establishment of unit standards in music for SAQA remain engaged in the process, and finality has not yet been reached in certain post-secondary areas. The paradigm of most subjects being "outcomes-based" is the dominant one in South African education in the new millennium, and this accords with the pragmatic view that a service band musician must be able to demonstrate practical skills at a pre-determined level of musical competency.

Said competencies at the various levels that currently obtain in South African service bands have been delineated in detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis. It is expected that, once the present collaboration with Trinity College, London, has been formalised, NQF levels can be appended to the five practical levels of musicianship, as well as to those of Group Leader, Bandmaster, Assistant Director of Music, Director of Music, and Senior Director of Music levels within the IDMAC structure. Finality has not yet been reached concerning the equivalency of these practical levels.

7.6 Response to the main research question

The principal research question addressed in this thesis was:

What components need to be included, and what specific areas need to be emphasised in the design and development of an instrumental music syllabus that will reflect the desired performance standards of South Africa's professional service bands, taking the varied backgrounds of service band musicians into consideration?

Empirical research has revealed that virtually all areas of performance need to be emphasised; it was precisely the over-emphasis of the prepared, accompanied work at the expense of the other components of the evaluation that led to dissatisfaction with, and the phasing out of, the old syllabus as a balanced means of musical assessment.

A reality that has presented itself to the management teams of the various IDMAC-regulated service bands is that the current framework and design of the new syllabus provides improved opportunities for self-advancement through the musical ranks. This has been achieved through clarity, explicitness, transparency and the individual choices presented to candidates, details of which have been documented in the various chapters of this thesis.

By the same token, it is realised by bandmasters and Directors of Music that areas most in need of remedial work are the supportive ones of technical work, aural training and sight-reading. This has to be done if the varied socio-economic factors of the past are to be adequately dealt with in terms of filling the gaps in musical training.

The writer finds that the combination of job-related band extracts, a well-chosen repertoire list for prepared works, plus realistic demands in the areas of scales, arpeggios, sight-reading tests and aural tests, combine in the new syllabus to address the shortcomings of previous syllabuses in a balanced and effective manner. *Syllabus 2000* is felt by those concerned to be palpably more successful than its predecessors as a means of remedying the aforementioned gaps in musical competency that are still exhibited by members of the less well-trained bands. In addition, the system is flexible enough to allow modifications and improvements in any area, should this be considered desirable by IDMAC.

The new syllabus can be credited with generating a healthy spirit of competition among the majority of band members, regardless of socio-economic background. The assurance that they will be evaluated as a result of their own individual efforts – musically, impartially, free from internal agendas and band "politics" – is proving to be a powerful motivating factor. It has become apparent over the past two years that this observable spirit of competition also exists between bands within the same arm of service. The National Police Bands competition organised by the Police Musicians' Association (POLMUSCA) realised higher musical standards in 2002 and 2003 than at any previous competitions in its history. The Army Bands and Choirs competition, held in November 2003 – at which this writer was an adjudicator – revealed a standard of ensemble playing by the two winning bands that might justifiably have been mistaken for the efforts of a British or American band.

The standards set by *Syllabus 2000* have arguably made service bands a more attractive option to the qualified professional. A new development within the South African music profession over the past five years is that, with the demise of the majority of the country's symphony orchestras, the IDMAC bands have conjointly become the largest employer of professional musicians in South Africa. A corollary is that prospective candidates for band membership who may previously have been members of a symphony orchestra, but who may not have previously considered a career in a service band, are now reconsidering the situation (E Malan 2003).

7.7 Value of the study to bands within and outside South Africa

The value of this study to IDMAC-regulated bands is explicit, and is already being felt. The writer remains a member of that committee, and there is a mutual exchange of information at each quarterly meeting.

The training component that is now a regular part of band members' dispensation has attracted attention from similar institutions in neighbouring states. Beginning with tentative enquiries in the aftermath of the national bands symposium in 1998, approaches have been made to the SANDF by other Southern African states – chiefly countries that are members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for assistance in the training of bandsmen and bandmasters. Training of members of the Botswana and the Namibian defence force bands is currently being carried out by the Western Province Command Band in Cape Town, under Capt Chris Nichols.

As mentioned, in-house training is being employed in addressing the needs of South African band members who have not had the benefit of a formal education in music. Members of the National Ceremonial Guard Band are currently being trained in Pretoria by the writer in collaboration with Col

Roger Buczynski. This encompasses one-on-one instrumental tuition and group aural training classes.

The writer believes it to be worthy of comment that the abovementioned neighbouring countries - with a shorter history of colonialism than our own - are favourably disposed to spending a measurable portion of their defence budget on the training of service band musicians. Even the most cynical observer must view this as an encouraging development, and a validation of the standards professed in *Syllabus 2000*.

7.8 Recommendations arising from this study

Three specific recommendations have arisen from the present research:

7.8.1 Explicit recommendations regarding marching band instrumentation

Traditions die hard, but it is the writer's observation over 50 years of direct and indirect involvement with service bands that certain facets of traditional instrumentation is less than ideal "on the march". The pertinent observation is made that significant improvements in the areas of tonal balance, intonation and even deployment of musical personnel could be effected through the implementation - fully or partially - of the alternative marching band instrumentation suggested by this writer in Chapter 5.2.7, and which are delineated here. The writer has reached the conclusion - through knowledge of the instruments available - that the following substitutions are guaranteed to result in a superior blend and body of sound from any fairly standard-sized military or civilian marching band. The Bandmaster/Director of Music should endeavour to:

- Ensure that there is a sufficient number of clarinets on the lower (harmony) parts, to effectively balance the Solo and the Ripieno clarinet voices;

- Employ a soprano saxophone to reinforce the Ripieno *or* 2nd clarinet parts where appropriate; the soprano saxophone is also effective on (transposed) oboe parts;
- Double the bassoon parts with bass clarinets reading bass clef bassoon parts (this was common practice in Britain during the first quarter of the 20th century, and many bass clef, concert pitch parts from that era are labelled "1st Bassoon or Bass Clarinet", or "2nd Bassoon or Bass Clarinet"). The latter is in any event more tractable on the march, being a single-reed instrument, with a relatively large mouthpiece;
- Employ a baritone saxophone and/or a E^{bb} contra-alto clarinet to add a true bass reed voice to the tuba parts (the contra-alto clarinet is comparatively light to carry, and a player will have no difficulty in reading parts in the bass clef);
- Use cornets in place of trumpets throughout, reserving trumpets for specialised, characteristically "martial" fanfares only (this suggestion is likely to meet with resistance from trumpet devotees, but the massed *timbre* of cornets in this context will certainly pay musical dividends);
- Reinforce the third cornet part with the use of at least one flügelhorn, preferably a 4-valved model for improved low-register intonation;
- Use 4-valved, rotary Eb (alto) horns* throughout, in place of French horns (band parts nearly always include parts for Horns in Eb); alternatively, use alto horns in the key of F;
- Use at least one Eb alto clarinet to reinforce and add texture to the Eb horn parts;
- Use medium-large (13,34mm) or symphony-bore (13,9mm) Bb/F tenor trombones, rather than small or medium-bore (12,9mm) instruments, for a more musical projection out-of-doors, better physical balance, and to obviate the use of 6th and 7th slide positions on the march;
- Use a full-bore (14,3mm) Bb/F (single valve) bass trombone on the march (with the double-valve Bb/F/D instrument being reserved for indoor use);

* This is the oval, German-type Eb horn, resembling a smaller version of the Wagner tuba.

- Use 4-valve euphoniums to minimise intonation problems and to increase range; consider also the German-type oval instruments with rotary valves, which are available in gold-brass;
- Substitute 4-valve brass helicons for upright tubas or BBb Sousaphones, perhaps retaining *one* 4-valve EEb tuba, and/or *one* 4-valve rotary *brass* Sousaphone (rather than fibreglass Sousaphones, which simply do not have the desired sonority).

As a result of perusing the relevant catalogues of two major discount exporters,* the writer has ascertained that this would not prove to be a particularly expensive exercise when the time came for the re-equipping of bands, or for the replacement of certain instrumental sections. Naturally, these recommendations apply to marching bands only; the concert band has its own rather different set of specifications and requirements. The modifications recommended here are not radical, but essentially *practical*. Even if carried out only in part, they will have a markedly beneficial effect on a band's sonority and carrying power in the concert hall or out-of-doors.

In the case of the low clarinets, Anthony Baines is of the opinion that a wind ensemble can benefit from what he terms "the strange purring quality" of the bass, contra-alto and contrabass clarinets (Baines 1992: 24). It is the writer's experience that the low clarinets are audibly more effective – and physically more tractable – on the march than the double-reed instruments, and their incorporation into the "standard" band instrumentation is strongly recommended.

7.8.2 *The standardisation of note value terminology*

A strong recommendation – one that has been proposed in IDMAC meetings – is the standardising of note values nomenclature. With the sole exception of parts of the UK, Southern Africa and other ex-colonial countries, the rest of

* *The Woodwind and Brasswind* (South Bend, Indiana, USA) and *Muncie Winds* (Boone, North Carolina, USA).

the English-speaking world today quite logically refers to eighth, quarter, half and whole notes. Afrikaans-speakers likewise refer to *agste-*, *kwart-*, *half- en heelnote*. The quaint Victorian terminology of breves to hemi-demi-semiquavers has long since served its purpose, and now deserves to be relegated to the musical archives where – in the 21st century – it belongs. Dr William Lovelock (1954: 24) describes an analogous situation that existed in the 1950s regarding the terminology used in describing Rondo-Sonata form:

Alternative names are Sonata-Rondo, Grand Rondo, Modern Rondo or New Rondo. The two final names afford a singular example of the snail-like quality sometimes achieved by the academic mind. "Modern" or "New" Rondo is only rather more than 150 years old!

Certainly, using the modern "mathematical" terminology for note-values would be of tangible help to candidates whose mother tongue is not English. It is significant that the Associated Board is attempting to standardise this terminology in its Jazz Syllabus (ABRSM 2003: 6/7), ostensibly because of the North American origins of that particular art form.

7.8.3 *Future equivalency between examining bodies*

Looking ahead on the evaluation front, most of the South African parties involved in training and examining would consider it an ideal situation were it possible to achieve close on 100% equivalency between certain practical music examinations of IDMAC, Trinity College, London, the Tshwane University of Technology's School of Music, the University of Pretoria's Department of Music, and the University of the Witwatersrand. Certainly, attempts to bring about equivalency in specific areas are continuing. These specific bodies have indicated the possibility of introducing courses and/or modules connected with the training of service band members at an undetermined time in the future. The possibility of the music departments of

other South African tertiary institutions becoming involved in similar developments has by no means been ruled out.

Future equivalency is not mere wishful thinking. In spite of a number of identified differences in syllabus content, the first tangible step in this becoming a reality was reached in August 2004, when IDMAC entered into an agreement with Trinity College, London, to jointly examine band candidates for the Principal Musician level with the ATCL (Recital) syllabus. The desirability of this development speaks for itself in terms of service band standards.

The next step envisaged is to examine Chief Musician candidates with a slightly revised LTCL, one which contains a mentoring component or module, the precise details of which are currently being ratified by Trinity. Should this exercise prove viable, a similar dispensation is to be extended "downwards" to accommodate the Senior Musician examination at approximately a Grade VIII level, and the Musician examination at approximately a Grade VI level.

Alternatively, should a consensus of opinion within IDMAC conclude that these levels are unrealistically high (considering local conditions), it has been recommended by the Committee that a slightly modified ATCL containing the mentoring component may be adopted as equivalent to the Chief Musician evaluation, with Principal Musician becoming a post-Grade VIII practical examination along the lines of a Recital Certificate. Senior Musician evaluation would then take place at the Grade VII (rather than VIII) level, as this was equivalent to matriculation music at the time of compilation. The Musician level would subsequently become the equivalent of a good Grade V practical examination, with Learner Musician remaining at the Grade III level. These readjustments would only take place in the event of the IDMAC evaluations finding full equivalency across the board with those of TCL.

Similarly, as a result of further research, the writer discovered that by adding a minimal number of alternative modules to the Tshwane University of Technology School of Music's current certificate, diploma and degree programmes, equivalency at virtually all levels of the IDMAC evaluations becomes a possibility. Naturally, this would entail course attendance by candidates. The writer is currently involved in ongoing negotiations with the Head of the TUT School of Music, Mr Marc Duby, and the senior training officer of the SA Police Bands, Snr Superintendent Jan Coetzer, with the aim of forging a viable equivalency between the first five IDMAC levels and the TUT School of Music's three certificates, diploma and BTech(Mus) degree. Once the necessary agreement in principle is reached, the initiative will be taken further and attention will be given to the Bandmaster and Director of Music evaluations, at the MTech and DTech levels, once these post-graduate degrees become established at the TUT. The writer is engaged in designing the structure of said degrees in collaboration with the TUT's research professor, Prof. Allan Munro, and Mr Marc Duby.

Whatever agreements are ultimately reached between IDMAC and other examining bodies, these will lend further clarity to the very practical question of outcomes, as cited in the third sub-question.

7.9 Suggestions for further research

The writer sees this study as paving the way for future syllabus design – conceivably in collaboration with other examining bodies – in respect of the specialised requirements of the service bands of Southern Africa. The new syllabus arose as the result of a specific need, and the circumstances and mechanisms leading to the compilation thereof – as well as the results of the first five years of implementation – have been documented in this study, with a view to making that information available to those undertaking (or even contemplating) a similar exercise within the foreseeable future.

A constructive suggestion that has been advanced in Pretoria academic circles is that "The initial MEUSSA team members should remain active as critical friends to an ongoing MEUSSA team, even after they have completed their theses" (Grové 2001). There is every indication that this is in fact taking place, in spite of the contrasting personalities and the ongoing challenges involved in ultimately completing the writing of the SAQA unit standards, a task that is by no means complete.

7.10 Conclusions and final observations

While it is not possible to prognosticate with any real degree of accuracy the events that may lie ahead, it does appear that the reality and desirability of the continued existence of service bands has been accepted and endorsed by all significant role players in "The New South Africa". In short, the future of service bands in the traditional sense is secure. A strict proviso, however, is the continuing necessity of catering for the broader spectrum of public audiences. Clare Stevens (2002: 10), deputy editor of the London publication *Classical Music*, underscores the nature of the new *status quo* when she writes: "Jazz ensembles, blues bands and pop groups also have their place in the modern spectrum of military music." Indeed, Raoul Camus (2001: 689) consolidates this viewpoint by pointing out that in Canada "every military band is required to function as a concert as well as a marching band, and to provide small jazz, rock and popular combos for social occasions" (emphasis added).

Maintaining this versatility is not a problem in South Africa, as a very real enthusiasm for – and awareness of – the jazz idiom and the "showbiz" repertoire is shared by the Bandmasters and Directors of Music of all bands operating under the aegis of IDMAC. The stage is being reached where all the senior service bands in the country encompass within their ranks a jazz, rock or "pop" group, usually comprised of performers from the concert or marching bands who effectively double on the instruments required. The

introduction of the RockSchool examinations – conducted by TCL – in South Africa in 2005 presents an additional vehicle for examination and evaluation purposes.

Initial fears of the cultural pendulum swinging in a retrogressive direction since the first fully democratic elections of 1994 have proved to be ill-founded, partially as a result of this more wide-reaching – some might say "populist" – musical approach. While isolated opinions have been aired alleging that service bands represent "a relic from Colonial times", as well as the tediously predictable accusations of Eurocentricity, these negative pronouncements are more the rhetoric of white "neo-liberals" than any cultural protestations from the indigenous peoples themselves. In fact, the future of the service band appears as secure as any other institution. The retired Director of the South African Naval Band, Commander Ron Marlow (2000), wrote "Nothing projects a good image quite like a good Band [...]. Our military bands reflect who and what we are."

The present writer had cause to endorse that view in a magazine article during the same period:

They (our service bands) are the image projectors of our national *status quo*, national pride, and a good deal of our tradition ... They are an indelible part of our musical heritage (Galloway 2000: 7).

While "the process of doing research at this level should be seen as continuously enriching and maturing" to the post-graduate student (Lebakeng 2000: 2), the writer is left with the realisation that the nature of compiling a viable syllabus is an absolutely unremitting one.

Having witnessed and been personally involved in the IDMAC exercise from its outset, and having documented the process in this thesis, the writer ventures the opinion that the IDMAC team has indeed succeeded in its

appointed task. Said task was to create a syllabus encompassing the desirable qualities of being "conservative in its concern for preserving the artistic integrity of musical traditions, yet liberal insofar as it goes beyond particular cultural preferences to confront larger musical ideas, processes and problems" (Elliott 1998: 2). And in documenting it, the writer has likewise striven to maintain the sometimes difficult "balance between originality and conformity in the technical" aspect of this work (Lebakeng 2000: 2).

A further conclusion reached by the writer and his colleagues in the wind band profession, is that a meaningful improvement in service bands' practical musical standards throughout the country has been initiated, to varying degrees, by the implementation of *Syllabus 2000*. Coupled to this can be sensed a commensurate boost in morale among the clear majority of South African band members, right across the sociological spectrum; the feeling of isolation from the management process that was typical of the "old regime" has given way to two-way communication, in the form of feedback and negotiation, with the new. Accessibility to practical global standards has likewise been improved. As Janet Wolff put it (1990: 203), "the idea of Art as a protected realm is, and always has been, a myth".

Drawing an analogy with the inner workings of a musical ensemble, the conclusion can be made that in an exercise of this nature, individual talent and creativity have combined in a united executive body to reach the agreed objective. Said objective, of course, being the evolution and realisation of an equitable system of musical evaluation for South African service bands.