

In Search of the Wind-Band: An International Expedition By Daniel Rager
EXCERPT CHAPTER 16

In Search of the Wind-Band: An International Expedition

By Daniel Rager



In Search of the Wind-Band: An International Expedition is a new interactive E-book, exploring 16 countries. The first-of-a-kind, interactive encyclopedic e-book uses text, video, mp3 and pdf files to bring the history and development of the wind-band to life.

The following pages contain a sample of
Chapter 16:
Argentina Wind Music

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In Search of the Wind-band

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Wind-band Music
12722 Bass Lake Rd.
Chardon, OH 44024
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In Search of the Wind-band

Catalog # WB – 1004 \$49.95



CHAPTER 16: Argentina Wind Music

Argentina is the second most populous country in South America, containing forty one million people. It covers roughly 3,800,000 square kilometers and borders the Atlantic Ocean. The economic and educational district is located in Buenos Aires, the capital.

First settled in the 16th century by the Spanish, other European countries gradually migrated into the region over the next three centuries, making Argentina the melting pot of South America. For this reason, Argentina's music reflects a wealth of indigenous folk music as well as European influences.

The first wind-bands were military bands during the Spanish colonial period of the 18th century. The instrumentation reflected the typical Spanish regimental bands of Europe which included: fifes and trumpets, horns, drums (atambores), and timpani (atabales). During the English invasion of 1806-07, military bands became quite popular. Through this encounter, instrumentation became augmented with the introduction of new English instruments such as the trombone, basshorn and serpent. According to Rubén Flores Garcia, windorchestra and choral conductor of the Music Conservatory of Gilardo Gilardi, when the British troops surrendered in 1807, the military band musicians of the 71st Regiment of Highlanders were taken as prisoners. Seven of these musicians were sent to the city of Mendoza, where they performed and taught music to local students.

Occasionally, these groups were augmented into a marching band known as "banda lisa" for festivals, holidays and other events. Instrumentation was increased to include eleven drums and three fifes.

During the wars of independence between 1810 - 1821, many wind-bands were created, and purchased new instruments that were developed in Europe. This resulted in making Argentinean band instrumentation similar to the European model.

Wind-band instrumentation changed again in 1854, based on the Adolph Sax system. Originally introduced into French Army bands, Argentine bands replaced their old instruments with Sax's new and improved designs. This included the new piston cornet and wooden keyed clarinet. Much has been written on the development of instruments that Antoine Joseph Sax made for the wind-band and orchestra. His instrument inventions and improvements to existing instruments were recognized globally and used by many bands by the mid-19th century. To reflect on his contributions to the wind-band genre is far beyond the scope of this book. There is a wealth of information contained in the volumes of books, papers and critical analysis that can easily be found in any library or following a brief electronic search.

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Types of Bands

There are a variety of wind-band types that cover the full spectrum of services and musical qualities. The larger communities have professional bands of 40 - 70 members, but in smaller rural communities where financial and educational resources are lacking, the wind-band may have only 15 - 20 musicians. When this occurs, instrumentation is frequently incomplete.

All military bands in Argentina are considered professional and their members are soldiers, and thus, employees of the government. Their ages range from 18 - 50 and musicians can retire after 30 - 35 years of service.

Musicians in the Army, Navy and Air Force are considered soldiers, so they must perform military duties once a week. There are some exceptions in a couple of symphony bands, which are considered "elite" groups with the best musicians. They don't perform or march at parades nor perform military tasks. Their roles are to give only concert performances or shows. For example, the Gendarmerie (Territorial Army) has a quality symphonic band which performs only at concert events, not parades. The Navy has an Orchestra with strings and a Big Band, covering a variety of musical styles for performances and dances.

Another type of band is the Police Band. These groups are considered professional, since they are paid by the Federal and Provincial branches of the government. Their role is to play parades and concerts in and around the town they serve. The "Federal Police Band" in Buenos Aires City has a symphonic orchestra, with strings, winds and percussion. It performs at many events throughout the city, including parades.

Traditionally, members of military bands begin as volunteers who study in music schools of the Army. When finished, they are promoted and posted in different military bases. Because these musicians come to learn as volunteers and have limited experience, the quality of bands in which they play varies. The military's purpose often finds it more important to quickly learn marches and military rules as opposed to providing quality performances.

The situation is different with Police Bands. These groups are generally comprised of students coming from conservatories or music schools looking for employment, so the quality level of the performer and band is better.

Military Bands in Argentina include:

- 13) Ejercito (Army)
- 4) Marina (Navy)
- 3) Fuerza Aerea (Airforce)
- 4) Gendarmeria (Territorial Army Bands)
- 2) Prefectura (Coastguard bands)
- Policia de la Provincia de Buenos Aires
- Policia Federal (Federal Police Bands)
- Servicio Penitenciario Provincial (Penitentiary Prov. Service Band)
- Servicio Penitenciario Federal (Penitentiary Fed. Service Band)

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Within these various groups we find different homogeneous bands that are organized into four types of instrumentation categories which varies depending upon the band's function.

4 Types of Homogeneous Wind-bands

Symphonic and Concert Bands

- 1) Typically large, averaging 76 - *110 members
 Function: Perform public symphonic concerts only
 (*Army symphonic band has 110 members)
- 2) Parade and Concert Bands (A) Typically medium size ensembles, averaging 40 - 70 members
 Function: March in parades and perform public concerts
- 3) Parade and Concert Bands (B) Typically small size ensembles, averaging 25 - 40 members
 Function: March in parades and perform public concerts
 (similar to No. 2 (A), member size is determined upon the activity)
- 4) Fanfares (Cavalry Corps, brass and timpani only) Typically medium size ensembles, averaging 40 members
 Function: March in parades, perform public concerts and Taptoe events (eight drums replace timpani when marching)

Military Wind-Band Homogeneous Type & Instrumentation Quantity

Homogeneous Type	1	2	3	4
Instruments	Quantity			
C Piccolo	1	-	-	-
C Flute	2	1	-	-
Oboes	2	-	-	-
English Horn	1	-	-	-
Bassoon	1	-	-	-
E Clarinet	1	1	1	-
B Clarinet	12	8	6	-

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E	Contralto Clarinet	2	-	-	-
B	Bass Clarinet	1	1	-	-
B	Soprano Sax	1	1	-	-
E	Alto Sax	2	1	-	-
B	Tenor Sax	1	1	1	-
E	Baritone Sax	1	1	1	-
F	Horn	4	2	-	-
B	Trumpet	3	3	2	6
B	Bass Trumpet	1	-	-	-
	Tenor trombone	3	2	2	3
	Bass Trombone	1	1	-	1
E	Flugelhorn Picc.	1	1	1	2
B	Sop. Flugelhorn	2	2	2	5
E	Altohorn	2	-	-	3
B	Tenorhorn	1	1	-	1
B	Baritone	3	2	2	2
B	Euphonium	2	1	-	2
F	Tuba	1	-	-	1
E	Tuba	1	1	1	1
BB	Tuba	2	2	1	2
	Glockenspiel	1	-	-	-

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Timpani	1	-	-	3
Snare Drum	1	1	1	-
Percussion	1	-	-	-
Bass Drum	1	1	1	-

Non-Military Wind-band

There are two prominent professional bands in Buenos Aires that have long-standing traditions. The first, mentioned earlier, has one of the largest memberships. “The Banda Sinfonica Municipal de Buenos Aires” has approximately 97 members. The other is “The Banda Nacional de Ciegos” (Blind National Band). The origins of this band date back to 1939. Pascual Grisolia, with the collaboration of Vicente O.Greco and Raul Torres began courses at the “School of Wind Instruments for the Blind” with initially ten students. The first public performance, on October 15, 1947, marked the debut of the first and only blind Symphonic Band in the world. Today, the ensemble consists of 58 musicians that perform educational concerts at primary schools for children as well as many public performances throughout Buenos Aires. The band has many accolades including a performance for Diana, the Princess of Wales, and has been invited to perform internationally. The group also received “La Banda” prize award from (UNESCO CAMU) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for its work. Argentina has a second musical group, the “Coro Polifónico de Ciegos” (Choir for the blind) that performs throughout the region in the same manner as “The Banda Nacional de Ciegos”.



National Blind Band

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Music Education

The region of Argentina has eighteen public conservatories located in the main cities of the Province and one Popular Music School. All are dependent on the Ministry of Education. In Buenos Aires, there are three important schools. The Conservatorio Nacional, Conservatorio Municipal and the University of Buenos Aires. All offer courses in instrument performance, theory, vocal and music education.

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The Nacional University of La Plata (Universidad Nacional de La Plata) is different containing a faculty of fine arts offering courses in conducting, chamber music and music education. Other provincial communities in rural areas have their own schools of music, but have limited resources and private instruction is done by retired military musicians. The Armed Forces offer opportunities for musicians and conductors beginning at the age of 18.

A fourth and important education center is the Conservatory of Music Gilardo Gilardi of the city of La Plata. Created in 1948, the school was the first in the Province of Buenos Aires under the direction of the General Culture of Education. The school was the first to have designed specific courses such as piano, singing, guitar, organ, music education, conducting, jazz, orchestra and wind ensemble. According to Rubén Flores Garcia, symphony and wind/orchestra conductor, once a student is accepted into the conservatory, his/her education is free, regardless of race or nationality. There is no fee to attend the school.

Students actively participate in an array of ensembles including choirs, chamber ensembles, symphony orchestra, string orchestra and wind ensemble.

This diversity and melding of cultural and musical styles is evident in Flores-Garcia's wind ensemble performances. The three video samples below reflect an array of styles from operatic selections with massed choirs and wind-band accompaniment to trombone concertos, as well as standard wind-band repertory. (Note, the video quality varies)

The first example is the Slaves' Chorus (Va Pensiero) from "Nabucco" by G. Verdi, arranged by Flores-Garcia. The large chorus is a combination of students, community choirs and professional singers from local conservatories. Choir members are all volunteers and are not paid to perform on these special concerts.



View other instrumentation, videos, music and mp3



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END OF CHAPTER 16 SAMPLE

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