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The Distin Family and its Influence on the Development of the Brass Band Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain

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Chapter 7

The Distins as arrangers, composers and publishers.

Introduction

The success of any performing group is linked to *what* they play, as well as *how* they play it and the successful brass bands, in nineteenth-century Britain, were those who considered their repertory carefully and performed it well. Each band built its own library of arrangements which suited their particular function and in this respect bands were similar to the Distins. Having previously examined the Distin Family repertory in Chapter 4, this chapter explains in some detail, the skills needed for successful arranging for brass and aims to show how arranging influenced and affected the preferences of nineteenth-century brass bands. This chapter also examines the effects of the Distins, as composers and publishers on brass band development, as arbiters of taste and style, and also on instrumental standardization.

The repertories of the Distin Family brass ensemble and nineteenth-century British brass bands reveal many similarities (see Chapter 4) even though brass bands generally had a wider repertory, which included operatic extracts, popular songs, hymns, marches and dance music. The repertory of brass bands at that time was far wider, in fact, than other contemporary music organisations. At the beginning of the nineteenth century most amateur bands played from memory or improvised¹ but gradually they became more organised and more literate but the function of a community brass band was different from that of the Distin Family brass group, who mostly performed indoors to a paying audience. However, when more serious music opportunities came, such as competitions, brass bands followed the same musical direction as that of the Distins.

The Distin Family repertory contained mostly extracts from the well-known operas of the day, especially Italian opera which was the most popular,² and indeed the preference of the middle and upper-class audiences to whom the Distins mostly performed. Reviews of Distin Family

¹ Newsome, Roy, *Brass Roots* (Aldershot: Ashgate 1998), p.70.

² Russell, Dave, *Popular Music in England 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.205.

concerts and various reports of brass band programmes in the nineteenth century, show that arrangements and transcriptions of opera music were common to both. Bands frequently relied on their conductors to make new arrangements which were tailor-made for their use, or they would seek help from professional military musicians of the day, and success in performance would be linked to the calibre of the arrangements, and so the successful bands appreciated the value of good quality arranging. Some groups went to great lengths to procure the services of experts, for example the Cyfarthfa Band, which brought over from France George D'Artney, a brilliant French musician, to be a resident arranger. Early brass bands each had their own unique library and repertory but gradually, with the aid of publishing, they became more standardised in their instrumentation and an amateur band institution became established, but while there were some compositions for brass bands, such as James Melling's *Orynthia*, Enderby Jackson's *Yorkshire Waltzes*³ and Joseph Parry's *Tydfil Overture*, nothing of stature was written until the twentieth century.

Distin Arrangements

Because music arranging was common to both brass bands and the Distin Family brass ensemble, a detailed examination is made at this point into the challenges of arranging for the Distins.

Even before the Distin Family started its career, John Distin had accumulated a wealth of experience as a freelance performer and as a military musician, and it is reasonable to assume that part of his training in the military was in the theory and practice of writing music; but even without formal training in the basics of harmony, transposition, rudiments, music notation, etc., he would have learnt a great deal as a practising, professional player working alongside some of the finest musicians in the country. The challenges he faced as an arranger for the Distin Family brass ensemble started as early as 1831 for its first public performance at The Adelphi Theatre, Edinburgh where two of his sons performed French horn duets which, though simple horn duets, would need to be specially written, albeit in some straight forward manner. The boys may have played from

³ The only surviving printed source is a piano arrangement in the British Library, however, Enderby Jackson states in A

memory at first, but a few years later they performed, probably from manuscript parts, a divertissement from Rossini's *Il Turco in Italia* and a concerted piece from Rossini's *La Gaze Ladra* and these pieces must have been specifically arranged for them. Careful thought and preparation by John Distin must have been given to these arrangements for the performance to have been a success. Significantly, a published version of *La Gaze Ladra* for small brass band became available soon after. The arranging skills needed, even for the early performances of the Distin Family, must have been quite sophisticated. Two keyed bugles, two horns, and one trombone was the combination used at first, and reports of the day inform us that John Distin became quite skilful: 'The pieces which the Distins perform are of their own arrangement, and do credit to their musical skill'.⁴ With John Distin himself, playing one of the keyed bugles the melody line was secure, as long as the key was not uncommon and we know from dozens of reports that his technique and range was extremely good. His son Henry (aged 12 at the first public performance) also played a keyed bugle, but was a relative beginner, having only played for a few years and so his part needed to be fairly simple. While writing for two horns and one trombone might be considered uncomplicated, there were still matters such as register, range and technique to be considered and consequently writing successfully for the individual instruments and also the instruments in full scoring, still had its challenges.

The keyed bugle is a difficult instrument to master and therefore much consideration must have been given to the part writing. If the piece to be played is too difficult for a performer, even allowing for a modicum of individual practise, the arranger faces the possibility that his musicians, especially inexperienced and very young ones, will lose motivation to play and consequently a performance is doomed. Today's three-valved brass instruments are relatively easy to learn to play but the keyed bugle of 1830 is difficult in several respects; the poor balance of the instrument makes it difficult to hold, and the set of keys is difficult to master. John, however, knew the

Biography (Msc 1885) that he composed it for bands.

⁴ *The Illustrated London News*, 'The Distin Family' December 14th 1844, p. 384.

instrument well and could probably find simple, effective notes for Henry to play within his arrangements.

Following its British revival in the late eighteenth century, the trombone was generally used in bands as a bass instrument, as it was in the Distin Family. George Distin played the trombone (unusually pitched in D) before moving to the bass saxhorn in the group. During this period the *valve* trombone, not the slide trombone was most commonly used, so it is somewhat surprising that he played what was in effect an alto slide trombone. As a young man, the 6th and 7th slide positions of the alto trombone would have been easier to reach than those of the tenor trombone but even so, arranging for the group with an alto trombone as the bass instrument would have been problematic. However, it was probably John's decision for George to take up this instrument and he probably saw a pragmatic use for it, even though the lowest practical note would have been an Ab.

Writing for natural horns has presented problems for composers and arrangers over the years principally because of the lack of a complete range of chromatic notes. The instrument (without any hand-stopping) can only play notes in the harmonic series:

Harmonic Series

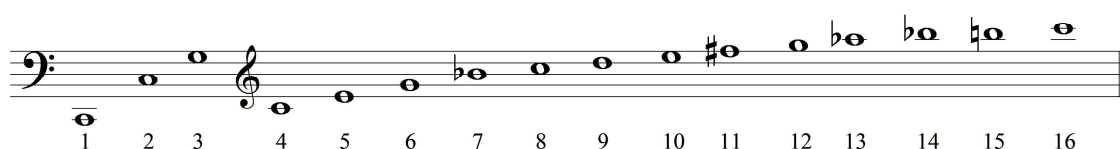


Figure 83: The harmonic series
Source: Illustration by the author

Therefore a horn with a fundamental note of F could only play the notes shown above transposed down a perfect 5th and even then only the middle register could be expected from a young and inexperienced player. The natural horn player does, however, have the facility of using crooks which lower the fundamental even further, in half-tone steps to low C, allowing the possibility of more notes. Pictures like the one below of the Distin brothers, Theodore and William, and their instruments (on the right) suggest, however, that they did not generally use crooks. John Distin's

slide trumpet was the same length as the boys' horns (around 12 feet) hence he would have had a good working knowledge of the pitch of the instruments.



Figure 84: Crooks for the natural horn. Theodore and William Distin's instruments
Sources: Hornmatter.com and picture belonging to the author

A further challenge for an arranger writing for natural horns is one of transposition and there are many instances in the horn repertory where mistakes have been made by composers and arrangers. Even today there are some ambiguities in early scores which provide a minefield of problems for professional horn players, conductors and musicologists. Weber's overture *Euryanthe*, for example, has horns pitched in A but the octave intended is not clear, and consequently performances vary in register.

Despite these obstacles John Distin began to build a repertory of pieces for his group and he had an important resource, that of his own band's library. The work of transcribing an existing selection or potpourri from the military band to a brass group is relatively straight forward especially if the set of parts contains a short score in concert pitch, and so John Distin probably worked from a piano score or a short score, selecting suitable extracts for his group. Of special significance are the Distin pieces also programmed by brass bands of the time, such as Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*, Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Gungl's *Cuckoo Galop*, Bellini's *Somnambula* and Offenbach's *La Grande Duchesse*. The arrangements for brass and wind bands would probably have been made from the published piano scores of the operas concerned. These piano reductions were generally available from publishers and John Distin's private military band

library in Taymouth would probably have contained operatic scores and arrangements freely available to him.

When the Distin Family brass ensemble's instrumentation changed, the arrangements would have needed reconstruction and possible alteration. This was the case in May 1843 when the combination of two cornets, two horns in F, and one trombone in D was used for the concert in Glasgow, where they performed an extract from Balfe's 'Siege of Rochelle'⁵. Henry Distin's cornet, judging from the picture below, was used with a crook.

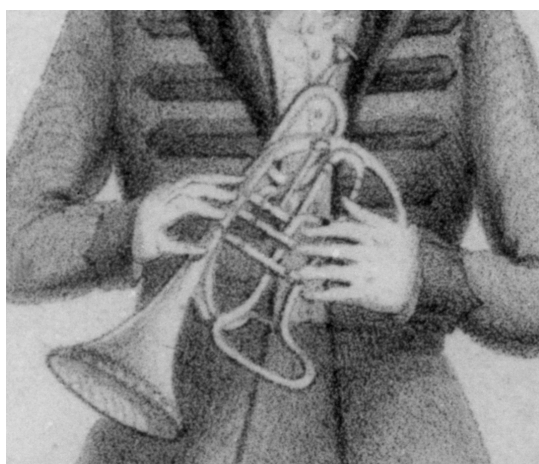


Figure 85: Cornet with crook used by Henry Distin in 1843
Source: Belonging to the author

Both cornets, in the group, were probably pitched in Bb (or possibly C) and the crook is probably an extension to G. This would mean that Henry had not only to learn a new set of fingering, but also to transpose his parts from the bugle in C, up a perfect 4th. While the G crook would have provided a darker tone quality, which was perhaps required, it is difficult to understand why Henry did not dispense with the crook and play the instrument in Bb, transposing the parts up a major 2nd. The parts written for the bugle in C would have fitted comfortably into the Bb cornet register. John Distin's parts lay in a higher tessitura and so he would probably have played the cornet in Bb transposing the existing bugle parts in C, up a major 2nd.

⁵ *The Musical World*, May 11th 1843.

Today there are sophisticated music notation software programmes available which have become invaluable to brass band arrangers, composers and publishers but in Distin's time, however, things were very different; parts had to be written out by hand in pen and ink and when mistakes were made the consequences could involve completely rewriting the material. Nevertheless, it is likely that the Distin boys re-wrote and transcribed their parts having changed their instruments. A bigger transformation came when the Distin Family brass ensemble took up saxhorns in 1844 where the pitch of the saxhorns demanded a restructure of their existing repertory for:

1. A soprano saxhorn in Eb, played by John Distin
2. A contralto saxhorn in Bb, played Henry John
3. A contralto saxhorn in Ab, played by William
4. An alto saxhorn (with four valves) in Eb, played by Theodore
5. A baritone saxhorn (with four valves) in Bb, played by George

John Distin's existing parts were probably in C and so he would have had to transpose the notes down a minor third. This is a fairly difficult task, especially at first reading, and so to avoid this problem, most players today would choose to crook their Eb instrument by a half tone to D and transpose down a major second. However, if John's parts had already been transposed for Bb cornet, then he would have transposed these Bb parts down a perfect fourth, which is a fairly easy task.

Henry was fortunate in that very little adjustment was needed in order to play his parts. Having played a Bb cornet, he would have easily adapted to a Bb saxhorn although a possible mouthpiece change may have been required. William, who had previously played parts for natural horn in F, had a much more difficult task as not only did he have to learn to play using valves (possibly for the first time) and adjust to a different pitch, he also had to transpose his F parts down a minor third (from Ab to F). His new contralto saxhorn, however, was probably a lot easier to pitch, being in another easier register and while there was probably a change of mouthpiece required the difference would be minimal. William also had to learn to play a valved instrument as his contralto saxhorn

was fitted with three Vienna double valves.⁶ Transposing his original F horn parts was relatively difficult (down a minor 3rd) unless the instrument was crooked to G, and this may have been the case.



Figure 86: Contralto saxhorn in Ab with a straight crook to G, used by William Distin in 1844
Source: extract from picture by Charles Baugniet. *Leader and Cock of New Bond Street*, 1846.

Examining the picture above showing William's contralto saxhorn, the tuning shank, near the mouthpiece, is extended further than one would expect for playing normally in Ab, but with such an extension, the pitch would have been lowered by a semi-tone to G. Therefore transposing would be much simpler: down a major 2nd.

Theodore had also previously played a horn pitched in F but he was given a four-valved alto saxhorn in Eb. This adaptation would have been an exciting prospect as these instruments have been, from the beginning, relatively easy to play and much easier to pitch than the French horn and in addition, there is minimal pressure and strain on the embouchure and physique. The instrument was built to be played by the Parisian horn and cornet player L. Dufrène⁷ and so Theodore probably used his own horn mouthpiece. Mouthpieces are extremely personal to a brass player and most

⁶ Scott, Jack, *The Evolution of the Brass Band and its Repertoire in Northern England* (Thesis submitted to University of Sheffield 1970).

⁷ While some records state that L. Dufrène was a Parisian horn player he was also known as a cornet player often performing for Musard, the renowned impresario. Dufrène also wrote exercise books for cornet in 1834: *Grande Méthode Raisonnée de Cornet-Trompette À Pistons* which was published by Gambaro and *Nouvelle Méthode Simplifiée Pour le Cornet à Pistons*, published by Baissières-Faber in Paris also in 1834.

players spend many years searching for the ideal one. Theodore's parts in F needed to be transposed up a major second for a saxhorn in Eb, a relatively easy skill to acquire.

George took up the Bb baritone saxhorn and probably used his own trombone mouthpiece which had similar dimensions. However, in most other respects, playing a new saxhorn would have been very different and the fingering of valves, pitching, and the general weight of the instrument may have caused some trepidation at first. The same problem exists today, in bands, where most aspirants, instinctively veer away from the heavy, troublesome bass instruments. For George, transposition may not have been an issue; he had probably been playing in the bass clef and would simply have to learn a set of fingerings aligned to his slide positions. The baritone saxhorn was capable of much lower notes than his previous instrument especially with the 4th valve, a facility he no doubt enjoyed. A fourth valve enables a player to perform notes from the lowest combination of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd valves (sounding a low E on a Bb saxhorn) down in semitone steps to the fundamental Bb and further low notes are possible. With this new additional low register, possibly more than an octave, the Distin Family brass ensemble now had a very different voice and so the group suddenly acquired a range and facility far greater than it had been previously. John, as the arranger for the group, had inherited a new and valuable resource.

Whatever the intricacies of adapting their repertory, the Distins would probably have taken the time needed to re-write their parts for their new instruments, once they had become accustomed to them. The first piece they performed on saxhorns in public, however, was newly written for them as the composer Giacomo Meyerbeer happened to be working in Paris during the Distin's visit in 1844, and he quickly orchestrated a fantasy on his *Robert le Diable*. The Distins performed the piece using their new saxhorns and achieved enormous success at a concert organised and conducted by Berlioz at the Opéra Comique on April 6th: 'The Distins had a real triumph when they performed at the invitation of Hector Berlioz, at the Opéra Comique on 'Adolphe Sax's grand new invention', their bell-forward saxhorns'.⁸

⁸ Carse, Adam, *The Music Review*, Vol. 6 1945, pp.193-201.

The Distins were busy for the next few years performing their popular repertory of arrangements which were well accepted wherever they went but when the baritone saxhorn player, George, died the repertory had, once again, to be re-scored; this time for brass quartet and William moved from the Ab/G contralto saxhorn to the Bb baritone saxhorn. The combination then became:

- Eb soprano saxhorn
- Bb contralto saxhorn
- Eb alto saxhorn
- Bb baritone saxhorn.

It was probably John who had the necessary task of deciding which chord notes to omit and which parts to reallocate when re-scoring for a smaller group and he may have considered re-constituting a new repertory of quartets instead undertaking the re-scoring. However, there is one strong feature of Sax's instruments which retains an advantage over other instrumental families today: *players can move, relatively easily, between instruments of the Sax family*. The fingering is identical and the note names are the same, with no transposition involved, and so a reasonably proficient player can move quickly from a soprano saxhorn to an alto, a tenor or a baritone saxhorn.

Following the re-scoring of its repertory for a quartet of saxhorns, the Distin Family brass ensemble later (in 1851) arranged pieces for a quartet of euphonic horns:

The second part introduced a quartette, selected from Donizetti's 'Belisario,' which was performed upon newly patented instruments, called 'Euphonic Horns,' the tones produced from which are of a more round and equal character (though scarcely, perhaps, so full and melodious) than those emitted by the Sax horns and tubas. The effect of the alto euphonic horn in its highest notes was quite flute-like, and the performance altogether appeared to give satisfaction.⁹

Very little information is available on the euphonic horns but we may presume they covered a similar register (soprano, alto, tenor and bass) to the saxhorns. The Distin repertory was adapted again in 1854, for the larger Distin Flugel Horn Union which was said to be: 'a complete brass

band... played by eight admirable performers, including the three Messrs. Distin, whose selections of classical music, beautifully arranged and executed, form one of the most delightful musical treats that can be imagined'.¹⁰

In 1859 the Distin Ventil Horn Union, which was even larger, needed a completely different repertory and Henry Distin is credited as the arranger of a long section from the opera *Norma* by Bellini for a string of performances in Weston's Music Hall, Holborn, London.¹¹ This would have been a major enterprise and would have taken Henry many weeks to complete a full score and a set of transposed parts. Arrangements for a larger ensemble have more options for texture and colour, of course, but there is an increased difficulty in accommodating a larger instrumentation.

While the repertory of the Distins consisted of arrangements, there were one or two exceptions, such as the piece which we are informed was composed by His Royal Highness Prince Albert especially for them called *Der Orangen zweig (The Orange Twig)*. Like many of the public announcements made by the Distins this may have been simply a boast, but perhaps Prince Albert had, indeed, written a piece which was then scored for the Distin quintet to be performed at a function at Windsor Castle on December 26th 1844¹². Prince Albert probably had some assistance scoring his piece for the brass group in respect of registers and transpositions; some composers, today, rely on contracted orchestrators who are given a two or three-stave short-score, shown some indications for orchestration, and then complete the score.

Distin Compositions

Occasionally we see evidence of the Distins not simply as arrangers but as composers and one example of this is a piece by John Distin, made at the outset of the Distin Family brass ensemble career: 'A hunting duet by Mr. H. and Mr. W. Distin, composed by Mr. Distin sen. on two French

⁹ *Bristol Mercury*, October 11th 1851.

¹⁰ *John Bull Newspaper*, August 5th 1854.

¹¹ *The Era*, September 11th 1859.

¹² A poster, describing their performance gives the date as December 16th 1844.

horns, in which every passage was echoed in a novel and beautiful manner'.¹³ Another review of the *Echo Hunting Duet* was made a few years later: 'we look upon more as a curiosity – a production of singular effects – than as a piece of harmonious composition'.¹⁴ Unfortunately, this frequently performed piece has yet to be traced, but other Distin compositions have survived such as John Distin's *Military Quadrille* which was written for the Distin group and performed by them in 1846. The piece was arranged for piano and published by Distin and Sons Music and Musical Instrument Depot, Cranbourn Street, Leicester Square, London in 1846.

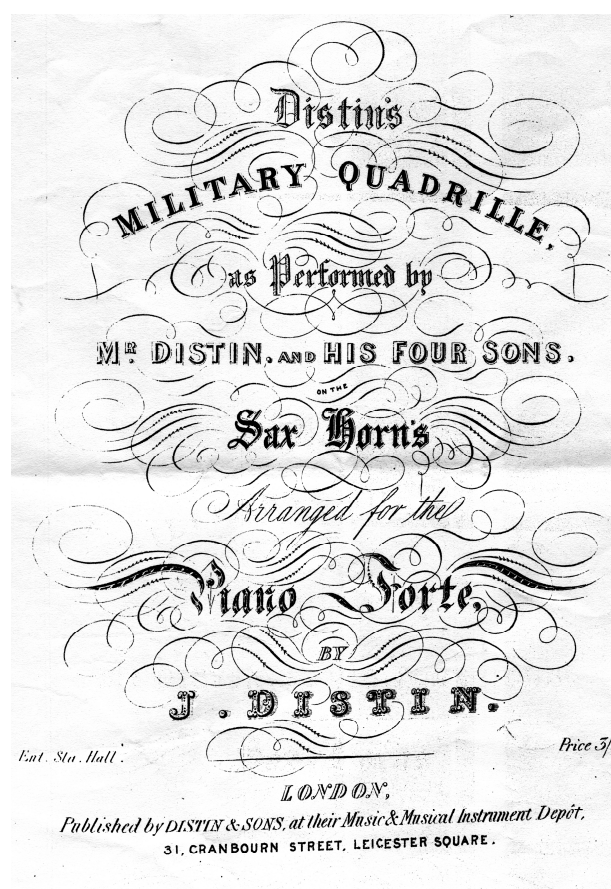


Figure 87: Title page to *Military Quadrille* by J. Distin
Source: British Library

In creating, performing and publishing musical works the Distins may be seen, once again, to be leading the brass band movement, and many brass bands, during the nineteenth century, took up this concept of acquiring special repertory, unique to their organisation, performing the work for a

¹³ *The Musical World*, April 7th 1842.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, July 16th 1840.

period and then releasing the music via publishers to the remainder of the banding world. This practise continues today.

Distin Publishing

Following the successful trip to France and Germany in 1844, the Distins established a company which operated from their London residence 6, Foley Place, Great Portland Street under the name Distin and Sons. At first they sold printed music¹⁵ from various publishers and soon after, they bought new premises at 31, Cranbourn Street, Leicester Square¹⁶ and started trading in musical instruments¹⁷ including saxhorns. This new business venture combined well with their performance schedule and publishing became an important branch of their operations, initially in order to release their own arrangements and compositions. However, music publishing was in its infancy and brass bands, at that time, still made special, tailor-made arrangements for their individual combinations.

While a settled, standardized instrumentation was yet to be established in brass bands, publishing grew to satisfy a growing market and the Distin Company developed into one of the most important publishers of brass band music. The first known publication of brass band music was *10 Popular Airs* arranged by George MacFarlane and published by Robert Cocks of London in 1836. Robert Cocks also published various pieces for small brass bands with a combination comprising, 2 cornets, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones (alto, tenor and bass) and ophicleide. In January 1837 Dalmaine published *The Brass Band*, which was a collection of pieces consisting of popular songs, airs, waltzes, quadrilles, drills, gallops, marches and selections from operas such as *William Tell*. These were arranged for brass band by John Parry, former bandmaster of the Denbigh Militia and music critic of the morning post 1834- 1848. The Wessel and Company's *Journal for Brass Band* was published around 1840 and included *Gems of the Opera* arranged for brass band by William Childe. The instrumentation was:

¹⁵ Horwood, Wally, *Adolphe Sax 1814-1894 His life and Legacy* (Hertford.: Egon Pub. 1992), p.33.

¹⁶ Langwill, Lyndesay, *An Index of Musical Wind-Instrument Makers* (London: Bingham, 1960).

¹⁷ Ibid.,

- Cornets
- 2 trumpets (ad lib)
- 2 or 4 Horns
- 3 trombones
- Ophicleide
- Db Cornet or bugle (ad lib)
- Kettle Drums (ad lib)

Within this collection was the septet from Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra* which was also in the Distin Family brass ensemble's repertory.

The Distin publishing company produced John Distin's *The Military Quadrille* in 1846 (shown above) and several members of the family had pieces published through the family publishing company. Of special significance are: *Distin's Journal for Saxhorn, Saxtuba and Cornet* which were collections of songs (mostly operatic) with piano accompaniment, written and arranged by John Distin in 1848.

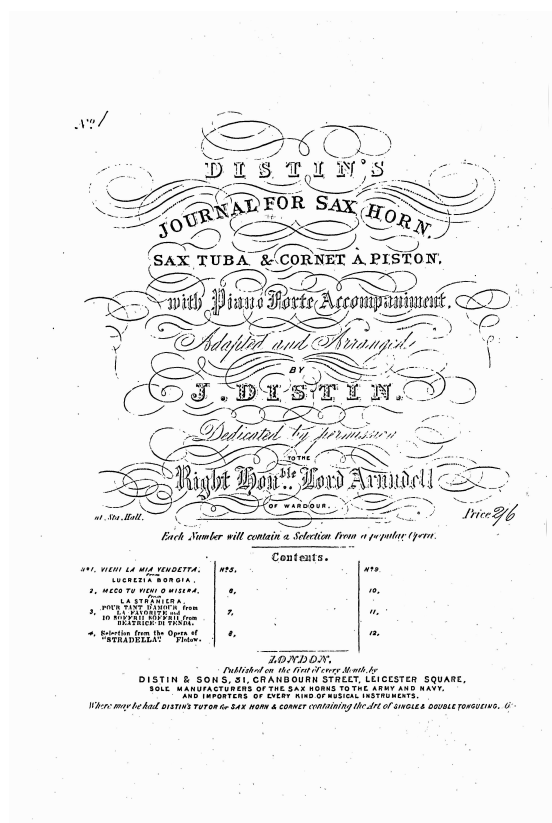


Figure 88: Title page to Distin's Journal for Sax Horn by J. Distin
Source: British Library

James Smyth was the bandmaster of the nineteenth Regiment Band (and later the Royal Artillery Band) and the Distin Company published his *The Green Howard's Polka* in 1852.¹⁸ Smyth became a prominent figure in the brass band world at that time and worked closely with Henry Distin professionally for several years. An important collaboration came in 1862 when Smyth was commissioned by Enderby Jackson, organiser of the Crystal Palace contests 1860 – 1863, to arrange a selection from Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* to be used as a test piece for the contest. *Robert le Diable* was an important piece in the Distin Family brass ensemble's repertory, having been especially written for them by the composer and featured prominently in their repertory for several years. Here is clear evidence of strong links between the Distin Family and contemporary brass bands; not only were bands playing the signature piece of the Distins but it was scored for brass bands by one of Distins arrangers.

Once the standardization of the brass band instrumentation had settled, more publications became available to brass bands and some original compositions for the 'new' medium were being commissioned. The first possibly being *Orynthia* by James Melling which was specially written as the test piece for the third Belle Vue Brass Band Championships in 1855, and has yet to be traced. According to Herbert, the earliest surviving substantial work¹⁹ is Joseph Parry's *Tydfil Overture*, written around 1879 for the Cyfarthfa Band. This has recently been found to be a transcription made by the composer Parry, of his earlier orchestral work.

In 1848, following Distin's published journals, other companies followed suit with music for brass bands such as:

- Boosey's Brass Band Journal 1852
- Distin's Brass Band Scores 1855
- Cornopean Journal 1855
- Cornet Miscellany 1856
- Champion Brass Journal 1857
- Brass Band Magazine by Cocks 1860

¹⁸ *Musical World*, January 10th 1852.

¹⁹ Herbert, Trevor, 'The British Brass Band Movement', *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed October 5th 2001).

- Chappell Journal for Brass Bands 1862
- Distin's Brass Band Journal 1869
- Wright and Round's Brass Band Journal 1875

Distin Brass Band Scores, published from 1855 by Henry Distin, were supplied without parts and each conductor, or librarian, was expected to transcribe them from the score as required, to suit his band's instrumentation.

SELECTION FROM FIGLIA DI REGIMENTO

Allegro con brio. *Poco Andante.*

BY DONIZETTI.

Figure 89: Selection from *Figlia di Regimento* by Gaetano Donizetti. Second series No. 6 of Distin's Brass Scores published by Henry Distin in 1857.

Source: A. Myers, Edinburgh University

The Distins used their contacts in the music business and persuaded various arrangers and composers to supply suitable pieces for their growing catalogue, and one piece, of significance, is the *Distin-guished Galop* by John Farmer which was written and published in 1862. This was

dedicated to Henry Distin who is featured in cartoon illustrations on the front cover (see picture below):



Figure 90: Title page to *Distin-guished Galop* by John Farmer.
Source: British Library

The Distin branch of publishing continued to develop and when, Henry Distin met Carl Fischer, who was assisting with the brass exhibits at the great World Exposition in Paris 1867, he offered Fischer a position in the Distin Company in London. Fischer accepted, and after a few years he was promoted to head of the company branches. In 1872 Carl Fischer emigrated to America,

where he became one of the leading publishers of band and orchestral music²⁰, but by that time Henry Distin had sold his company to Boosey.

Highly significant in early brass band development was the publishing of journals, or collections of pieces, which became very popular with brass bands, and one of the most important was the *Distin's Brass Band Journal* which was published in 1869.

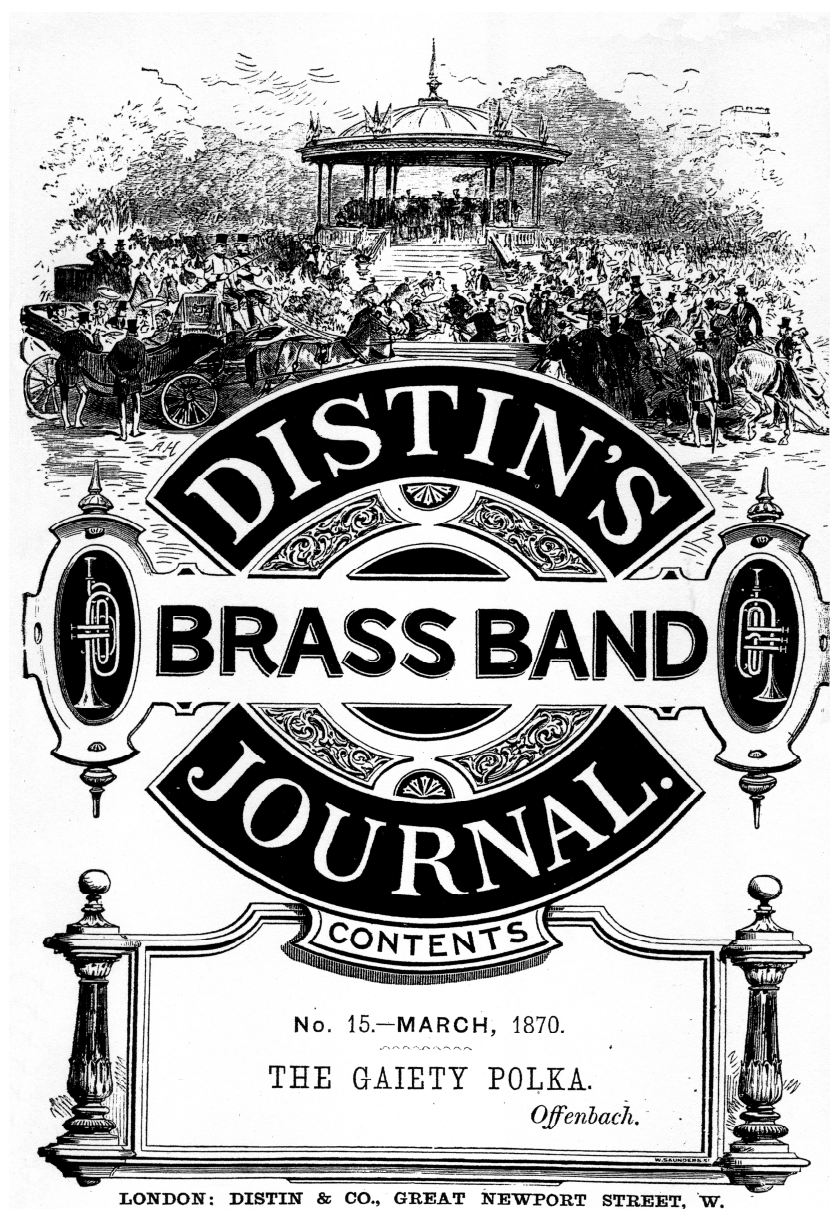


Figure 91: Distin's Brass Band Journal march 1870.
Source: British Library

²⁰ Herz, S. F., *Carl Fischer Centennia*, (USA: Music Educators Journal, 1972), p.80.

Distin's Brass Band Journal was a monthly collection of pieces in a variety of styles arranged by various distinguished, professional military musicians. The most notable were Winterbottom, Godfrey, Smyth, Jones and Tutton²¹ and the subscription cost was ten shillings per annum. The music was scored for a band of ten musicians: 1st cornet Bb, 2nd cornet Bb, 1st cornet Eb, 1st tenor Eb, 2nd tenor Eb, baritone in Bb, euphonion, bombardon, side and bass drum and the euphonion and bombardon parts were supplied in either treble clef or bass clef. Interestingly, extra parts were offered (at 'twopence' each) for repiano cornet in Bb, 3rd and 4th cornets in Bb, 2nd baritone in Bb, 1st and 2nd trombones in either treble or bass clef, bass trombone, solo tenor in Eb and contrabass in Bb and so with these extra, optional parts the Distin Brass Band Journal was establishing a combination of parts which became the settled and recognised instrumentation for the standard brass band and is similar to the modern, twentieth-century brass band. Only the flugel horn is absent from Distin's combination but this instrument was mostly considered as part of the repiano (or ripieno) group, therefore, Distin with his *Brass Band Journal* of 1869, could be regarded as the instigator of standardization of instrumentation for brass bands.

The contents of the first *Distin's Brass Band Journal* were arrangements of:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| • <i>La Grand Duchesse</i> | - Offenbach |
| • <i>Ten Little Niggers</i> | -Claribel |
| • <i>I Cannot Sing the Old Songs</i> | -Claribel |
| • <i>Rossini Quadrille</i> | -Godfrey |
| • <i>Valentine Galop</i> | -M. Relle |
| • <i>Come Back to Erin</i> | |
| • <i>Just Before the Battle</i> | |
| • <i>Duet from Linda di Chamounix</i> | -Donizetti |
| • <i>Linda Polka</i> | -Strauss |
| • <i>The Minstrel Boy</i> | |
| • <i>Moll Roone</i> | |
| • <i>Grand Selection from Belisaro</i> | -Donizetti |
| • <i>March from La Périhole</i> | -Offenbach |

²¹ Herbert, Trevor, 'The repertory of a Victorian provincial brass band' in Trevor Herbert, *Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.17.

Conclusions

While the function of amateur brass bands at that time was different from the Distin Family brass ensemble, there were many similarities in respect of their musical activities, particularly with regard to repertory. Both the Distins and amateur brass bands relied heavily on arrangements of opera extracts, and several pieces in their respective repertories were the same. While the repertory of the Distin Family brass ensemble was not large, the arrangements and compositions they used established a model for the newly developing brass bands who were motivated to emulate them, and the musical policy, style and approach of the Distins established a strong example for aspiring amateur bands.

Original compositions of stature for amateur bands were rare during this period but when publishing houses became established the Distin name again, was foremost in supplying brass bands with quality arrangements and, significantly, establishing a standardised combination for the brass band. The pioneering *Distin Scores* and later, the *Distin Brass Band Journals* showed an astute choice and mixture of music pieces which both followed broader, popular music trends and at the same time, led musical direction. The wide repertory of brass bands at that time, which included contemporary, serious art-music, was being driven by publishers such as the Distin Company which satisfied the demands of a growing market.

While the Distin Journals contained few arrangements made by members of the family, they cleverly commissioned the best arrangers of the day to write for them. These shrewd innovative policies combined with the success of their other business enterprises, and of course their enormous reputation as performers, further promoted the Distin name as leaders in the various fields of brass band activity.

The arranging, composing and publishing of music for brass was an important thread which enabled the Distins to weave a stronghold on a developing brass band movement and while some might consider their motives purely commercial their incentive in this direction was also idealistic and innovative.