instruction resembles that of other English
teachers in being concerned largely with touch
and relaxation. Five of the nine chapters of
this book deal principally with touch and
physical/mental preparation, with strong in-
sistence on the mental act. The gymnastics
of virtuosity and such elements of playing and
interpreting as rhythm, dynamic, tone gra-
dation, phrasing, accentuation, the percussive
and evanescent aspects of sound, are either
only touched on or omitted, and certain
problems which evidently lie beyond the scope
of this book are provided with no other sign-
post than that the reader should seek expert
guidance. But whose? Mr. Hope’s special
instruction seems to be aimed at the advanced
student who is on the brink of public concert
work (the book would also be useful for the
serious amateur) and to be designed as a
corrective. His able analysis of common
faults (for which antidotes are suggested) and
his repeated insistence on conscious prepara-
tion and conscious control imply that the
diseases of stiffness and vagueness in the native
pianist are still rampant. But unfortunately
his constructive and encouraging advice is
hampered by a circumlocutory and repetitious
style and by the perpetuation of such well-
known ambiguities as ‘amount of tone’ and
‘tone colour.’ Rubato is poorly defined. Mr.
Hope is much happier in illustrating and in
giving practical advice than in scientific
definition: and the book has a particular value
in that it stimulates the reader to think for
himself.

Trevor Fisher

LETTER

The Editor TEMPO

21st September, 1956.

Sir,

Recently a composer was asked to write a
new work for Military Band: his answer was
brief—which one?

Colonel Miller’s excellent article in Tempo
40 brings this question into relief and it
would seem opportune to take stock of the
instrumentation of our military bands in
relation to other countries.

There is no international pattern for the
constitution of a band as there is for the
symphony orchestra, and this would seem a
logical step to take now that international
pitch has been established.

The British military band slowly evolved
for the dual purpose of marching and concert
performance, with marching as the primary

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For Solo Trumpet, Timpani,
Harp, Cembalo (ad. lib.) and
Strings. (15 mins.)

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For String Orchestra

(12 mins.)

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consideration. This has resulted in a hotch-potch of instrumentation incomplete in almost every family, with a preponderance of brass.

On visits to continental military band festivals, in company with Colonel Miller, it was possible to study the sound quality of Musique de la Garde Republican, Les Guides Belgis and other famous bands from Holland, Italy, Spain and Luxembourg. At that time it seemed to me that our own Grenadier Guards Band was limited in tone colour by instrumentation. We lacked a complete family of Clarinets from high Ab to contra bass, the family of flügel and the complete family of Saxophones. A string bass was used, but only one.

To-day our military bands are even more restricted in tone colour, seldom possessing even one bassoon and often sadly lacking in oboes, flutes and a complete quartet of horns. Rarely do we hear the bass clarinet and never the alto. The complement remains the same, with the brass even more dominant.

The limitations dictated by necessity in the past—cost of instruments, shortage of certain players—have somehow been twisted into virtues.

When discussing this with an American friend, an authority on wind bands, Dr. W. Revelli, of Michigan University, it was interesting to hear the American wind band is very strongly influenced by the Continent. For concert performances his own band often has 12 flutes, 5 oboes, 1 cor anglais, 30 Bb clarinets, 1 Eb clarinet, 4 bassoons, 6 alto clarinets, 4 bass clarinets, 2 contra bass clarinets in Eb and 2 contra bass clarinets in Bb, (67) woodwind in all, with a brass section of 46 players in conventional proportions. The same band on the march or "on the grid" as he called it, is altered to less bass and more saxophone in the woodwind, and more bass in the brass and less trumpet. Marching music is specially arranged and full consideration is given to the medium for which it is to be used.

This need not be the solution to the instrumentation of our military bands, but I feel the composer who was asked to write for "a military band" would have enjoyed his task more with these tone colours to play with, and the open air orchestra would be more interesting to listen to and a more satisfactory one in which to play.

Yours etc.,

ERIC A. McGAVIN.