

*The Sociology of Wind Bands: Amateur Music between Cultural Domination and Autonomy.* By Vincent Dubois, Jean-Matthieu Méon, and Emmanuel Pierru; trans. Jean-Yves Bart. pp. xix + 225. Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series. (Ashgate, Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, Vt., 2013. £55. ISBN 978-1-4094-6185-2.)

Why do musically inclined adults continue playing in amateur wind bands when the standards of performance fall well below professional, the repertory is neither truly popular nor high art music, and their efforts are not valued? Given the contributions of wind bands to the musical world, and to society in general, this is a question worth asking and which Dubois, Méon, and Pierru go a long way to answering.

This book is the translation from the French of *Les Mondes de l'harmonie* (Paris: La Dispute, 2009). This reviewer has not examined the original, but the translation has resulted in a fluent and very readable book. The French text was in turn a reworking of commissioned research for the Fédération des sociétés de musique d'Alsace. So, it was commissioned in effect by the very bands that are the subject of the research, located in the north-eastern region of Alsace. With this local rather than global remit, the title might be misleading. Some of the conclusions may apply to amateur wind bands worldwide, but amateur wind bands exist in a variety of traditions. In the UK, the social aspects of the British brass band with its culture of contests and the continuing feeling of a 'brass band movement' diverge perceptibly from the picture presented here. American high school bands are a completely different kettle of fish. However, as so little serious research has been done on the wind band phenomenon, it is almost certainly more valuable to have an account such as this of a study in depth, using the tools of modern critical sociology, than some more superficial overview. The authors' sociological methodology could be used to advantage in the examination of bands in other cultural contexts.

To understand the motivations of wind-band members, a survey was carried out using questionnaires and interviews in the early 2000s. This has allowed an analysis using demographics such as age, gender, level of education, socio-economic class, occupation, father's occupation, rural or urban, other leisure activity, music listening preferences, and musical train-

ing. The central analysis is presented in the form of two two-dimensional 'spaces': that of the musicians and that of the bands. The musicians are ranked on the horizontal axis by level of musical training, ranging from learning in a band to advanced and ongoing musical training, and on the vertical axis by sociability, ranging from fully integrated to those with little communication with other musicians. The rewards of wind-band membership can range from the preservation of local tradition and community spirit through to the development of transferable musical skills. The bands are ranked on the horizontal axis according to how much they prioritize the traditional and social nature of banding or how much they prioritize musical aesthetic accomplishment, and on the vertical axis according to the degree of institutionalization, ranging from isolated to attachment to a music school or membership of wind-band associations. Excerpts from the interviews are interspersed judiciously through the text, providing entertaining and relevant illustrations of the authors' arguments.

Wind-band repertory is portrayed as consisting largely of arrangements (simplified), minor works of major composers, and the major works of minor composers. This could also be seen as characterizing the repertory of the most fully professional wind bands, the military bands of the armed forces, which seem to have rather little influence as role models for amateur wind bands, at least for the sample discussed in this book. With its sociological focus the book does not attempt a detailed evaluation of the repertory or its position in the wider world of contemporary composition.

The volume equips us to form a view of the future of wind bands—whether growth and renewal as a leisure activity for the considerable numbers who have learned an instrument at school; or gentle decline as the players lose interest, retire (or die) in greater numbers than young players are recruited; or indeed imminent collapse as urbanization extinguishes the rural community life of which many bands have been a vital part. In conclusion, this publication is to be welcomed by musicologists and sociologists as a substantial and well-researched contribution to our understanding of wind bands.

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