

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1160

The VICTORY BANDS

1928-1931

In 1928 the Crystalate Manufacturing Co. introduced through Woolworths the 7" (18 cm) diameter VICTORY record at the unprecedented low price of 6d. One side of each record was a popular song of the day on which royalties of three farthings had to be paid, but to reduce costs the other side contained entirely non-copyright material such as classical or traditional tunes and the band leaders' own compositions. Many of these tunes have not appeared anywhere since and would have been completely forgotten but for these tiny records, often found relegated to the bottom of the pile in junk shops. Thanks to the generosity of private collectors we can still hear and preserve this unique legacy of the style of music played by small bands and orchestras of the 1920s. The pseudonym "The Victory Band" was often used as a generic name for the several different bands which produced this pool of recordings during three years of Victory production. Through the painstaking research of Brian Rust into the original company's files, we now know the identity of the bands at each recording session. The electrical equipment used to make the recordings was scarcely better than the acoustic equipment it had supplanted and despite valiant efforts by Victory's recording expert Mr. W. Ditcham, the recording quality was atrocious, even by the standards of the day. Cheap records tended to be treated carelessly and copies in good condition are difficult to find. In most cases, however, with modern sound restoration techniques, that cheerful and enthusiastic 'Victory Band' sound still comes shining through.

George Ernest Cathie was born in 1880 in Manchester but of a Scottish family and one well rooted in the arts. His mother was a painter and a cousin of the poet Francis Thompson. He and his brother Philip both studied at the Royal Academy of Music and both played in the Queen's Hall and Covent Garden Orchestras. He was taught, too, by Jenö Hubay and Hans Wesserley. Philip went on to become a professor of violin at the RAM and George at the London College of Music. In 1914 Cathie was appointed both leader and deputy conductor of the Devonshire Park Orchestra, Eastbourne and about this time he formed his own quartet. Five years later he became Conductor and Musical Director of the Buxton Gardens Symphony Orchestra and, after staying there for a similar period, moved on to the North Pier Orchestra, Blackpool and finally to the Llandudno Pier Orchestra. Cathie played everything from Wagner to Waldteufel in the true tradition of the Municipal Musical Director. However, it should not be thought that such a concert denotes a necessarily inferior ability to those who conducted in the big towns. Stanford, who had known Brahms personally, was most impressed by Cathie's performance of the 2nd Symphony, commenting on his ability to realise what

Brahms had not felt necessary to include in the score, and Adrian Boult often engaged him to conduct symphonic repertoire for the BBC. Like Adrian Boult, he used a long baton and always appeared immaculately dressed.

The rise of radio and changes in public taste, the two perhaps not unrelated, brought a decline in demand for resort orchestras. Thus, 1936 was the last year of Cathie's real career; a sad end due to what seems to have been needlessly unpleasant political manoeuvring. However, after the war he was Musical Supervisor for Poplar and Bromley Town Councils' Park Entertainments.

In retirement, in Ewell, Surrey, he painted (his other great interest), played the violin and pruned his roses.

Charles H. Hassell was born in 1866 and in 1878 began his training with the Sherwood Foresters, one of the county line regiments in Derbyshire. His progress was such that in the year following he was sent to Kneller Hall where, in the final examination, he obtained Highest Honours. He soon rose to the rank of band-sergeant and in the Egyptian War, which commenced in 1882, he received the war medal and the Khedive's Star. In 1891 he successfully passed the special examination at Kneller Hall necessary for control of one of the regimental bands. Thus in 1892, aged 26, he was able to assume his first position as bandmaster with the 4th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps. Later he moved to the band of the Irish Guards, formed in 1901, and with it twice toured Canada. In ordinary line regiments the band is part of the regiment, thus in time of war its members serve as stretcher-bearers or like duties. During the Great War, the Irish Guards band being used in recruiting drives, its members enrolled primarily as musicians. By the time of the records transferred onto this Compact Disc, the band and its conductor had a recording career extending back to well before the Great War. There were also Edison-Bell and Winner records, and those on the Guardsman label bore a likeness said to be that of Hassell himself.

Annunzio Paolo Mantovani was born in Venice in 1908 (some sources give 1905 and the name may have been Montevanni). His father was the leader of the orchestra of La Scala, Milan under Toscanini and was also Professor of Violin at two Italian conservatoires. He had played under Hans Richter and treasured a baton presented to him as a token of regard by Mascagni. In 1912 he came to London to lead the orchestra of the Italian Opera Company then visiting Covent Garden. The family came with him and such was their liking for England that they remained here. Annunzio attended Archbishop Tenison's Grammar School and L'Ecole Notre-Dame de France. Leanings towards music were evident and encouraged by his mother, but his father insisted on him studying engineering. However at fourteen years he finally took up the violin and with his father's blessing and encouragement. He studied at the Trinity College of Music. Within a year he played a Kreutzer concerto and within two years, Bruch's concerto. Jacques Thibaud encouraged him in his studies and he performed in the Wigmore and Queen's Halls. He found himself much influenced by Kreisler and especially by Kreisler's 'light' encores. These and the rise of radio encouraged him to form the Tipica Orchestra.

He recorded extensively. Early on he often appeared as Gandino or, on records, anonymously. He became famous for his arrangements and for the unique string sound of his orchestra. In developing both of these we should not overlook the extensive work of his long term associate Ronald Binge.

Harry Petersen was a professional arranger. His name appears also on the Zonophone and Edison Bell labels. More than likely he lead Petersen's Band.

James Edward Wilbur, in his earlier years known as Wilbur E. Blinco, was born in Bournemouth and rose from choir boy to pianist and vocalist on the halls. He studied orchestration in America and returned as pianist and arranger for the London Band. In April 1926 Wilbur Blinco was pianist in Leon van Straten's Band. A year later he was pianist-leader of Alfredo's Band (Park Lane Hotel) and then at the Tricity Restaurant (The Strand).

As a band leader a major part of his career was in the recording studios. He became Musical Director of Dominion Records and then of the Crystalate Record Company. Later he was with Decca. His work appeared on the Imperial, Victory, Eclipse, Rex, Crown and probably other labels. From the mid '30s he was a frequent broadcaster. From 1946 his career was in New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, where he died circa 1969.

He always chose leading West End musicians, changing as little as possible. Many of his session men being top grade players with such leaders as Ambrose and Carroll Gibbons.

Simon Wurm may have started out as Stanislaus or Stanislav Wurm, for in the 1890s there was a Stanislav Wurm and his Original Viennese Orchestra on Brighton Pier in which Gustav Holst played the trombone!

References:

Andrew, C. Radio and Television Who's Who George Young, 1954
Badrock. A. and Hughes, J. 7" Victory Research Gunn Report 67-75, 1978
Ronald, Sir Landon Who's Who in Music Shaw, 1937
Young, K. Music's Great Days in the Spas and Watering Places Macmillan, 1968

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Catalogue & Matrix Number

1	Vale of Health March	GC	22 VI 29	124	DC712	Michaelis
2	Kindergarten Polka	GC	17 X 30	184	DC834	
	Austrian folk tune. Used by Haydn in the "Surprise" Symphony & "The Seasons"					
3	Lucerne Vals	GC	25 VIII 28	80	DC481	Godwin? also 233
4	Yoik	PB	26 III 30	213	DC894	
5	Tarantella	GC	27 V 29	139	DC689	
6	Country Dance No.1	HM	8 V 29	104	DC680	
7	Turkish Patrol	IG	7 II 29	167	DC627	Michaelis
8	Il Corricolo	HM	26 IV 29	102	DC660	
9	My Little Caravan	GC	31 VIII 28	49	DC506	
10	Xylo Nights	JW	3 IX 30	261	DC964	
11	Morgenbl„tter	AM	9 III 29	95	DC644	Johann Stauss II
12	Paprika	GC	17 VIII 28	2	DC439	also on 186
13	Ancient Gigue	GC	27 II 30	267	DC878	
14	Tangier Tango	GC	22 VI 29	122	DC713	or only Tangier?
15	Marche aux Flambeaux	GC	6 VI 29	113	DC701	Scotson Clarke
	has also been attr. to Meyerbeer: Fackeltanz (Torchdance) No.1 in Bb 1846 or No.3 in C min 1853					
16	Cuckoo Galop	HM	8 V 29	103	DC681	
17	Bajaderentanz	SW	31 VII 29	130	DC723	Anton Rubinstein aus der Oper "Feramors" 1863
18	Dancing Dervish	GC	31 VIII 28	51	DC507	or 31 VIII 28?
19	Post Horn Galop	GC	17 I 30	236	DC831	H. Koenig
	Posthorn played by Bert Heath					
20	Irish Jigs	HM	1 V 29	177	DC661	"Father O'Flynn"
21	Bolero	GC	6 IX 29	136	DC751	
22	Petronella	HM	8 V 29	105	DC677	
23	Captain Kettle	GC	13 VIII 29	200	DC738	
24	Cornelius March	GC	13 VIII 29	134	DC741	Mendelssohn
	March in D Opus 108 for the Fête given to the painter Cornelius at Dresden in April 1841					
25	Stephanie Gavotte	HM	1 V 29	99	DC666	A. Czibulka (1842-1894)
	from the operetta "Stephanie"					
26	Old Country Dance	GC	25 IX 29	168	DC759	
27	Vivette-One Step	PB	12 XI 29	264	DC782	
28	Real Ow'd Lancashire Clog Dance	GC	22 VI 29	123	DC711	
29	Ravenscroft	GC	10 I 30	185	DC823	
30	Mazurka des Traineaux	GC	6 VI 29	114	DC702	
31	Snap Shots	GC	13 VIII 29	133	DC742	
32	1812-Finale	GC	16 IV 29	127	DC657	Tchaikowsky

PB Petersen's Band

GC George Cathie and his Orchestra

IG The Band of H.M. Irish Guards (Conductor: Capt. Charles Hassell)

AM A Mantovani, conductor and solo violin

HM The Harry Maquilty Band

JW Jay Wilbur and his Band

SW Simon Wurm and his Orchestra