BRASS CHAMBER MUSIC

in

LYCEUM and CHAUTAUQUA
DEDICATION

For chamber brass lovers everywhere.
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Brass chamber music has figured prominently in my life. I have performed brass chamber music since my childhood, taught classes and workshops in brass chamber music for more than two decades, composed many chamber brass works, and produced a recording of my brass quintet compositions. Not until my doctoral course work, however, did I assess my grasp of the history of the genre, and I found my knowledge of the subject wanting.

As I delved into the history of brass chamber music, thinking naively that such work would not be difficult, I soon discovered how few were comprehensive resources in the field. The academic community’s prevalent ignorance and disregard of brass topics generally, and of brass chamber music specifically, also became clear. So began a dedicated search for information relating to brass chamber music history, especially that before 1940.

Early in 2005, I encountered a website entitled “Traveling Culture: Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century.” It consists principally of digitized images of nearly 8,000 brochures that were used to advertise the ‘talent’ (i.e. the speakers, musicians, artists, and so on) that appeared in lyceum and chautauqua. (References to the “Traveling Culture” website occur so frequently in the text and footnotes of this book that I employ the abbreviation “TC” to refer to it.) As I navigated the “Traveling Culture” website, I found many images of brass chamber ensembles—mostly brass quartets—that had performed professionally in lyceum and chautauqua. This phenomenon was completely new to me, and I was confident it would come as news to the brass community, as well.

As I constructed timelines and outlines of brass chamber music history, the significance of this discovery grew, and new questions arose, foremost among them, “What music did these groups play?” Early answers to this question resulted also from research on the Internet and occasioned a second important discovery. In an old music catalog (undated, but apparently early twentieth-century) that I procured by auction at Ebay.com I found a page that advertised six collections of music published for brass quartet and brass sextet. This second surprise prompted my acquisition of many historical American music catalogs and the eventual identification and cataloging of a large quantity of music published for small brass ensembles between 1875 and 1929.

Ultimately, I was able to find extant examples of most of these publications and to obtain copies for reference and research. The quantity of music published for small brass ensembles, especially quartets, between the 1870s and the 1920s is significant. No fewer than one hundred collections of music—many of which included a dozen or more individual titles—and a smaller number of single titles...
were published for brass quartet, quintet, and sextet during that period. A small percentage of these works were original compositions, and many of the collections include arrangements of patriotic, popular, ethnic, and religious selections. The majority of the arrangements, however, are of well-known works by important eighteenth- and nineteenth-century composers.


Finding the nexus created by these two discoveries—the many forgotten American brass chamber ensembles and the remarkable volume of music published contemporarily for such groups—has been one of my priorities. In many cases, evidence shows that specific chamber brass selections indicated in talent brochures and elsewhere were commercially available to the groups that claimed to perform them. In other cases, no such connection can now be shown. Some groups probably played from published music, and other groups probably prepared their own arrangements.

The blending of traditional research methods with the benefits of Internet resources has already become normal for many musicologists, and the number of valuable and important research websites will surely increase. Much of this book would not have been possible without the regular and creative use of the Internet. I have coined the term ‘e-search’ to refer to such activity.

Several music scholars have recently made important contributions to the field of brass chamber music history, and significant details may be found in the works of scholars whose focus was not primarily on brass chamber music. As new computer-accessible electronic resources have been created, additional relevant information has come to light, much of it lying plainly in view. By researching available scholarship and adding newly developed information, I have been able herein to present an up-to-date comprehensive history of brass chamber music. My overviews of specific eras in brass chamber music history offer new views of Renaissance and Baroque brass ensembles, mid-nineteenth-century French brass chamber music, and the Russian Chamber Brass School.

The “Overview of Brass Chamber Music in America to 1939” provides important new information and identifies the phenomenon that I call the First American Chamber Brass School. The many ensembles that performed brass chamber music in lyceum and chautauqua are, at present, the most prominent feature of this phenomenon, and they are the principal subjects of this book.
INTRODUCTION

Brass chamber music, lyceum, and chautauqua—the three major cultural phenomena whose points of convergence are the principal focus of this book—require introduction. A pool of individuals truly knowledgeable about any of the three terms would be a small fraction of modern American society—despite lyceum’s ancient origins and familiar modern offshoots, chautauqua’s substantial contributions to the intellectual and cultural unification of our expanding nation, and the worldwide success of the Canadian Brass and similar ensembles.

Today’s civic and collegiate speakers’ series would be familiar to lyceum-goers of a century ago. Electrified stages, barns, and shells often function as modern substitutes for the chautauqua tents of the early twentieth century for millions of twenty-first-century music lovers that attend outdoor summer evening concerts, yet the chautauqua movement—that Progressive Era educational and cultural crucible in which were forged important links that brought together Americans from old coast to new—is now all but forgotten. Additionally, brass chamber music, whose history can be traced to the Renaissance, is mostly marginalized in aca
deme to a status clearly separate, but not at all equal.

A brief conversation with an obviously intelligent, educated, and cultured librarian at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC crystallized forever in the memory of the author the obscurity of his principle areas of research. When the author told the librarian the subject of his research, her puzzled reaction was but one of many similar responses that the author has heard, if worded more eloquently: “Why is it that I do not understand a word that you just said?” This book therefore begins with an explication of terms.

Chapter One discusses ‘brass chamber music’ and explores the sometimes obtuse world of brass instrument terminology, focusing on the brass instruments encountered in this book. It tackles the surprisingly thorny problem of defining ‘chamber music’ and discusses the treatment and status of brass chamber music in the scholarly arena. Overviews are provided of the significant areas of brass chamber music history that led up to and frame the principal subject of this book, and brief remarks on brass chamber music in the twentieth century and beyond are provided.

Chapter Two introduces lyceum and chautauqua—two of America’s many leisure time options in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—and details their histories as influential determinants of modern American culture, from their roots as self-education movements to their widespread popularity as America’s first purveyors of edutainment and their rapid decline and disappearance with the rise of better roads, inexpensive automobiles, free radio programs, and motion picture
palaces. The chapter also discusses the on- and off-stage realities of life as a performer in lyceum and chautauqua.

Chapter Three examines the principal sources and resources for the author’s discoveries and research in the field of brass chamber music before 1940, especially brass chamber music in lyceum and chautauqua. Each source is identified and its contributions and limitations discussed. The growing potential and importance of online research in the twenty-first century is clear.

Chapter Four presents histories of sixty-one professional ensembles that presented music for brass trio, quartet, quintet, and sextet to lyceum and chautauqua concertgoers. Evidence for all but one of these groups exists in the Redpath Chautauqua Collection in the Special Collections and University Archives of the University Libraries at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa. Many images from the Redpath Chautauqua Collection are reproduced, with permission, in Chapter Four.

The summation and conclusions in Chapter Five are followed by two appendices intended to ease the work of future researchers—a chronology of brass chamber ensembles mentioned in this book that were active in the United States before 1940 and an annotated alphabetical list of chamber brass musicians mentioned in this book who were active in the United States before 1940.

The organization of the information in this book is intended to prepare the reader fully to comprehend the histories presented in Chapter Four of the professional musical groups that performed brass chamber music in lyceum and chautauqua. While Chapters One through Three elucidate relevant subjects, they also present much information whose importance might not at first be obvious. Chapter One, especially, contains much new information, and the reader might benefit by reading a few of the ensemble histories presented in Chapter Four before commencing a read-through of the book.
An Overview of the Russian Chamber Brass School, ca. 1870 to the 1940s

From the last quarter of the nineteenth century into the twentieth, a phenomenon identified by David F. Reed as the ‘Russian Chamber Brass School’ flourished in St. Petersburg. Some of this music has been widely published, performed, and recorded in the twentieth century and in the twenty-first still figures centrally in the music libraries of brass quartets and quintets around the world. Until recently, histories of brass chamber music could have referred to little before 1940 beside the Russian Chamber Brass School and the pre-1750 ensembles of cornettos and trombones. Fortunately, recent writers, including Leonid Chumov, André M. Smith, and Edward H. Tarr, have shed important new light on Russian professional, amateur, and student brass chamber ensembles, especially those active in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

The cultural soil that bore the fruit of brass chamber music in St. Petersburg was cultivated in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century by influences from across Europe, including France, Germany, and Finland, in particular. Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich (1779-1831) and Tsars Nikolay I (1796-1855), Aleksandr II (1818-1881), and Aleksandr III (1845-1894) all expressed keen interest in brass instruments and brass music. With such high-placed interest, it is not surprising that Russia’s aristocracy, professionals, and students also embraced brass music.

The earliest of the six brass quartets by Danish violist, conductor, and composer Wilhelm Ramsöe (1837-95) was composed in 1866 for a group in Copenhagen. The first four of the quartets were scored for B-flat cornet, trumpet in F, tenor horn, and trombone. A Ramsöe brass quartet of this instrumentation, performed during the St. Petersburg Chamber Music Society season of 1873-1874, was the first piece of brass chamber music that is known to have been performed professionally in Russia. Ramsöe immigrated to St. Petersburg in 1877 to pursue his musical career, and his quartets were probably well known there.

Wilhelm Wurm (1826-1904), a German trumpeter who immigrated to Russia in the late 1840s, established in 1867 the first brass ensemble classes in Russia at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, the first year of his professorship there. Beginning in 1877, one of the requirements of Russian Navy musicians graduating from the conservatory was the ability to perform in a chamber ensemble. Wurm later composed or arranged seventy-six brass quartets and thirty cornet trios for his Conservatory students.

In 1870, the German trumpeter Julius Kosleck formed a cornet quartet that toured Europe and appeared in both Russia and the United States in 1872. In 1876, the Bohemian instrument maker Václav Cervený (1819-1896) made a set of four brass instruments (two cornets in B-flat, an E-flat alto cornet, and a B-flat tenor cornet—all in circular shape) and dedicated them to Crown Prince Aleksandr (later Tsar Aleksandr III). These instruments and Kosleck’s ensemble both took the name ‘Kaiser-Cornet-Quartett’ (‘Crown Prince Cornet Quartet’), and their appearances in Russia and America are probably responsible for exciting nascent interest in brass chamber ensembles in both countries. Cervený later pub-
Three aspects of concert life in America, even in her colonial years, relate directly to themes in this book; these are chamber music, varied concerts (vocal and instrumental music combined), and brass instruments (especially the horn), all of which were elements of American concert music in the eighteenth century. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, variety was a key principle in lyceum and chautauqua programming, and brass chamber music added significantly to that variety.

A variety concert in 1770 in New York, New York featured, among other things, “select pieces for four French horns.” In 1772, music was presented for “six French horns in concert” in Charleston, South Carolina. After the American Revolution, a concert in 1798 in Boston included a horn quartet. Some of the earliest known music published in America for a small ensemble of mixed brass instruments was the nine trios for two keyed bugles and trombone composed by J. (possibly John) Friedheim. This collection of one march, three waltzes, and five quicksteps was intended for dancing, but it clearly demonstrates the existence of small mixed brass ensembles in America as early as 1836.

Small brass ensembles associated with the church of the Unitas Fratrum (later, the Moravian Church in North America) constitute the longest-running tradition of small brass ensembles in American history. Trombone quartets and ensembles were and are commonly associated with the Moravians, but before trombone ensembles became popular, mixed ensembles of trumpets and horns were the norm. The activities of Moravian brass ensembles continued the German stadtspfeifer tradition, and eight sonatas for two trumpets and two horns by Weber (n.d., first name unknown) and six sonatas for trombone quartet (discant, alto, tenor, and bass) by Cruse (n.d., first name unknown), all of which date to before 1850, are among the few examples of brass chamber music now held in American Moravian collections.

In 1849 the Distin family ensemble, reduced to a quartet following the death of George Distin, performed in America at the second annual music festival sponsored by Boston’s Philharmonic Society at Tremont Temple. The program included “Soffriva nel pianto” from Donizetti’s Lucia di Lammermoor arranged for saxhorn quartet. The Distin brothers performed a saxhorn trio by Costa (n.d., first name unknown; possibly Michele Costa, b. 1810). The significance of the Distins’ American tour lies in the attention it drew to mixed brass chamber ensembles and chamber brass programming, which included transcriptions of popular masterworks by European composers (e.g. Donizetti) and (apparently) original brass chamber works, as well (e.g. Costa’s Trio). Some nineteenth-century American works for small brass ensemble continued in the vein of Friedheim’s social dances, particularly the many collections published for brass sextet, but the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century brass quartet repertoire borrowed heavily from European operas and overtures and included popular music and favorite national selections from England, Scotland, Ireland, France, and Germany.
Lyceum and chautauqua were two of many attractions that competed for Americans’ leisure time in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Festivals, fireworks displays, parades, concerts, theater, fairs, circuses, camp meetings, lectures, minstrel shows, carnivals, concert saloons, variety theater, medicine shows, burlesque shows, Wild West shows, puppet shows, balls, magic, amusement parks, dime museums, lectures, vaudeville, and motion pictures all enjoyed popularity, but many of these options were not considered respectable. After the Civil War especially, the working class often sought the combination of song, drink, and frequently crude entertainment in variety theaters and saloons. Minstrel shows, concert saloons, medicine shows, burlesque shows, and early vaudeville also appealed to the working class. Even theater and circuses were sometimes considered a threat to morality.

In contrast, the very respectable lyceum and chautauqua originated not as types of entertainment, but as means of education. Public lectures were the central feature of both lyceum and early chautauqua, but other elements, especially musical performances, gradually increased in importance, drawing focus at least partially away from the single speaker. As America’s rural population increased, its desire for information and culture grew, and lyceum and chautauqua were developed to help meet this need.

The changes in American taste which occasioned new forms of entertainment in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries resulted in part from the accommodation of large immigrant populations. Waves of immigrants hit American shores following the Revolutionary War, and while this influence was rich in variety, it was also largely unrefined. Another wave arrived after 1820, almost doubling the population of the United States by the 1830s and pushing its westward progress. Between 1870 and 1910, 21 million people immigrated to the United States, and had there not been institutions to educate the new Americans and provide some sense of unity across the expanding country, the “melting pot” effect for which the United States is known might never have occurred. Lyceum and chautauqua were two of the most prominent of these institutions.

The disparate natures of America’s urban and rural populations have long been a source of cultural disunity. Even in its earliest days, American cities often had the resources to support highbrow activities like symphony and opera, while rural America was seen as lacking refinement. Contrarily, cities also had large populations of the working class with their preference for bawdier types of entertain-
CHAPTER THREE

SOURCES, DISCOVERIES, PROBLEMS

Hidden among the relics of lyceum and chautauqua—two once mightily influential but now mostly forgotten American socio-educational phenomena—lies evidence of many professional ensembles that performed music written for small groups of brass instruments. These groups, usually quartets, performed extensively throughout the United States (and occasionally elsewhere) from around 1877 until about 1939—a period of about sixty years. The relics of lyceum and chautauqua are dispersed throughout the nation in libraries, museums, and personal collections, and the research required to investigate such sources has taken the author from coast to coast and to several points in-between. There is a surprisingly large amount of evidence available to the researcher who seeks it, and more will surely come to light.

At this stage of research in the field of American brass chamber music before 1940, it appears that professional chamber brass playing in lyceum and chautauqua (and to a lesser extent in vaudeville, as well) was part of a larger phenomenon. The author has uncovered the existence of many other small brass groups, as well, usually brass quartets that were active in civic, religious, professional, and military spheres of American music-making during this period. These groups were discussed in Chapter One.

The author’s related discovery of a large volume of music published for small brass ensembles in the United States between the mid-1870s and the 1920s points to a greater demand for such music than the currently known ensembles could have created. The large number of publications and the insistent regularity with which they appeared in print suggests the practice of brass quartets in American music during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth was extensive. The imbalance between the known number of publications for small brass ensembles and the known number of small American brass ensembles is best explained by the existence of a significant market for this music among amateur musicians, whose activities went mostly unrecorded in the press and are hard to document today.

This chapter discusses important sources for the author’s discoveries and examines problems associated with various types of evidence.
CHAPTER FOUR

BRASS CHAMBER MUSIC IN LYCEUM AND CHAUTAUQUA

In this chapter, a history of each of the organizations known to have presented brass chamber ensembles in lyceum and chautauqua is presented in as chronological an order as can be determined. The problems associated with dating the evidence in TC and RCC has already been discussed, but at least one firm date has been found for most of these ensembles. In some cases where no clear date was found, deductions could be made from the evidence. In four cases, no dates were found, and the available information was insufficient to warrant a guess; these four groups—the Boston Glee and Minstrel Club, the International Lyceum Four, the Varsity Harmony Trio, and the Vassar Girls—appear in alphabetical order at the end of this chapter. In some cases, especially when a small brass group was part of a larger ensemble—a band or orchestra—the date(s) associated with the brass group, not the larger organization, determined placement in the chronology. In five cases, two or more ensembles are grouped into a single section because their histories are so closely related. The resulting chronology should provide a meaningful sense of progression.

Forty of the groups in this chapter numbered from three to six musicians, and most of these groups (thirty-seven) performed brass quartets. Twenty-one larger groups—mostly bands and orchestras—presented brass quartets and/or brass sextets for a few numbers in their concerts in order to provide variety in programming. A small number of organizations presented more than one small brass ensemble in concert (e.g. a brass quartet and a brass sextet, or a brass quartet and a brass trio).

The brass quartet was clearly the dominant brass chamber ensemble in the United States until 1930. Of the seventy brass ensembles identified in this chapter as active in lyceum and chautauqua, fifty-five were brass quartets, compared with only five trios, two quintets, and eight sextets. Most of the small brass ensembles mentioned in this book that are not known to have been active in lyceum and/or chautauqua are also brass quartets, and according to the author’s recent research, the majority of music published in America for small brass ensembles before 1930 was for brass quartet.

The instrumentation of the brass chamber ensembles active in lyceum and chautauqua favored groups of heterogeneous brass instruments (‘mixed’ ensembles) over groups of homogenous brass instruments (i.e. trumpet quartets or trombone trios). Two of the brass trios, most of the brass quartets, and all of the brass quintets and sextets discussed in this chapter were mixed brass ensembles. The
woman seated second from left appears to be White. The Aidas’ artistic level is demonstrated by a list of noted musicians with whom they appeared; the list includes Mme. Schumann Heink, Mme. Bernice de Pasquali, Mme. Rose Olitzka, Mme. Isabelle Bouton, Miss Florence Mulford, Miss Marie Stoddart, Dalton Baker, Paul Dufault, Carl Dufft, Dan. Beddoe, Ellison van Hoose, Franz Koehler, Ion. Jackson, and G. Randagger. Sample programs from their appearances with Schumann-Heink and Bouton are provided, and these include Verdi’s March from Aida and Gounod’s Faust Fantasie. The latter was published in the United States for brass quartet in 1900. An unidentified New York Tribune music critic is quoted as writing, “The Aida Quartette played the march from Verdi’s ‘Aida’ with spirit and precision.”

The Aidas reorganized in 1915, without White, and sought work again with RLB in lyceum and chautauqua in 1917 and 1918. It is not known whether they succeeded. From 1922 to 1925 the Aida Quartet (Aida Brass Quartet, or Aida Trumpeters) made radio broadcasts from stations WJZ and WOR in Newark, New Jersey and WEAF in New York, New York. In 1922 their personnel consisted of Clara Haven (solo trumpet), Eleanor Bett (second trumpet), Ethel Clark (French horn), and Cora Sauter (E-flat horn). In 1923 the personnel was slightly different: Cora Sauter, Clara Haven, Ethel Clark, and Marion Bushnell.