

Extracts from the SPBA Magazine "The Pipe Band" Mid-1950s

PIPE BAND PROGRESS REVIEWED PART ONE

By Pipe Major Dugald McLachlan

On many occasions since I resigned from the Piping Panel of the Association I have given thought to the measure of progress achieved through Association activities, and following numerous requests for my opinion on current Band performance I have been persuaded to write this article.

Recent Changes

There have been changes in recent times, but changes do not necessarily mean progress, and two changes of major importance which to my mind are not progressive, are under cover judging and the divorcement of Marching and Discipline from Pipes and Drums performance. Many will recall earlier days of pipe band contests when bands during their contest performance were subjected to strict scrutiny by judges resulting in bands attaining a high degree of efficiency in deportment and in the condition and functioning of their instruments. Today, by comparison, in a pipes and drums contest, the competing band is not seen by a judge. The band forms up at the starting point and as long as their numbers conform to the minimum requirements according to rule, they are accepted by the starter. It is no concern of the starter whether some members of this band are unable to play the instruments carried by them. The judges are under cover waiting on sound coming over from which they will distinguish errors and omissions, and ultimately assess the value of the performance in so far as conditions have allowed the sound to be heard. It may now be gathered that the conscientious Pipe Major is the individual most likely to incur the displeasure of the judge since he will make every endeavour to have all instruments functioning 100%, although he may be well aware that some of his reeds are hanging in the balance. On the other hand, the unscrupulous Pipe Major will not take such a risk. He resorts to the maxim that no sound is much better than a bad sound, sets up his band accordingly and beams with pleasure should the judge compliment his band on tone and performance.

Marching and Discipline

The separation of Marching and Discipline from band performance is embedded in the minds of most band members, resulting in the adoption of attitudes foreign to what is normally expected in the bearing of a pipe band, and certainly disappointing to the public who enjoy watching a well drilled and disciplined band.

Judging of Tempo

A further change which does not spell progress is the withdrawal of Tempo points from the Piping judge. Some readers may hold the view that only the Drumming judge should have Tempo points on the ground that it is the drummer's function to provide the Tempo. In pipe band playing a duty is imposed on all players - pipers and drummers alike - to maintain a steady Tempo and failure to do so constitutes faulty playing. The effect of the change is that the Piping judge in obvious cases of variance of Tempo and of Tempo setting cannot impose a penalty and therefore cannot separate bands on this account. The only redeeming feature of the change is that in withdrawing Tempo points from the Piping judge, five points were added to Tone - an addition welcomed by judges and Pipe Majors. On progress, drumming has no doubt developed on a scale greater than that of piping, but that is mainly due to the fact that scope existed for development and therein lies the danger of overdevelopment in so far as a corps will probably concentrate on variety of beatings without recourse to unison with pipers.

Summing-up

I do not feel much progress has been made and may be considered severe in my criticism, but in anticipation of queries as to what I would suggest, I propose to submit my constructive views in the next issue of "*The Pipe Band*."

PIPE BAND PROGRESS REVIEWED

PART TWO

By Pipe Major Dugald McLachlan

Following my article in the previous issue of *The Pipe Band*, in which I stated and gave reasons that progress in Pipe Band Association activities had been very limited, I now proceed to point out weaknesses with relative remedy.

The Annual General Meeting of the Association is the birthplace of revolutionary changes, and accordingly all member bands are responsible for such changes irrespective of the small number of bands usually represented, but the main concern is whether or not the delegates who carry voting power also carry the attributes of practical or theoretical musical knowledge, enabling him or her to take part in or follow a discussion and act for progress. Too many, in my opinion, cast a vote not on the merits of matter before the meeting, but on the opinion of a neighbouring delegate. The remedy to which I would subscribe would restrict delegates at an AGM from exercising a deliberative vote on matters affecting pipe band performance and/or judging, by reducing the decision to one of recommendation only because in cases such as those mentioned the ultimate decision to amend should be left in the hands of individuals of known capacity, and in the Advisory Council the Association already has such a channel, though one which does not get full opportunity for showing results. Recommendations could be thoroughly discussed between members of the Judges' Panel and the Advisory Council in order to ascertain whether progress would result through adoption, and the matter fully reported to the National Council if acceptance be considered desirable. Progressive action taken on such matters would be reported to the Branches in the normal course, who would be aware of views expressed on the particular matter forming the subject of the recommendation, and member bands would be satisfied that all such matters were thoroughly sifted instead of having rules altered without recourse to the full knowledge of commitments.

In fact, judges and Advisory Council members should have consultation periodically on matters affecting Pipe band contests in general so that information may be passed back to Branches on faults etc. that frequently arise.

Tempo, the speed at which music is played, is an item which applies equally to pipers and drummers in so far as the maintaining of the Tempo is concerned, consequently it is an obvious weakness to withdraw Tempo points from the Piping judge, but the weakness is further aggravated because if the set speed determined by the Pipe Major at which the tune be played is not considered suitable to the given tune, it is only the Piping judge who could inflict the appropriate penalty. Drumming judges are not concerned with the set speed; their only concern being the maintaining of the set speed and by the withdrawal of Tempo points from the Piping judge, no provision has been made to discredit bands failing to fix a Tempo necessary for the beautification and expression of tunes. It would be simple for Piping judges to adjudicate on Tempo if test tunes bearing a speed signature were played, but in the absence of such the Pipe Major, usually the experienced piper, must determine the most suitable speed for the tunes selected by him and pass such instruction to his drummers. Under the present setup, with drumming prizes at stake, it often happens that drummers start off at a speed much in excess of that laid down by the Pipe Major, maintain their fast Tempo, capture the drumming prize and create havoc among the piping section resulting in the band as a whole being outwith the prize list. Again the drummers are often penalised for lack of variety in beatings, when they choose to closely follow a pipe band, since many scores have little variety. This is the outcome of catering for two units, i.e. piping and drumming, and not as one unit, i.e. the band.

Arising therefrom it appears clear that the remedy lies in ensemble adjudication as being the necessary approach to pipe band progress, the adoption of which would give the Pipe Major greater control over his band, not only in this matter of Tempo setting but also in the suitability of drum beatings to the punctuated melody, and would serve to give the public what they want to hear - a pipe band performance. This is a matter I have frequently discussed and given much thought to in recent years and to which I suggest, if they have not already done so, the Advisory Council should give consideration.

I trust my articles have given readers food for thought and, while the subject matter may not meet with general agreement, they have been written without bias and for the furtherance of points of view for discussions through which the SPBA make progress.

PIPE BAND PROGRESS REVIEWED

Comments by Drum Major James Gray

I have read with interest but with mixed feelings the concluding article by Pipe-Major Dugald McLachlan on his methods to improve Pipe Band Association activities, and feel that the anticipated progress following adoption of his proposals would be one forward, two back.

My interest lay in his viewpoint on necessary changes arising from resolutions at the AGM of the Association in regard to pipe band performance and/or judging, and while I am sympathetic to some extent with the procedure proposed, I must refrain from expressing an opinion due to the position I hold on the Panel of Judges. I would, however, fully agree with him in that judges and Advisory Committee members should have frequent consultations affecting pipe band contests in general. Although I disapprove entirely of his recommendations on tempo and ensemble playing, I am aware that many, especially pipers, will voice agreement with his views, but since I consider that not only has the drumming angle been dealt with insufficiently, but also the correct foundation for ensemble playing, I would offer the following criticism:

The drum beatings of yester years have been overshadowed in our modern age by the gradual adherence of drummers to the musical melody of the pipes. It is now appreciated by most that the drummers share equally with pipers in giving full effect to the phrasing and expressing of pipe tunes. Accordingly, as parts of a tune vary with the piper, so also has the drummers to respond with quality and variety of beatings for each part, and so continue the musical combination throughout.

It is not a convincing argument to say a pipe score has little variety and imply a drum score should be correspondingly likewise, when properly schooled drummers have sufficient ideas to put into effect for relieving the monotony of sameness. The Drumming judges are due to pay regard to the musical contribution provided by the drummers and should inflict penalties for default, and in this connection the speed at which tunes are played is very much their concern since the drum performance can be marred by the speed set for the tune being incompatible with the melody to be expressed. Therefore, it is obviously wrong to say that Drumming judges are not concerned with set speed, and that drummers have the tendency to operate as an independent unit for selfish purposes.

His remarks that ensemble adjudication would give the Pipe Major greater control over his band in the matter of tempo setting and suitability of drum beatings is rather difficult to understand, since the tempo setting is at present his responsibility, and with regard to the drum beatings he cannot, in most cases, instruct but can only listen. Therefore, the Pipe Major must be dependent to a great extent on what his Leading Drummer, can offer, since the drummer is the individual who knows the intricacies involved and analyses them to give mutual satisfaction.

Readers will now appreciate that the co-operation of all concerned is the key note for the desired pipe band performance as rendered by our leading bands, and with the judges, both Piping and Drumming, thinking in musical terms, besides noting execution, we have ensemble adjudication.

In conclusion I would like to say I have had many personal conversations with Pipe Major McLachlan and appreciate his desire at all times to hear the musical beauty expressed by the combined unit, but from his article I am rather inclined to the view that he has allowed his wide piping knowledge to outshine his rather diminished appreciation of the modern drumming technique.

PIPE BAND PROGRESS REVIEWED

HARKING BACK

By Pipe Major William Sloan BEM

It was disappointing to note that Pipe Major Dugald McLachlan did not feel disposed to continue the controversy arising from his articles under the above heading. He, nevertheless, deserves full credit for having had the courage to put them into writing in the first instance, and it is hoped this will act as an inspiration to others. There are plenty who are forever carping and criticising in the background, but who never venture to expose their ideas to the critical forum of "*Pipe Band Magazine*" readers.

Under-cover Judging

His contention that under-cover judging has not proved highly progressive is not without some foundation. Bands have adopted a counter strategy, based on taking full advantage of the weaknesses in the system. "Dummying up" is "nae cairried story" as Willie McCulloch would say, and 100% instruments might almost be a rarity. I am not inferring that a contest should be won or lost on a silent drone, but "Dummying up" is making the whole thing ridiculous. Although I personally took a leading part in the instigation of this form of judging, I would be acting contrary to my conscience and experience if I did not admit its obvious weaknesses.

Judges' Viewpoint

I would not be at all surprised to find that adjudicators prefer the tent (apart from the coldness which is aggravated by the nature of the structure in which they are asked to sit), as it no doubt lends itself to better concentration by reducing the element of distraction. To offset this, however, there is the drawback of the fixed position, the vagaries of the wind, the Piper who does not get started and maybe never starts, and the deliberate dummy, all of which adds up to certain amount of luck creeping in, and I think this element of luck makes the proposition attractive to some Bands, as there is always the possibility that they might slip into the prize list and steal a prize which they could never hope to get with open judging.

In its very essence, judging is a personal thing, and strength of character and integrity are not two of the meanest qualities required. A good judge would still be a good judge in or out of the box, although his answers might be slightly different.

Tempo Points

I agree with Pipe-Major McLachlan regarding the shifting of the tempo points to the Drumming judge. This was certainly a backward step, and another push to the wedge which tends to split the bands into two separate units. There is no gainsaying the fact that drummers set the pace of a specific performance, but that pace is supposed to be an interpretation of something already fixed by the Pipe Major. If the Pipe Major fixes it in the first instance, then the Pipe judge should be the man to give his findings on it. If the drummers do not strike it exactly, the Pipe judge is still the most likely person to assess the results correctly.

Separate Units

There is no doubt that the Drumming judge is a law unto himself at the present time, and Drum Major Gray is indulging in a bit of wishful thinking if he imagines that any serious cognisance is taken of the combined musical effect. For the nonce, this judge is mainly concerned with the technicalities of the tappings, and I cannot remember ever seeing a Drum judge's sheet making any reference to affinity or musical effect. Drum corps have been known to go on and play a setting which it could

not be said was divorced from the tune, because it had never even been married to it, and yet get a first prize.

Ensemble Adjudication

His advocacy of ensemble adjudication is on the right lines. If a pipe band is a musical unit, then it should be judged as such. This does not mean that pipers only would be fit to judge; many drummers are extremely well endowed musically, even more so than some of the Pipe Majors, and would thus be well qualified to take their place on such a panel. It will be a proud day for the Association when it reaches those heights. Hitching your wagon to a star is not all moonshine. This must not be interpreted as meaning that I think modern drum beatings are the acme of musical perfection. On the contrary, I think they have lost the place considerably, and will deal with this point in a subsequent article.

PIPE BAND PROGRESS REVIEWED
HARKING BACK-2

Pipe Major William Sloan BEM

Yesteryear and Today

"The drum beatings of yesteryear have been overshadowed in our modern age, by the gradual adherence of the drummers to the musical melody of the pipes." This is the first quotation I cull from Drum Major Gray's reply (in Magazine No. 36) to Pipe Major McLachlan's critique under the heading of "Pipe Band Progress Reviewed".

What he means exactly by yesteryear is not quite clear. I can go back at least 30 years, when "Affinity" was considered a fetish word in Pipe Band realms, but Pipe Bands still played their quick marches as such, and the drumming had a rhythmic pattern in simple keeping with it. On the whole I would say the effect was much more musical than that of the present day. I realise that this is only one person's opinion, but it has at least the essence of all genuine opinions in that it is based on a knowledge and experience of more than one aspect of the subject. Otherwise it would not be an opinion at all but merely a parrot-like repetition of what someone else was saying or doing. This latter aspect, I think, is the one that prevails among the majority of our drummers today; they are imitating something or somebody. They flatten out the melody notes and think that mathematical precision is equivalent to musical perfection. In the process of doing this they tend to ignore the most elementary musical laws. They also seem to forget that the instrument they play is not a musical one, and that trying to tap a melody out of a side drum is about as sensible as trying to play a tune on a morse buzzer. Side drummers should realise that the instruments they play can only produce rhythmical noises of a great variety and kind, and that these noises should conform in a pipe band to a readily recognisable pattern in keeping with the tune. The work put into the pattern is naturally a matter of taste, but nevertheless the pattern should predominate and not the work.

Listening

My second quote from the aforesaid article is that Pipe Majors *"Cannot in most cases instruct, but can only listen"*. No matter how much truth or otherwise may be in this, the last two words intrigue me - "only listen". How I wish the drummers would do just that. The other inference is that one must be able to play an instrument to appreciate or criticise the musical results. This, of course, is just nonsense, as witness any orchestral conductor. An apt quotation from Gay's fables (not Gray's) readily comes to my mind:

*"In other men we faults can spy,
And blame the mote that dims the eye,
Each little speck and blemish find,
To our own stronger errors blind."*

I would suggest that drummers listen carefully to the function of their instruments in other musical combinations and carry the obvious lesson into their pipe band work.

PIPE BAND PROGRESS REVIEWED

THE FAILURE OF MODERN COMPETITIVE DRUM BEATINGS

By Pipe Major William Sloan BEM

THE PAST

That modern competitive drum beatings are a vast improvement on the pre-war ones is more or less an accepted fact among the side drummers of today; but are they really so? They may be much more difficult to execute and their structure more highly technical, but it still does not automatically follow that they are more musical or even on a par with the old ones.

The fact that music is an art and not a science leaves a much greater amount of scope for individuality, but nevertheless certain fundamental rules must still be observed. The drummers are supposed to be beating an accompaniment to the pipers, so let us listen to the pipers first. When they are playing a tune the rhythmic sequence and metric phrases are most readily followed, and unconsciously the feet of the listeners are tapping it out in perfect synchronisation with the players. No special musical knowledge is required to be able to do this; it is just that the emotional anticipation of the beat is so strong that the urge cannot be resisted. This is one of the most charming features of music and should be the drummer's strong point.

THE PRESENT

Now listen to the drummers tapping out a modern competitive beating without the accompaniment of the pipers and it will be noted that the intended rhythmic sequence and phrase are not nearly so readily discernible. This is decided weakness from a musical point of view and is not a fault which can be laid at the door of the old beatings. If the drum beatings do not sufficiently excite the emotional urge, then they can hardly claim, in the first instance, to be enhancing the performance. In musical combinations such as pipe bands, where the drummers are literally beating a continuous accompaniment, their failure to bring out the beauty and balance of the rhythmic phrase or sentence must be marked against them. In some musical combinations the drums are merely marking the regular accent or some special feature or climax. In no case do they tap out melody notes with the monotonous regularity now prevalent in pipe bands.

Let us now look at it from another aspect. The present-day drummer

takes a simple musical unit or figure such as



and writes it out in this fashion



but in actual practice it sounds like this



Here is a simple musical unit or figure comprising four notes with the pipers' regular accent distinctly noted by the dominance of one particular note, while the accompaniment sounds like four separate erratic taps rasping out from a dummy roll. On what grounds this is claimed to be musical it is difficult to know. The staccato effect of the noisy tappings against the smooth musical legato of the pipes is nothing short of premeditated musical murder. The loss of the regular accent in the welter

of irregular ones will never redound to the drummers' credit and simply drags the performance down to the level of a ponderous mess of pottage.

Any claim the drummers have to musicianship must be through their rhythmic ability, and they will never rise to their full stature in this respect so long as they chase the myth of the melody line. This trying to actually synchronise the tappings to the pipers' fingers only further confuses the issue. The drummers used to be chaffed by telling them they were pipers' labourers, but now they have taken on the self-appointed role of melody line slaves. There is no doubt that some drummers are capable of bringing a modicum of musical effect out of the mass of technical tappings now being poured out, but on the contest field they are conspicuous by their absence.

THE FUTURE

I will close by appealing to all drummers not to miss the substance for the shadow and stop trying to show how clever they are with a pair of sticks and use their imagination and undoubted ability to enhance their musical reputations and not their technical skill. A beating is not necessarily musical because it is difficult.

PIPE BAND PROGRESS REVIEWED

Dear Sir,

With reference to the article in the July/August number of *The Pipe Band* by Pipe-Major William Sloan BEM regarding drum beatings of yesteryear, I entirely agree with everything he has said, and I am quite sure so would the undernoted drummers of 20/30 years ago: A D Hamilton, Danny Turrent, Guy Adams, Percy Dawson, Davie Lyall and Dougie McLeod. All were, in their own way, excellent drummers. At that period they played the same six-parted Marches, Strathspeys and Reels as they are doing today and at a tempo of over a hundred. The judges wouldn't listen if it was below that.

Now, let me illustrate how some of the drummers of 30 years ago were taught to read music; mark you, they were few and far between in the pipe band world and did not have the advantages that the SPBA offers today. The usual procedure was to go to the local brass band to get the necessary lessons, and it was customary then to start with "Time". "Time" was considered to be the most important factor and was said to be divided under three chief headings, namely Duple, Triple and Quadruple. Duple, as the word implies, being that which has two beats in the bar, Triple three, and Quadruple four. Duple and Quadruple also being known as Common Time, and this is much used in pipe band music.

"Accent" was the stress or emphasis given to a certain note and in Simple, Duple and Triple the strong one fell on the first beat only, but in Quadruple there was a subordinate one on the third beat. In Compound Quadruple the strong accent was again on the first, with subordinate ones on the fourth, seventh and tenth. Then there were irregular groups such as the Sextolet, which was a group of six notes played in the time of four, and many others.

Now the present style of drumming features mainly irregular groups and syncopation, and in our time we did similar things, but in a different way. I agree we must move with the times to a certain extent, but I think the present day drummers are crushing far too much into the score. The beatings are, on the whole, very well executed, but there is inclined to be far too much repetition. Personally I would like to hear more of the rudiments introduced. A nice Drag and Stroke, single or double hand to hand, Paradiddles, close five stroke rolls hand to hand, and Roughs etc. I am sure these would be much appreciated by the judges.

Marching and Discipline. Pardon me for saying this, but after seeing the Arab Legion Pipe Band, we in membership of the SPBA will be like the English and Scottish FAs being taught by the Continentals. What do we find at contests today? Head dresses worn like soap boxes, hair all over the foreheads, metallic and leather parts of uniform never clean, and plaids, kilts and hose put on any old way. We pipers and drummers of yesteryear feel quite ashamed of how our national dress is being worn by some of our bandsmen today. Thank goodness, there are still a few who take a pride in themselves. I remember in our day how important a part it took in a contest, and especially the late Drum Major Hetherington, who examined every individual bandsman and if the kilt and hose were not at the correct length and height you got the pencil. He wasn't long in finding a fault. I remember at Kirkcaldy Police Sports we dropped on M&D, and when we got our sheets it was the Pipe Major who was at fault. Railway ticket sticking in right hose top. I would say that the time has come when M&D should again be included in the contest points and by doing so uplift the standard and give the public something to look at and admire.

Yours faithfully,

PETER ROBERTS,

Hon. Secy., Lothians and Borders Branch

PIPE BAND PROGRESS REVIEWED

The other side of the story

By Drum Major ALEX McCORMICK, Melbourne, Australia, Ex-Drumming Principal SPBA College

I was interested in Pipe Major Sloan's articles on the above subject, particularly his views on present-day drumming, compared with that of 30 years ago. It is evident that he doesn't like the drum scores he hears being played by the drummers, and considers the scores of 30 years ago much more enhancing to the musical performance. Having been very closely associated with drummers and drumming in Scotland up to three years ago, I know the styles played by various drummers. I agree with the Pipe Major when he says that the scores should conform to an easily recognisable pattern in keeping with the tune, and I think this is the main point of his articles - patterns. However, I was disappointed to find that a man of the Pipe Major's knowledge and experience hadn't given any examples of suitable patterns. When one considers that most of the drummers in bands today weren't born 30 years ago, or if they were, had little interest in drumming then, I'm sure a few examples of March, Strathspey and Reel patterns would have given a much clearer picture than the one the Pipe Major has painted in his articles. In his condemnation of the drummers he used some good descriptive phrases, and I thought how much more helpful he would have been had he used some to clarify his ideas on suitable drum scores.

STYLES OF DRUMMING

Up to the time I left Scotland, I classified the drummers, for my own convenience of course, into two main groups: (1) those that played scores with an abundance of groups of short-valued notes, and (2) those that didn't. Among those in the second group were those who played the melody line system. I belong to this section, so instead of being a piper's labourer, I'm a self-appointed slave and a myth chaser. So be it, but I would like to give my ideas on the melody line system. When constructing a score I use the melody line as a basis, and also a guide to the phrasing. I then sit down with the Pipe Major, and between us construct a beating on the basis of the melody line. The finished score doesn't necessarily follow every note and group in the pipe score, but there is no doubt as to how the score was constructed. For the past fifteen years I've had ideas along these lines, and have spent many hours with pipers and Pipe Majors in a genuine attempt to evolve a style of score construction suitable for pipe tunes, and also to enhance the musical performance. I put my ideas into practice in 1950 when, as Leading Drummer, I constructed scores for competitive work. In 1951, and again in 1952, our drum corps won the supreme award in the World's Championship contest.

Since coming to Victoria, Australia, where the old style of drumming was being played, both pipers and drummers, who look on the band as a musical unit, agreed that the melody line system of score construction contributes more to the musical effect of the performance. As a matter of interest I have appended three examples of beatings.

OTHER MUSICAL COMBINATIONS

I started drumming in a flute band, and for 5 years played drum scores which were arranged for the various compositions, so I know what Pipe Major Sloan means when he suggests that the modern pipe band drummers should listen to the function of their instruments in other musical combinations, and carry the obvious lesson into their pipe band work. In this particular instance pipe bands can't be compared with other combinations, because there are different instruments in these bands, whereas we have only one in the pipe band.

Any typical brass band or flute band full score will show that the side drummer doesn't always follow the melody line but that, during the performance, he may follow what can be easily recognised as the melody line, and throughout the piece may change to following any of the other parts. The point is that, generally speaking, he's following some instrument.

PIPE BANDS

What has the drummer to do in a pipe band? Does he follow the tune or doesn't he? In following the melody he has at least something to guide him in his phrasing, and by co-operating with the Pipe Major, can construct a score in keeping with the tune and thus contribute to the all-round performance of the band. As against this, what has Pipe-Major Sloan to offer? In his articles nothing. He says that the modern drummers are imitating something or somebody. All right! What did the old style drumming give us? In my opinion it set a standard of imitating unequalled in pipe band drumming history. A lad was taught to play the fundamentals by ear; he was taught to play drum scores by ear; in other words, he was taught everything by ear and, therefore, imitating his teacher. The drummers in those days who could read and write drum scores were as scarce as diamonds. One who comes to mind easily as a pioneer in the teaching of reading and writing of drum scores is Drum Major John Seton Snr. He published a book in 1922 in an attempt to set some kind of standard in writing, but in my opinion it was published too soon. The drummers weren't ready for it, and couldn't follow it sufficiently to make any appreciable difference to the numbers who couldn't read or write. In the next 8-10 years, little progress was made in this section of Pipe Band drumming; then, in the early 1930s, Jack Seton Jnr, and the late Charlie Davis, started spreading the gospel. In 1935 or 36 Drum Major A D Hamilton published a book with his ideas, and at the same time lads like Willie Paterson, Jimmy Cairns, Jimmy Catherwood and Alex McCormick were helping to educate drummers in the art of reading and writing drum scores. Things lapsed somewhat during the war, and towards the end of the war and since we found new names coming into the picture - Gordon Jelly, Johnny Kirkwood, Jimmy Gray and Alex Duthart. All the foregoing played a part in the development of pipe band drumming.

PIPE BAND ENSEMBLE

After a few years in pipe bands it became apparent that very few pipers and drummers gave any thought towards the band as a musical unit. Those who did couldn't do very much about it, being in such small numbers. Where and when this sort of rift between pipers and drummers originated is hard to say, but it could have been in the days when the drummers weren't musically educated like the pipers. One thing I am certain of, and that is that the wedge was fairly deep long before the Drumming judge got the tempo points. However, whatever the cause or how deep the wedge, it must be levelled off before we can hope to get a real musical unit. With the knowledge drummers have now, plus co-operation with their Pipe-Majors, surely something can be done to put Pipe Bands on the same level as other musical combinations. The training of men in piping and drumming will help achieve this. The judging of competitions by one man, so trained that he can have in front of him the pipe score with the drum score underneath. I hear someone say, "How can he read both at the same time?". Easy. A trained musician, say a pianist, can read two lines of music at once, with two, three or four notes in each line in the form of chords. A child of 9 or 10 can do it, so I don't think it would be beyond a trained adult to do a similar job in pipe bands.

SUMMING UP

I have long ago come to the conclusion that the finest structure is built by co-operation of the parties concerned in the building, and this I feel goes for pipe bands. A good pipe band is good because of the ability of the players to play well and march well. There is co-operation here between piper and piper, and drummer and drummer in the playing side, but between piper and drummer and vice versa in the marching side. A better band would be produced by co-operation of all bandsmen in playing as well as marching. Drum scores have a part to play in this musical unit, so I

would say to Pipe Major Sloan, "You have condemned the modern drummer, why not co-operate and share your ideas."

Top style is typical of the scores of 30 years ago. Bottom setting, my own style of score.

79th FAREWELL TO GIBRALTAR—March Old Style

My own style

MARKET PLACE OF INVERNESS—Strathspey Old Style

My own style

LOCH TAYSIDE—Reel Old style

My own style

PIPE BAND PROGRESS REVIEWED

Still Harking Back

By Pipe Major WILLIAM SLOAN BEM

For the sake of brevity and to bring the spot-light to bear on the focal points at issue, I propose to stick to MARCH beatings only as they seem to have suffered mostly from the present craze. Drum Major McCormick's reply is most welcome because it keeps alive this very vital issue but unfortunately he does not deal with contemporary beatings as played here.

I could not make up my mind whether it was apathy or a guilty conscience that lay behind the prolonged silence, from the drumming fraternity. He is maybe at a slight disadvantage having been away from our shores for three or four years, which in itself is not a long time but a lot of water has flowed under the bridges during it and with it has gone the style of beating he now writes. I can well imagine our drummers here sniggering at his naivety thinking this is good competitive stuff. This type of beating, although not highly imaginative, has vanished or been vanquished from the arena and probably the latter is the better word. The transferring of the Tempo points to the drum judge was the last straw. Not having to concern themselves with musicality the drummers could go to town on technicality and by jove they did it with a vengeance. They even forced the Tempo down to 78 on occasion to let them get all their laborious work in and at best it only averages in the middle eighties, which is bad enough.

DISTINCTIVE STYLES

The Drum Major admits himself that he split the drummers into two groups roughly, "The innumerable shorts" and "The melodic longs" and that he classifies himself with the latter group. Now, it would be most interesting if he would tell us why he prefers to belong to that group; is it by choice or by chance? Herein may lie the crux of the whole point at issue, namely, the compatibility of innumerable shorts to the music of the bagpipes. If his style of drumming had prevailed these articles would never have been written, at least not in the same strain. It will be readily understood, so far as I am concerned, that if he had come to realise that this types of beating is better suited than the contemporary ones here, I welcome him back to the fold. I do not know how many of the "melodic longs" type were extant in 1951/2 but I do know they were practically extinct in 1955, so far as competing was concerned.

MUSIC AN ART

Music being an art and not a science, personal preference is not only permissible but desirable and I would not care to attempt to lay down a rigid code which even if practicable would tend to stultify imagination. In our midst here we have a terrific potential among our prominent drummers; I would go so far as to say that there is none better anywhere and I want to see that ability redirected from technicianship to musicianship. If I have been pointed in my remarks, destructive criticism is not the intention but rather to force a critical analysis from which to reconstruct anew.

The phase through which the drummers are passing now I believe just had to come, but I hope to hasten its passing for beyond lies a new vista of better musical interpretation and enjoyment.

COMPARATIVE BEATINGS

So far as the beatings themselves are concerned, I would like to have seen them written beneath the pipe score; it does help when there is any controversy. I can appreciate his difficulty, on this

occasion, however, owing to the popularity of the tunes, the length of his article and the scarcity of space in the Magazine.

In spite of this, however, I append the march ones anew, 4 bars only, with two personal additions for comparative purposes. They are marked "A", "B", "C" and "D" for simple reference.

THE 79TH'S FAREWELL TO GIBRALTAR. MARCH

* DENOTES POINTS OF ARRIVAL

"A" is just an unimaginative fundamental beating which takes cognisance of what I term the points of arrival. Music seems to progress or move forward on Accent and Rhythm and the end of a rhythmic phrase is marked by a sensation of arriving, not departing.

The drummer seems to be arriving when he plays a quaver roll as entry to bar one in D/M McCormick's style and seems to be departing when he plays the quaver roll leaving the beat in his fourth bar. In other words, a climax is being reached in one case and being departed from in the other. Drum beatings should be built on the rhythmic phrase, the melody line is only the dry bones of a skeleton for general guidance. The melody is the determining factor.

"B" is the Drum Major's very simple specimen of the old type which I still maintain is more musical than "D", the reason being that the pattern is very simple without being incompatible with the melody. It's even flow and unmistakable rhythm make it readily absorbed and anticipated by the pipers and the drummers themselves can swing along with a confidence which is infectious and carried the whole ensemble with it. In other words, it gives the tune a lift.

PIPE BAND PROGRESS REVIEWED

Still Harking Back

By Drum Major A McCormick, Australia

Before embarking on the main theme of this article, I would like to clarify, and if possible, eradicate an impression which Pipe Major Sloan seems to be harbouring. He seems to think I wrote my article with a view to self-elation. I can assure him that such a thought never entered my mind. The writing of the article was prompted by a genuine desire to stimulate interest in this important factor of better musical performances by pipe bands, and the contribution of the drummer to such performances; also to discuss Pipe Major Sloan's articles on the above subject.

Contemporary Beatings

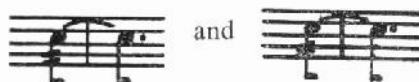
For a number of years before I left Scotland, some drum corps were playing this style of beating, and many more were following suit; therefore, I'm not in the least surprised to hear that my style of beating has been vanquished from the contest arena. I didn't follow the drift towards contemporary style, because I believed then, as I do now, that it does not enhance the musical performance owing to the abundance of short notes included therein. Expression is one of the mediums through which musical performances become pleasant to the listener, and one of the modes of expression is the playing of long and short notes. In most of the contemporary beatings there are far too many short notes and not sufficient long notes to make that contrast necessary to help expression. I chose what the Pipe Major calls the "melodic longs" style because I think it suits the pipe tunes the best. I didn't adopt it by chance. Having never played the contemporary style, as the Pipe Major visualises it, I don't see where I strayed from the fold, unless he has seen my competitive beatings and considers them contemporary.

Comparative Beatings

Knowing music to be an art and not a science, I agree with him when he says that personal preference and imagination are desirable in all compositions. Therefore, I don't expect a rigid code on which to construct drum scores, although certain points should be observed, such as phrasing and rhythm. Since starting this series of articles last year, he hasn't given us one example of a beating so constructed as to observe the fundamental rules and contain the attributes of imagination and personal preference. A man who criticises as he does, and expounds a theory, is bound to be asked for an example sooner or later. Why not now? You and I, Pipe Major, can bandy words, discuss, agree and disagree across 12,000 miles of the globe, but eventually the proof of the pudding will be in the "beating". Give them something in crotchets and quavers etc. then you'll get an interest and plenty of discussion.

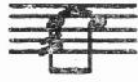
The Examples

"A" - No comment on beating other than I think, when played, will suit better than "B". I agree with his views about the movement and progression of music, but disagree with his POA in the examples and the sensation caused by hearing



He says the end of a rhythmic phrase is marked by a sensation of arriving; therefore, in the examples "A", "B", "C", "D" the quaver on the 2nd beat of the 2nd bar is the POA. Surely the next quaver roll in the same bar is the point of departure into the next phrase, yet he marks the finish of this roll as a



point of arrival. In other words,  is a rhythmic phrase.


Wouldn't the quaver at the beginning of the beatings "A", "B" and "C", and the dotted semiquaver:- and demi-semiquaver in "D" be points of departure? I would mark the examples thus:-



"B" - His comments here indicate that he considers this beating the best of the examples, because he makes no adverse criticism about it. One point which struck me as significant was the use of the expression "*very simple specimen*". Could he oblige by giving a very intricate one?

"C" - This wasn't written with a competition in view, but merely to show the relationship between pipes and drums, with a little counter rhythm in the form of off-the-beat accents in the seventh bar. The effect of the playing is the main thing, and a poor or careless player can spoil that effect. Therefore, the ability and technique of the player should be of a high standard to secure good



rendition. In the fourth bar, which the Pipe-Major considers weak, I wrote  because I feel that the piper holds the "C" and a roll is necessary here. I don't think it weak and feminine. It depends on the imagination of the composer.

"D" - I've covered contemporary beatings at the beginning of this article.

Tempo

This is a subject which, in my opinion, merits an article on its own. However, I would say that the drummers who forced the tempo down to 78 had no sense of duty towards their band, and were not co-operating with the pipers. I don't know the band in question, nor do I know the tune played, but when one section of a band FORCES another section to do something, there is no basis for a good musical performance. I'll give my views on this subject later.

Conclusion

Although I stated my views regarding one man judging etc., I make no claim to being the originator of these views. I know as well as the Pipe Major, that Drum Major Hamilton expounded these ideas 20 years ago. I met the Drum Major once or twice in his office in Wellington Street, Glasgow, and we discussed various aspects of pipe bands, and looked at film slides showing musical instruments being tested for pitch. We discussed the idea of tuning the bass, tenor and side drum to the bass drone, tenor drones, and chanter; which idea was, I believe, also in the mind of Pipe Major William Gray. I just mention these little points to clarify my position in regard to these ideas. I've tried to recognise knowledge in others, and won't detract any credit due them. I may disagree with their views, and welcome discussion so that something good may emerge, but so far as those that sneer are concerned, you can rest assured, they won't influence me in my search for knowledge.

PIPE BAND PROGRESS REVIEWED

The Old and the New

Final Article by Pipe Major William Sloan BEM

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The drumming aspect of this controversy arose through some earlier remarks regarding the beatings of yesteryear and today. It would now appear that to prove the point, reasoned criticism, illustrated with supporting explanatory examples is inadequate, and that nothing short of writing or playing something spectacular will fill the bill. This is without parallel in the realms of critical analysis. The art critic is not expected to be able to paint a better picture or chisel out a better sculpture; suffice for him to say wherein the faults lie. The music critic is not expected to play or sing a better piece, and the Drum Major would not be expected to bake a better cake if he tasted one and criticised it. The same licence is naturally looked for here.

INSPIRED BEATINGS

I make no claim to being able to write inspired beatings. I have simply learned, through long years of experience and practice, to appreciate certain aspects of musicianship. The present-day drummers are deprived of showing their merit in this respect by the prevailing method of points' allocation. I have been hoping that my examples in support of yesteryear would clearly show the trend of my musical thoughts, because I am convinced that the leading exponents in the Pipe Band world today would produce much more musical results if freed from the shackles of separate points gathering. How on earth can they expect to be rated as musicians if no cognisance is taken of this factor when assessing their contribution to the combined effect? I appeal to them to stop burying their heads in the sands of technical intricacies and stand up boldly for the broader musical issues of their rhythmic art and bring back life and vitality to the competitive field. Odd bands are trying to do this now and I say more power to their elbows.

PUNCTUATION

To get bogged down in lesser details of points of arrival or departure would be an error of judgment under the circumstances. When all is said and done, all points of arrival become points of departure; it is merely that, to my way of thinking, points of arrival are just that wee bit more important, because something has to be accomplished to get there and they are natural resting places in the strain. I prefer to stick to my original purpose of musical comparison, and when I referred to the Drum Major choosing a simple example, I merely meant that he chose a tune which had a nice natural balance of long and short notes, thus simplifying the drawing down of a compatible beating if properly followed.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

For comparison this time I have chosen the first four bars of the last part of Abercairney Highlanders which has eight semiquavers in the bar, and I take the contemporary beating for it from a publication which bears Drum Major McCormick's name as a co-compiler. Probably it was here that I got the idea that he belonged to the innumerable shorts group, but I was pleased to alter my opinion on his own admission.



Example "A" (Contemporary) is taken from the publication referred to. One glance at it shows the numerous irregular accents which tend to swamp the regular ones and stifles the simple duple rhythm which the piper so clearly marks. The alleged slavish chasing of the melodic finger, with the continuous open rat-tat-tat, conflicts with the melodic flow, obscures the pattern and lacks the essential rhythmic anticipation which is imperative for good synchronisation.

Example "B" Melody line.

Example "C" (Old Time) is something like how it might well have been played thirty years ago, although the pointing would not have been so clearly shown. The duple rhythm is well maintained and the pattern easy to follow. The roll, which is the only means the drummer has of sustaining a note, does not confuse the issue, but rather complements the piper's punctuation and leads to better unison throughout. Moreover the character of pipe music is strongly upheld and this, to me, is an important factor.

FINALLY

I think I have now given ample reasons for my line of thought and, unfortunately for these articles, the Drum Major practically belongs to the same school. Surely, it is now up to some contemporary "tapper" to draw aside the veil and show wherein lies the musical beauty of his involved technicianship.

TEMPO

BY DRUM MAJOR ALEX McCORMICK, AUSTRALIA

In the light of Pipe Major Sloan's articles, this is a very controversial point, and one which merits more thought, than is normally given. The word is Italian and means time, but in music it is used in the sense of pace or speed. This pace or speed is usually indicated in two ways (1) by the use of Italian terms such as Andante, Allegro etc. and (2) by a metronome marking. The first method is more elastic than the second, because it does not tie the performer to an exact number of beats per minute, but allows a slight range within which the performer may play. The second is quite definite inasmuch as it states the exact number of beats per minute.

TEMPO IN PIPE BANDS

Under the present rules of the SPBA there are no conditions laid down to the effect that a competing band will play the march, strathspey and reel at any given or approximate tempo. In the books of pipe music available to pipe bands, there are no tempo marks, nor is there any indication in the preface or notes of instruction as to how fast the various tunes have to be played. The only book in which I have seen any mention of speed, is a book of bagpipe music written by a William Ross, and published in 1885. In it he mentions that quick time is 108 beats per minute, and double time 150 beats per minute. As far as pipe bands go, the Pipe Major is responsible for the tempo at which his band plays. This is usually decided at the practices, and is based, on his interpretation of the time, and, to a degree, the ability of his pipers, although I don't think it's correct for a Pipe Major to lower the tempo of a tune to suit his pipers, when he feels it should be played at a higher tempo to get the best performance. This point was evident among the lower grade bands that played tunes too difficult and therefore gave a poor performance. Getting back to the band practices - when the pipers had the tune mastered, and the drummers had the beatings memorised, they got together for the combined effort, and in some cases the Pipe Major would say, "I want it played like this, at this speed," whereupon he would play the first part at the desired speed. The drummers had to memorise that speed, and stick to it. In other cases the Pipe Major didn't say anything until after the band had played, then he would say it was either too fast, too slow, or just right. Very few Pipe Majors, if any, gave the tempo in actual figures. In his article in the March-April issue, Pipe Major Sloan states that on one occasion a band played at 78 and that the average tempo was in the middle 80s which was bad enough. I gather from this, and previous articles, that he favours the marches played at 100 or more. It would seem that if the average tempo is in the middle 80s there wouldn't be any bands playing at 100, in fact there would be very few playing at 90. I find it hard to believe that all these Pipe Majors have been superseded by the drummers in their bands. Surely the majority of these Pipe Majors are satisfied with the tempo otherwise they would object and, by the same token, surely the majority of the drummers aren't so pig-headed that they are actually defying their Pipe Majors. Would it not be nearer the truth to say that there has been a general lowering of the tempo in the last few years, not altogether the fault of the drummers, but because Pipe Majors wanted it.

Pipe Major Sloan admits that 30 years ago pointing was practically unheard. Could it be that because of the pointing of the tunes, present day Pipe Majors find they can get better performances by lowering the tempo? As I see it, Pipe Majors are to pipe bands what conductors are to brass bands and orchestras. Their job is to get the best possible performance, and this can only be done by the co-operation of all members of the band.

WHO SHOULD GET THE TEMPO POINTS?

It has been admitted that the drummers set, and maintain the tempo, therefore they should get the tempo points. I agree, but let's go a little further. Whether the tempo set is the pre-arranged one or

not makes no difference. The points are not deducted because a band fails to play at 96 or 100 etc., but because it fails to maintain the initial tempo. Pipers can do very little to alter the tempo during a performance, and are dependent on the drummers to maintain the initial tempo. If the initial tempo is the pre-arranged one so much the better but if it is not then, according to the present points sheet, the pipers will probably lose points in execution. If the pipers had the tempo points, and the drummers started them off too fast, then the pipers would lose points for something over which they have no control, namely tempo. I agree with Pipe Major Sloan, that the Piping judge is the best man to say whether the tune is being played at the proper tempo to ensure the best possible performance, but is it in the best interests to give him points to penalise them in order to get a better performance. Would it not be better to try and instil the feeling of musicianship in all members of the band, and through this, reach the pinnacle of musical Performance so much desired. I don't think the transferring of tempo points to the Piping judge would achieve any sooner the results required. I don't know what the feelings of bandsmen in general think of this tempo question, because Pipe Major Sloan is the only one so far who has voiced his opinion. Is there a general feeling that the tempo of tunes in competitions is too low? If so, here's a suggestion; why not form a panel of competent people to catalogue the various marches (they seem to be the focal point) and lay down certain tempo, for certain tunes, at which they would consider would be the best to achieve the highest performance. The individual members of the panel may differ a beat or two per minute in their ideas of the best tempo, but surely they would be within a short range of each other, so that there would be a minimum and maximum, e.g. one tune might be marked to be played between 96 and 100, while another might be marked 100-104, and so on with the others. Being a march, the initial tempo would have to be maintained, but so long as the initial tempo was within the figures laid down, there would be no penalty.

SUMMING UP

In these articles pertaining to pipe band performances there has been plenty of opportunities for bandsmen to express their views. Instead, we find no attempt to date of any expression either for, or against the ideas and views put forward by Pipe Major Sloan or myself, with the exception of Drum Major Roberts. What's wrong? Are the bandsmen satisfied with the present set up, or are they just not interested? It's nearly 12 months since Pipe Major Sloan wrote his first article, and the pipe band fraternity have remained silent. Come on boys, give us some of that "*after-contest-post-mortem-spirit*."

ENSEMBLE AND MUSICIANSHIP

BY DRUM MAJOR A D HAMILTON

I have been interested in some of the recent articles published in the Magazine and I would like to take some of the subject matter a little further.

PROGRESS

There is no doubt that pipe bands have made very considerable progress over the last forty years; bands have increased greatly in numbers and much technical progress has been made, but whether a band performance has improved musically within the last ten years is another matter. It seems to me that all the stress of a band performance is put entirely upon technical ability with the result that many of our bands have reached the stage of absolute stalemate. It is possible for an instrumentalist to have excellent technical ability, in short he could be a very fine technical performer but be lacking in the awareness of what should constitute a good ensemble.

OUTLOOK

The present outlook of many pipers and drummers is not on the quality of sound produced but rather on the quantity of notes played. While it is necessary to have technical ability, it is equally important, if a performer wants to become an artist, to have a good sense of musicianship and I feel that further progress can only be made through a more concentrated effort on the latter aspect. Our whole outlook, including the method of playing, the types of tunes selected, and the present system of adjudication is long overdue for reconsideration.

GRADES - TUNES AND BANDS

We have several grades of bands but, on listening to various contests, it would appear we have only one grade of music. Even the very junior grade bands want to play the heavier type of tune because they feel that it is the more adroit fingering technique that wins all the prizes. Surely a simple tune played well is a better musical rendering than a difficult tune played only moderately well. The tunes selected by a Pipe Major should surely be within the technical ability of the poorest playing members of his band. To play heavy tunes without the necessary ability of all members of a band is bound to lead to a rather deliberate laborious performance. This has resulted in the dreadfully slow tempos now so evident at all contests. Pipers and drummers are so concerned in the technical effort required that they have lost all sense of enjoyment in the melody itself. Is there any virtue in playing a piece of music which has only difficulty to commend it?

IMPROVEMENT

To improve the musical standard of a band performance it is necessary to take two vital steps. Firstly the drum prize must be abolished, because it is obvious that the average drummer is only concerned with his technical display and not his drum composition. Secondly there should be an opportunity of adjudicating a band contest on the combined effort of both pipes and drums. Why did we introduce the word "ensemble" if there is no opportunity of using it?

The existing method of adjudication, viz. one or two Pipe Majors confined to the pipes only and a Drum Major concentrating on the drums and no-one appointed to adjudicate the band as a musical ensemble is, to me, plain daft.