

The Melbourne Staff Band of The Salvation Army

The early performances of the Melbourne Staff Band were not auspicious; a report from 1890 said 'It managed to get over one tune successfully while Major Barritt begged for the collection!' It was probably to be expected; the Band was put together, at the behest of Commissioner Thomas B. Coombs, by Staff Bandmaster Jeremiah Eunson from a motley group of eight officers, three comrades and Willie the messenger, all staff from The Salvation Army's Territorial Headquarters. Only Eunson, who arranged all the music, trained and conducted the Band, had any musical experience.

Progress was rapid though and by 1899, when the band first journeyed interstate to support the visit of General William Booth, a reporter could write of its 'spirited playing, perfect harmony and brilliant execution of the music.' Since its inception there have been six name changes and ten different Staff Bandmasters but those virtues remained inviolate.

By 1924, the band was broadcasting; in 1929 it made its first recording and in 1959 made its initial overseas tour, to New Zealand. The Band, under Staff Bandmaster Colin Woods, probably established its world-wide reputation at The Salvation Army's International Congress in 1978 when, after a wonderful U.K. tour, composer Kevin Norbury wrote in *The International Bandsman*, that the Band was 'the finest Army band I've heard in the last ten years.'

The Band's international reputation has been enhanced by visits to the U.K. (four times), Europe, Canada, the USA, New Zealand and, Korea. Recordings are regular features of the Band's diary but not its *raison d'être*. It maintains its primary roles of supporting major Salvation Army events, sponsoring concerts with leading contemporary performers from Australia and overseas and campaigning in the streets and halls of towns, large and small, throughout Australia.

In becoming a world-class band, the Melbourne Staff Band has not lost sight of its mission. It has a great history and tradition but presses on bringing the message of Christ to the modern world. The challenge is immense but the Band continues its quest in the firm belief that its work is relevant and the God it serves will honour its commitment.

Staff Bandmaster Ken Waterworth

When Ken Waterworth joined the Melbourne Staff Band in 1979, he already had a formidable reputation as a euphonium soloist. His progression to Deputy Bandmaster and, in 1994, to Bandmaster was smooth and natural as by then, he had established his credentials for leadership and musicianship far beyond the confines of The Salvation Army.

For over 25 years, Ken was the Director of Music at Eltham High School where he built the instrumental programme to the point where his Senior Symphonic Band was consistently a national pace-setter in the genre. Amongst many community honours recognizing this, he received the Prime Minister's Centenary Medal for outstanding leadership and development in music education.

As Staff Bandmaster, Ken's constant challenge is to affirm the relevance of the brass band in a changing Army musical ethos. He endeavours, he says, to extend the boundaries of musical styles of the Band 'to serve the present age.' He succeeds by maintaining the superb standards he inherited, producing attractive concerts, both contemporary and traditional, backed by innovative use of multi-media technologies, campaigning in corps throughout the country and actively encouraging the next generation of Army musicians.