



TAKING UP THE BATON

mark taylor
discusses his new
role with Chicago
Brass Band

.....

EXPLORING THE PREPARATION OF CONTEST MUSIC

part 2 of matt billock's
innovative new ways
of analyzing practice
routines

.....

SUN, SEA AND BRASS

international brass
band summer school
review



CONTENTS

- 3 **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**
- 4 **EXPLORING THE PREPARATION OF NABBA CONTEST MUSIC PART 2**
matt billock concludes his discussion on innovative new ways of analyzing practice routines
- 9 **NABBA RULE CHANGES**
nabba approves updated rulebook
- 10 **TAKING UP THE BATON**
interview with new chicago brass band director mark taylor
- 12 **SUN, SEA AND BRASS**
international brass band summer school review



A MESSAGE from our president

.....



It is a great pleasure to bring another issue of the Bridge to our membership. Thanks go to Aaron Campbell and Andrew Wainwright for putting this project together. The Board had a great work session in August in Indianapolis, as well as a good fall meeting online in September. We are really excited with the adjustments to the Championships that are being put into motion that will make the weekend better for everyone.

We are also really excited to branch out from the Championships and partner with Regionals like the US Open, Dublin Festival of Brass, Gateway Brass Band Festival, Mid Atlantic Brass Band Festival and the new Great Canadian Brass Band Festival. Look for information about these events soon.

We hope everyone is back to playing concerts, rehearsing, and socializing with their band friends. We invite you all to plan to come to Huntsville in April and be a part of the Championships event. We also strongly encourage you to either perform, or attend as a spectator, any of the regional brass band events that may happen near you. Happy banding!



NABBA President
Tony Granados

Vice-President
Dr. Patrick Herak

Secretary
Doug Lindsay

Treasurer
Alex Schnautz

Ex-Officio
Anita Cocker Hunt

Board Members
Term ending July 1, 2022
Dr. John Bell
Aaron Campbell
David Jones
Dr. Bill Waterman

Term ending July 1, 2023
Jason Collier
Andrew Harms
Anita McAlister
Jon Heaver
Douglas Lindsey
Jesse Rackley
Sal Scarpa
Mark A. Taylor
Christopher Ward
Bryen Warfield

Brass Band Bridge Editor
Andrew Wainwright

Typesetting and Artwork
Andrew Wainwright

Display and classified advertising and general enquiries
Email: granados@nabba.org

The opinions contained in the magazine are not necessarily a reflection of those held by the publisher, its editorial advisors or consultants. Neither does the publisher accept responsibility for claims made by those advertising in the magazine.



EXPLORING THE PREPARATION OF NABBA CONTEST MUSIC

Part 2

In the last issue of Brass Band Bridge, **Matt Billock** discussed innovative new ways of analyzing practice routines. Here he continues the discussion in part 2 of the article.



Graphing the data

With the application written, and all the data in place, it's time to take a look at some graphs!

Cells per date

The first graph (Graph A - top of page 5) we will look at is very simply “cells completed on each date”. This is just an aggregate count of the number of cells completed on given dates, with no other analysis built in.

This shows the average activity level I achieved during my practice sessions. There are a few conclusions we can draw from here:

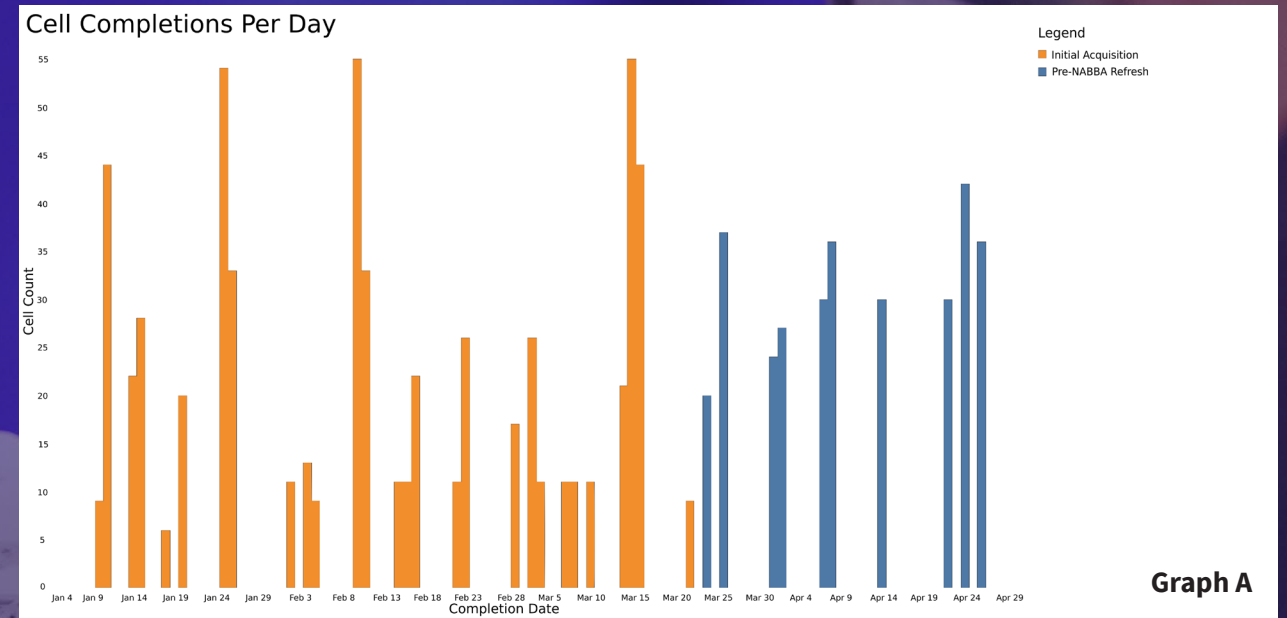
- I set a goal for consistently completing rows each day at the start of the season. Obviously that didn't work.

- There are a few clear gaps:
 - Some of these (such as the one starting after April 14th) are due to illness or other obligations.
 - Others are likely cases where I practiced but did not work on the spreadsheet (if I was feeling run down I'd just run tunes).
- Cell counts, though more widely dispersed, were more dependable as I hit the refresh sheet (the blue columns to the right of the graph).

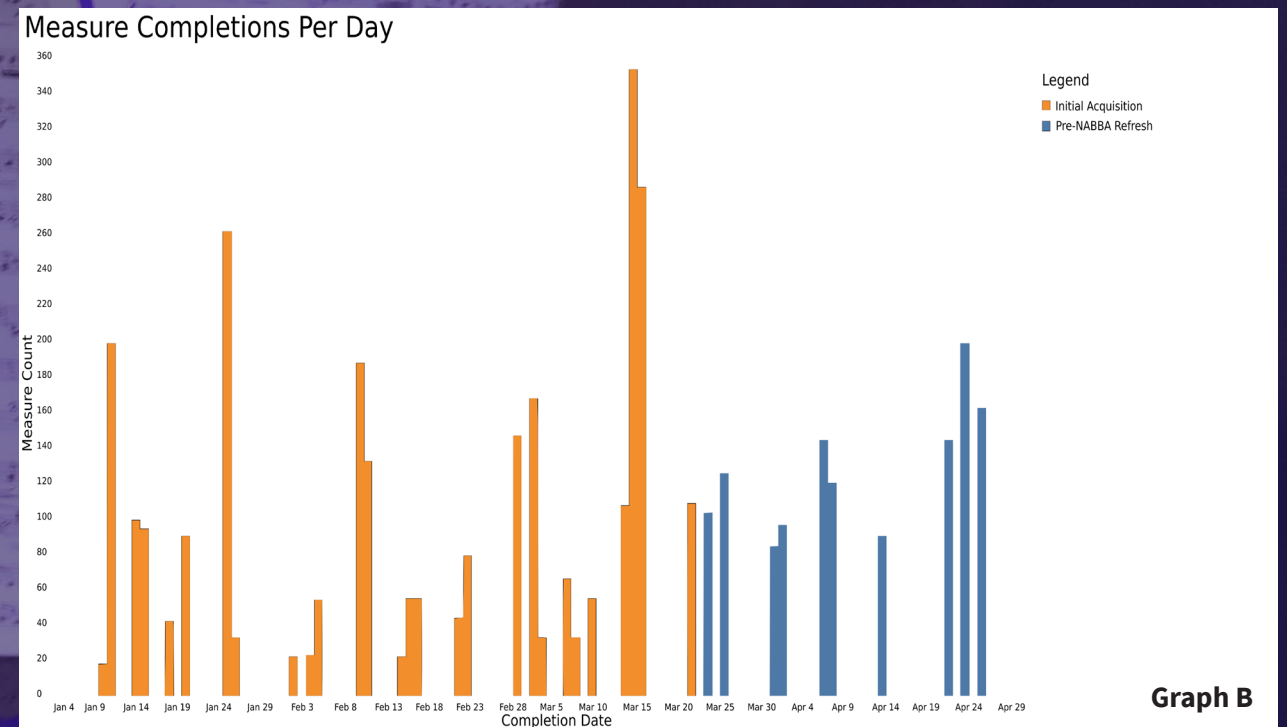
Measures per date

This next graph (Graph B - second down on page 5) is very closely correlated to the prior, but with one minor difference. The graph above only counted cell completions in the aggregate. This graph takes those same completion counts, and multiplies them by the number of measures in each segment, in an attempt to count the total number of musical measures marked completed each day.

The hope here was that the days that had spikes in effort would have a similar number of “completed measures” to those without the spikes, the hypothesis being that the peaks in the graph were cases where the segments I chose might have been particularly easy. I don't believe the data bears that out - you see some extra volatility, but overall the slope of the graph reflects that of the cell completion rate. This means the differences in productivity are likely more driven by energy and available time, rather than any particular aspect of the segment lengths or inherent complexities.



Graph A



Graph B

A quick note on data normalization

Something the above graph highlights is that not all cells are created equal. Some of my rows would cover a single measure, while others would cover a range of measures as long as eight. This meant that some cells simply had more notes in them, which meant they took longer to learn. In essence, as each cell is not the same size, trying to analyze the cells in aggregate - as a collection - is a lot more challenging to do.

This process is called data normalization, and is critical for creating a means to not only measure the relative complexity of cells, but for ensuring a data set is meaningful in the first place. The goal is to try to refine the process so that each cell represents a similar unit of work. If I have two segments with four measures, I'd want the same number of total notes in each, at a minimum. Doing so would allow me to say “each cell is roughly equal in challenge and complexity”, and in doing so I'd be able to turn my measurements into a predictive tool for progress.

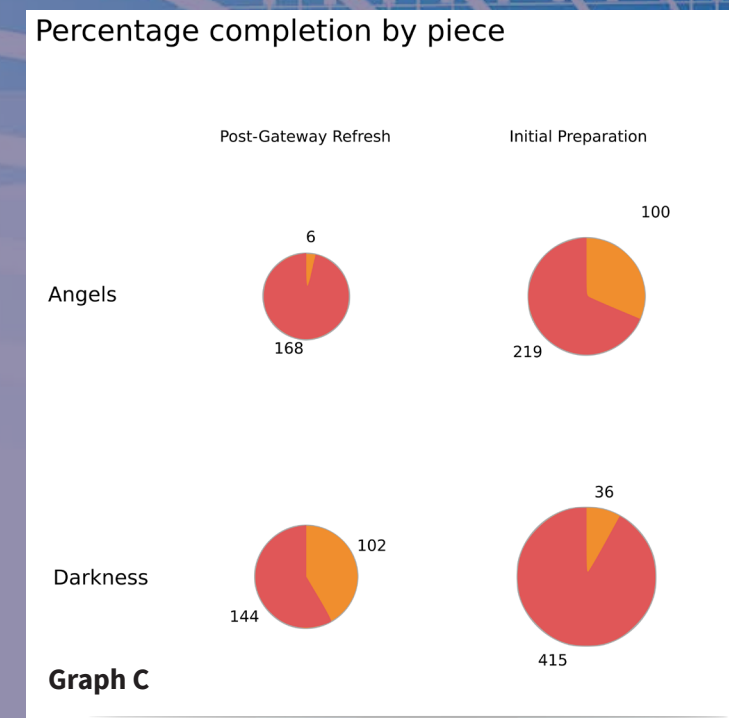


That's a bit of complexity there. Ultimately what I'm getting across is that one of the potential problems with my approach is that each cell is *not* created equal. Much as the Arban *Carnival of Venice* presents a greater challenge than the Clarke, some music is just more challenging to learn. This process, which I am still refining, doesn't adequately account for the comparative complexity - I think there's some interesting experimentation to be done along these lines in future articles.

This is a likely future improvement for my practice regimen from a metrics perspective, but very quickly we start trading off musicality for a choppy practice scheme that never lets you treat a phrase as a cohesive unit, with the end result being a piece that sounds like a hundred measures put together rather than an identifiable song.

Comparing null rates between the iterations

The final graph we'll look at is a simple pie chart showing the portions of each sheet that I completed versus the total number of cells available per song. In essence, if each row asked me 11 questions, how many of them did I not answer?



In this graph (Graph C), the left set of pie charts represent the work I did between St. Louis and NABBA on the reinforcement sheet, while the right set of pie charts represent my initial work-up of the pieces in preparation for St. Louis. You can see the relative reduction in sizes here between my reinforcement sheet (left, about 418 cells) and my original work-up sheet (right, about 869 cells), the difference in the graph sizes reflects that difference in the domain size.

As is likely obvious, I did not meet my goal of completing every cell. There are plenty of reasons why, but the thing I noticed as I approached the contest is that there were a number of items that either didn't need reinforcement at all, or received sufficient reinforcement through simple rehearsal and runs. That being said, we're looking at around a 15% miss rate for initial workup, and a 30% miss rate for the final reinforcement.

I've clearly got some work to do on dedication and consistency here, but there's also a point where you simply have a ton of work to do, and only a finite amount of time to do it. And the above data reflects that in a lot of ways, as stretches of days with no or little progress are periodically interrupted by days of great productivity.

Observations on Reinforcement

As I mentioned above, once I completed the initial workup of the music for the Gateway contest in St. Louis, I created a new spreadsheet that I used to reinforce what I'd already learned. This spreadsheet was similar to the other, but I removed a few rows that were no longer challenging (once you're able to triple tongue at 200, more reps is just endurance building) and reduced the number of iterations in tempo for each row. This resulted in a smaller sheet to fill out, but as the hard work was largely done with respect to learning the music, I felt like this was a good balance to get ahold of any parts that were getting away from me.

And it worked too. Beautifully so. Taking a part I'd been playing at tempo for a month and slowing it back down to half speed really helped expose the issues I was running into while playing with the ensemble. There were a few runs in *And from the Darkness...* where I discovered I was rushing 16ths within the beat, or that my triple

tonguing had a gallop to it, and slowing everything back down two-thirds of the way through contest prep really helped to refocus and reinforce the knowledge that I'd become complacent with.

Reflecting on the Process

So the ultimate question here is: was this worth the effort?

My answer? Unequivocally yes.

The most important thing it did was quantify the problem. When you receive the sheet music for a piece like *Where Angels Fly*, it can be daunting to look through page after page of runs and gentle chords. The exercise of building the practice sheet really helped me break the piece down into manageable chunks, which took some of the fear out of the process.

The other thing that this process brings is psychology. Simply put, seeing a spreadsheet become progressively filled with dates is satisfying. Like popping every bubble on a piece of bubble wrap, you can get into a competitive mindset. My high score was 55 cells in one day - something I would not have known if I hadn't taken the time to calculate and track the data.

The critical thing, though, is that the tiny dopamine hit you get from completing a cell is a key subtle reinforcement introduced by the process. Completing a cell feels good, and after you've completed a row you can feel a sense of accomplishment. Instead of feeling like you're staring at the same four bars for six hours, you can put those bars in their context or even move on to another area that still needs attention, to let your subconscious adjust to the new demands being placed upon it.

That being said, there are a lot of improvements I'd like to make to this process:

- I'd like to build an app that lets me populate the database directly. I had to spend a couple hours writing a CSV importer for my database, and after the fourth sheet that's just not going to be my idea of fun. Plus, if it's on the web, anyone can try it out and help improve the method! I'm a huge fan of open source.

• There's some substance here, but overall I feel like I don't know the right questions to ask, and I don't have data to answer the ones I would like to address. I'm going to address this next time by simply tracking more data about the music being played, and tying those into the analytics suite alongside the existing data.

• There could be improvement to the reinforcement components. I found most of my time going to empty cells as I practiced, and I only really reinforced the music during rehearsals and on the occasions I'd run the pieces during a practice session. Intermittent reintroduction of learned material would be a well-proven way to solidify the procured knowledge. I think technology can assist here.

• In general, I think there's a lot we can do with technology to learn about the "meta" of practicing. It's always going to be hard to separate the practice data with the physical situation, performer biases, and varying standards of quality applied by each musician as they practice, but we can learn about practice skills in aggregate and work to get a stronger gauge on what exactly a productive practice session looks like.

The Ultimate Question

In conclusion, the ultimate question we really need to ask is "did all of this accomplish my goals?" To which I say "definitely yes."

There was a quirk of microphone placement on brasspass.tv that, simply put, means you can hear the 1st tenor horn extremely clearly. Which is awesome, as now I can directly compare my notes against the reality presented by the recording.

The thought I want to leave you with is this: Do not be afraid to leverage technology to assist you. Whether or not the practice regimen I followed above is pedagogically the "right" way to do things, it kept me motivated. Watching that sheet fill, and seeing the progress I was making, kept me coming back to the horn night after night, and ultimately put me in a good position to do the preparation I needed to represent myself and the Chicago Brass Band well.

Special thanks to Jennifer Billock, Aaron Campbell, and Kiley Billock for reviewing advance copies of this article.

CELEBRATING **B**ROOKWRIGHT Music

Christmas with

Over 100 titles for the holidays for brass band, brass and percussion ensemble, wind band and solo instruments



All items available for instant PDF download at www.brookwrightmusic.com
Sheet music available from www.solidbrassmusic.com

BOARD APPROVES UPDATED NABBA RULEBOOK

At its recent annual fall meeting, the Board of Directors of the North American Brass Band Association approved the updated rulebook for the North American Brass Band Championships for 2023. Full text of the rulebook may be found on the NABBA website Championships page, here: <https://nabba.org/championships/>

We invite members to review the document carefully, as there have been some changes made to the rules. Specifically we want to highlight the following:

- Changes to Band Contest Rule 8 (sharing of players between bands)
- Updates to Band Contest Rule 9 (timing of own-choice programs)
- Changes to Band Registration Section 5 (penalties for late

submission of own choice scores)

- New Band Contest Flow Item 2 (Championship, First and Second section bands will perform Test Pieces on Friday and Own Choice programs on Saturday)

- New Solo Registration Item 8 and Ensemble Registration Item 7 (performance spots in solo and ensemble events are limited)

Band registration for the 2023 NABBA Championships opens November 15 and closes January 15. Solo and Ensemble registration opens January 22 and closes February 10.

We hope everyone's banding season is off to a great start! Order your choice pieces and adjudicator scores now to make sure they are ready for submission by January 15.

AW WAINWRIGHT Music & Media

The official media company of ANDREW WAINWRIGHT

- Composition/Arranging
- Soundtracks & Audio Mixing
- Orchestration
- Graphic Design
- Web Design

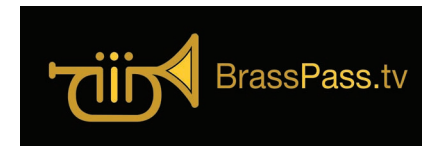
An award-winning composer and arranger whose music is performed internationally by brass bands, choirs, orchestras and wind bands.

As a designer, he continues to work with many leading figures and ensembles in the music world.

www.wainwrightmusicmedia.com



NABBA WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR PARTNERS:



TAKING UP THE BATON

Mark Taylor was recently named the new director of the Chicago Brass Band after working with them in the role on an interim basis for this most recent NABBA. **Aaron Campbell** recently sat down with Mark to discuss the move and all of the exciting aspects of becoming the director of the band.

After a successful trip to NABBA last season, how excited are you to be taking the podium full time with the band this year?

This is an incredible opportunity and I feel fortunate to be able to continue this journey with Chicago Brass Band that began 20 seasons ago! I joined the band as a percussionist about a month after the organization was formed. I didn't even know what a British brass band was. But my friend Teralyn Keith invited me to sit in with the section, and after the first rehearsal I was hooked. Later when I went to grad school at University of North Texas, I was privileged to be assigned to the brass band as its grad assistant (under Brian Bowman, no less!). I ended up writing my dissertation on collegiate brass bands in the U.S., and all of this traces back to my joining CBB as a player.

Over the band's first 20 seasons, I learned so much about the history, traditions, and repertoire from the band's founding director, Colin Holman. During that time the band has traveled on several international tours and competed in the North American Brass Band Championships every year. The band has compiled an amazing legacy, so to be part of it now as Music Director is an honor and a privilege. It was a blast for me to conduct the band through last contest season, so now getting to start the year off is like a level up!

What are you most excited for heading into this season?

Last year was still a bit of a recovery year following widespread shutdowns during the pandemic. Audiences were somewhat slow



to come back to live music, and like most bands, attendance at rehearsals was compromised by COVID exposure or illness. I'm excited to continue moving back towards a more normal year, where we can focus our efforts on improving our musical product and refining our concentration and artistry.

I love contest season. I'm a big repertoire nerd, even though I'm still relatively new to the genre. But I feel that it's in contest music that the brass band movement is pressing forward most boldly in terms of the body of repertoire. So I love digging into what's happening throughout the field, finding new composers I may not have encountered before, finding works that may bring something new to the genre.

But I also love the way brass bands connect with their home audiences. I think it's important that we continue to build an audience base in our home communities to broaden the appeal of brass bands, and that it's important that we support the creation of interesting, artistic repertoire that both stretches and rewards our home audiences. So I'm really looking forward to planning our season of concerts and helping to grow the population of brass band enthusiasts in our area.

We also are fortunate to be located in a region with several other terrific bands as well - some that are annual NABBC competitors, and others that are not, but we're all part of the brass band community in Illinois/Indiana/Wisconsin. I'm looking forward to building and strengthening connections with these other bands since we are all in this together!

Is there anything that you have always wanted to conduct that you may put in the folder this year?

CBB is such a deeply talented ensemble. Conducting them is what I imagine it might be like to climb behind the wheel of an exotic sports car for the first time! I'm really looking forward to exploring some of the older, "classic" early brass band repertoire. We have Holst's *Moorside Suite* in the folders now, and I'm preparing it in conjunction with reading Steven Arthur Allen's great analysis of the piece.



SUN, SEA AND BRASS AT SWANSEA SUMMER SCHOOL

Maggie Craver reports

The International Brass Band Summer School in 2022 was genuinely sun, sea and brass. Held at the University of Wales, Swansea in the beautiful surroundings on the Gower peninsula, the delegates came together from around the world, with the course being directed by Black Dyke Band's conductor, Professor Nicholas Childs.

The week was a mixture of musical education with a vacation atmosphere with like-minded musicians. The course fee included individual en-suite accommodation, breakfast, evening meal and all the tutorials. This was the first time IBBSS had held its course at the Bay Campus and from the reaction of the delegates they thought the facilities were outstanding.

"I loved the new campus! Good food, tutor room and band rehearsals were all close together."

Barbara Stockli, Zurich, Switzerland

The world renowned IBBSS tutors included Richard Marshall (Black Dyke), Tom Hutchinson (Cory), Chris Turner (formerly of Cory), Owen Farr (formerly of Cory), Gary Curtin (Foden's), Dan Thomas, Brett Baker, Matthew Routley, Neil Edwards and Mark Thackrah (all Black Dyke).

Our composer in residence was Norwegian Fredrick Schjelderup, from whom we gained special insight to the life of a composer. Fredrick commented on the week: "Thank you so much for some amazing days at IBBSS. I really understand why people travel from all over to visit this course. This has been one of the greatest weeks

for a long time, great staff and wonderful delegates."

IBBSS has two single bands, Cardinal and Symphony, which joined together to form a special massed band. Tuition included individual lessons, full band rehearsals, sectional practices, ensemble tuition, and conducting. This year's sight reading sessions included Eric Ball's *Resurgam* and Edward Gregson's *Of Distant Memories*.

Delegates had the opportunity to prepare solos with resident accompanist, Chris Williams (official accompanist at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama), and some performed in the Delegates' Concert at the end of the week.

Each night there were wonderful solo recitals from IBBSS's world class tutors. Meanwhile, there was a fantastic quiz night with our very own quiz master, Matthew Routley. On Wednesday evening IBBSS created three bands, where we enjoyed our own 'Brass in Contest', with a format including a march, hymn setting and set test piece. This year's piece was the *Heroic March* from Percy Fletcher's *An Epic Symphony*.

On August 1st we even had our own celebrations to commemorate

Swiss National Day and Yorkshire Day, which share the same date. Thursday night represented an ensembles concert. This gave the trombones and horn sections a chance to perform in a concert environment. The evening closed with our own all ladies ensemble 'Girls Alone'. This featured Siobhan Bates in *Upon Green Vales*, before the ensemble's finale of *For Your Eyes Only*. One of the highlights was having the Gala Concert in the magnificent Great Hall.

"The concert was amazing. I think the acoustic was simply outstanding. I sat in the centre of the audience and the sound was exceptional. You could hear the percussion easily without it overloading. It was the best live brass band concert I have heard for a long time."
Christopher Jones, Swansea

The Final Concert featured the Symphony and Cardinal Bands, which performed items including Fredrick Schjelderup's *New Beginnings* and *Fantasy of Joy*. There was music from the movies *Star Wars* and *West Side Story*, with Paul Lovatt-Cooper's *Fire in the Blood* as one of the finales. Guest soloists within the concert included Richard Marshall, Gary Curtin and Dan Thomas playing *Charavari*, *Neath Dublin Skies* and *Bravura* respectively.



The IBSS massed bands is always special and this year didn't disappoint, with items including R. B. Hall's *New Colonial* and *March of the Appian Way* from *Pines of Rome*.

A poignant moment was when the massed band dedicated its encore *I'll Walk with God* to past delegates who have sadly passed away during the pandemic, including Morfydd Childs, Frank Matley and Bryan Warrington.

The course proved even more memorable when the flugel and tenor horns were announced as 'Section of the Week'. After a great concert we had karaoke and the legendary end of course party, which finished on a different day to when it started!

Next year's International Brass Band Summer School will take place from 31st July – 5th August. Please visit www.ibss.com to download your PDF application form or for more information please contact Administrator Alison Childs at Alison4horn@btinternet.com.

IBSS would like to thank its principal sponsor, the Geneva Group, together with the support of its other partners including Rath, Band Supplies, Prima Vista, Kapitol Promotions, Musikverlag Frank, Kirklees, Obrasso, Brass Band World, GK Design and World of Brass.

Delegates' Comments

"A massive thank you to 'The Childs' and all the tutors on IBSS, this truly has the 'midas' touch. I have been motivated, inspired, developed and supported throughout the week." Rob McHarg, Scotland

"The sun was shining and I have loved every moment! Amazing tutors with so much expertise. Wonderful accommodation! Enjoyed all the new facilities." Lorraine Rogers, Chiltern, England

"Thanks to Nick and all the staff for organising a great IBSS. Thanks to the tutors for their expertise and

brilliant recitals. The new facilities are very good, as was the food." Peter Jaeggi, Switzerland

"Sun, sea and lots of brass! Happy to be here again! Great location, delicious food and as always wonderful friendship." Thomas

"My first time and I have loved every minute. Everyone is so kind and welcoming. I have learnt so much." Polly Napper, London

"Fantastic week (my first year). Loved the Gala concert, sight reading and conducting workshop. Already looking forward to next year." Steve Fryett

"Thank you to all the team for a fabulous week. I also enjoyed relaxing at Becky's Bar, a very welcoming addition. Music was definitely the winner." Sandra Pearce, Oxfordshire

"The best so far, and I have been to a few! Fredrick is a genius, and the ensembles were a great new idea!" John Gillespie, Camberley, Australia

"It is absolutely fabulous to be back! Thanks for organising and to give us an opportunity to play with magnificent players and make new friends." Sarah Moore, Leicester

"We made it to 2022! Thank you so much for your powerful leadership, the highlight of my year." Neil Craver, Florida USA

"Thank you for another wonderful week of music making, all your organisation running round after us and, of course, Becky's Bar! After missing out on the past two years it is brilliant to be back!" Amber Lewis-Roberts, Sheffield





**THE NABBA BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE 2023
NABBC BAND ADJUDICATORS:**

JOHN PHILLIPS
DR. HOWARD EVANS
ALLAN RAMSAY
JESSICA SNEERINGER
DR. T. ANDRÉ FAEGIN
COL. (RET.) THOMAS PALMATIER
DR. JACK STAMP
SR. CHIEF (RET.) JAMES JACKSON
DR. JOHN FALSCOW

REGIONAL EVENTS

US OPEN

NOVEMBER 19, 2022 – CLARKSTON, MI
WWW.USOPENBRASS.ORG

MID ATLANTIC BRASS BAND FESTIVAL

FEBRUARY 11-12, 2023 – GLASSBORO, NJ
WWW.MIDATLANTICBRASSBANDFESTIVAL.COM

GATEWAY FESTIVAL

MARCH 18, 2023 – ST. LOUIS, MO
WWW.STLBB.ORG/GATEWAY-CHAMPIONSHIPS

DUBLIN FESTIVAL OF BRASS

MARCH 25, 2023 – DUBLIN, OH
[HTTPS://DUBLINBANDS.COM/DFOB](https://DUBLINBANDS.COM/DFOB)

GREAT CANADIAN BRASS BAND FESTIVAL

MAY 12-13, 2023 – UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO