



Above: Master David Hill and NYJO musical director Bill Ashton. Above right: saxophonist Sam Mayne. Below: Dave O'Higgins, Mark Armstrong and Jamie Talbot

compered the evening, introduced the NYJO under its MD and founder Bill Ashton, and its initial contribution was a rousing trumpet fanfare – the opening bars of the specially composed *Worshipful Company*, written and conducted by the orchestra's assistant musical director, Mark Armstrong.

The first of the evening's special guests, alto saxophonist Jamie Talbot, came on stage to deliver a lyrical interpretation of the lovely standard *Here's that rainy day*; and there was more fine reed playing from flautist Gareth Lockrane and tenor saxophonist Osian Roberts on *Kids from Red House*, which Bill Ashton dedicated to his wife and helpmeet Kay. A lively reworking of the classic *Moten Swing* featured an unusual voicing of tenor, baritone sax and flute on its main theme before reaching a roaring climax.

The first half culminated in the extended *Remembrance*, dedicated to the victims of the terrorist outrages in the US and given added poignancy by the sound of an emergency

vehicle's siren passing by outside the theatre.

The band stretched out after the interval in four lengthy musical expeditions, starting with Mark Nightingale's composition *Don't mention the blues* and followed by an exquisite version of *Our love is here to stay*, which brought the second guest of the evening, tenor saxophonist Dave O'Higgins, to the stage.

On this standard, and the succeeding *Unison in all things*, where he was joined by his fellow former NYJO associate Jamie Talbot, Higgins showed himself to have developed into an impressive and major figure on today's international jazz scene. And this degree of maturity was matched by numerous individual contributions from the fledgling musicians in the orchestra – their cohesion and delight in their playing communicating to the appreciative audience, and underlining the Company's good sense in deciding to sponsor the NYJO over the next three years.

Book Review

ESSENTIAL READING FOR BAND FANS

The British Brass Band
A musical and social history
Trevor Herbert, editor
381pp Oxford University
Press £48
ISBN 019 816698 2

Liveryman Bram Gay writes Here at last we have a history, as complete as human endeavour can make, of the birth, development, organisation and repertoire of the brass band in the British sense of the term.

The book owes its origin to *Bands*, published by the Open University in 1991, under the same editor, and its remarkably detailed coverage is largely derived from the diverse research of the contributors to that earlier work. Such an approach brings, inevitably, a degree of repetition, but happily in the present case it has resulted in a beneficial broadening of the discussion.

From the origin of the British band in the early 19th century to the results of the most important band contest of last year, almost every aspect of brass-band activity, whether musical, social, competitive or religious, is recorded here, alongside a comprehensive discussion of the bands and repertoire of The Salvation Army.

Herbert's research into the early bands, especially into the Cyfarthfa Band, for which the earliest original repertoire was composed, makes for fascinating reading.

His writings on performing practice among bands, with special reference to the recorded work of celebrated players, includes the effects of training and performance on British brass-playing in general and on symphonic performance in particular. Here he has had the invaluable advice of John Wallace.

Enthusiasts of the brass-band contest will be pleased to find not only a complete listing of the test music used at the British Open and National Championships since 1853, with the names of the prize-winners, but also the rules under which these contests were held; while the repertoire since 1913, when original composition for the medium as we now know it began, is discussed with judgement and balance by Paul Hindmarsh.

This book, surely, is essential reading for all those who take a serious interest in this branch of music-making.

Reproduced by kind permission of the Times Literary Supplement

