



LITTLE BOY BANDS IN AND AROUND SAN FRANCISCO

DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS COLUMBIA PARK BOYS CLUB

who can get into it is looked on as a top-notch by all the rest of the small boys there.

There is just a touch of romance and tender human interest in the story of its organization.

Among the inmates of the Masonic Home there is an aged veteran of the Civil War, a Mr. King. He is an old musician, and in the quiet and the ease of the home he longed for something to do along the lines of his busier artist life. He interested himself in the orphaned boys that were also the care of the home, and found among them many with the musical gift. These he gathered together and trained as best he could. He found a sympathizer and fellow-enthusiast in M. Siminoff, one of the benefactors of the home, who had given it the handsome temple, and Mr. Siminoff made it possible for the little boys with musical talent to be formed into a band by his gift of the set of fine instruments it uses and the natty little uniforms that set it off and make it a point of interest at the big Masonic gatherings.

The sixteen little boys in their silver gray gold-braided uniforms, with their jaunty little pillbox caps, each with its gold pompon, make a gala showing with their 10-year-old drum major at their head, almost extinguished under his bearskin hood covered with imposing as an officer of the Queen's guard.

They have made splendid progress musically under their aged volunteer instructor, and although they have a paid instructor once a week from the city they still continue under his daily guidance.

They play on Sundays at the home for the pleasure of the inmates and for visitors. They play on all the holidays and at the funerals. They play at the receptions of important visiting Masons. They play at outside entertainments occasionally, and have toured as far as Stockton and San Jose, as well as in the immediate vicinity of the home, and they have toured and played to good purpose, too, for they have a fund of their own earning of between \$1500 and \$1600 in the treasury, that is reserved entirely for the use and needs of the band.

The band of the Home for the Feeble-minded is not really a little boys' band except in so far as the members of it always remain children.

As Dr. Dawson, the medical superintendent, says: "No matter what their age may be they still experience the joys and sorrows of childhood."

"With few exceptions," says Dr. Dawson, "they all have an innate love for the sound of music. Some are capable of being taught to read and play by note on string or brass instruments. Our brass band under the leadership of an instructor has a repertoire of about 100 pieces,

including both standard classic and up-to-date compositions.

"Our band boys are selected from the brightest and most capable of the inmates who show a talent for music and range in age from 13 to 23 years. To be a member of the band and wear the natty uniform of a bandman is considered by the boys to be the goal of their ambition. They exert a strong moral influence, which is felt throughout the institution. In fact, the members of the band set the highest standard for individual conduct and are leaders among their companions.

"The band usually accompanies the boys on their annual outings. Last year 164 boys and band visited Napa City to attend Barnum & Bailey's circus and on one occasion the band took part in the Fourth of July celebration at Sonoma. A daily practice takes place in the assembly hall of the home from 10:30 to 11:30 a. m. A concert is given to the public every Saturday from 2:30 to 3:30 p. m. The band takes part in the various entertainments given during the year for the amusement of the children and at times furnishes the music for the social hours given for the officers and employees of the home. It has been a part of the work department of the home since the work was founded. It has been and is now more than ever recognized as a vital force in the education and training of feeble-minded children, not only in the California Home, but in all the schools for feeble-minded throughout the civilized world."

H. no; Oh, dear no; it isn't at all the case any more, it isn't true of these piping times of progress that "When the elephant walks around, and the band begins to play, the little boy under the monkeys' cage had better keep out of the way."

Quite the contrary, in fact.

The little boy is no longer in concealment under the monkeys' cage, a surreptitious on-looker.

He is himself the cynosure, giving second place to the once lordly elephant; and "when the band begins to play" he is, to borrow his own words "right in it"—not an envious, admiring straggler in the band's wake, but the very band itself.

was a very modest little band of little boys, about a dozen in number, with inexpensive instruments and no uniforms, but now it has grown into one of the smartest, best equipped and most firmly established of the little boy bands. Thanks to the gift of aged Abraham Anspacher, the "old man benevolent" of the institution, it has a fund all its own of \$10,000, the income of which goes to supply its needs. It numbers twenty-five members, as well as a drum and bugle corps of twelve drums and six bugles; it has as fine a set of brass and reed instruments as any band of big boys or little could wish for, a set of instruments worth over \$3000; it has Professor L. von der Mehden as its very own instructor now, and it is uniformed like a company of little Beau Brummels.

When it turns out in its full strength, in its trim little trousers and tunics and peaked caps of postman's gray, playing with little boy zest and an almost professional unison and precision on its fine instruments, it is a band that makes you turn your head to look and stop on your way to listen, and that moves you to say:

"Isn't that fine! Who would have expected it from such little fellows?"

There's not a boy in the band over 14 years old, and from the drum major up they range 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

In honor of the donor of their fund they are called the Anspacher band now, and such a distinction is it to belong to it that there is a waiting list out at the asylum a column long, two or three ambitious recruits for every instrument waiting for one of the older lucky handsmen to drop out, to reach his fourteenth birthday, when he has to go away—and make way for some one else.

If you doubt it just keep your eyes—and your ears—open on the occasion of some big celebration and be prepared to be surprised by the number of little boy bands that take part in it, and also by the excellence of the part they take.

Some good angel of small boys in the course of sociological inquiry discovered that music is an important factor in the education and regeneration of the world, and particularly of the rampant, irrepressible boy-world. The same good angel showed further wisdom in hitting upon the right kind of music for boys, after having, perhaps, discovered the futility of tying the ordinary boy to a piano stool to practice scales, or locking him in a room so many hours a week with a violin or mandolin.

And the result is the organization and training of little boy bands in the most progressive clubs, schools and institutions where boys are herded for their own and the general good.

The wisdom of the undertaking is manifest in the really delightful performances of the little boys' brass bands, and is further evident in the long line of recruits, from six to twelve years old, who practice in secret and live on the hope of some day getting into the band of their special club or school or home.

In the average boy mind—by what process of reasoning only a boy may know—some sort of ignominy attaches to piano playing, violin bowing and the twanging of the light guitar. However much he may like the music—and like it he does in his inmost soul—he'll say of the musician, if he's a boy musician, "Aw, he's a kissy!" And, of course, that settles it. There is no deeper depth of degradation in the boy world.

But give that same boy a brass horn to blow, a drum to beat or a bugle to tootle, and it's all right. That is, indeed, real boy's work!

Hence the popularity with boys of the little boys' brass bands, and therefore the excellence of the bands.

There are boys' bands in plenty, and that of the League of the Cross Cadets is of course the flower of them all, the model and the envy, but that is not included in the catalogue of little boys' bands. Nor is the senior band of the Columbia Park Boys' Club, which has a reputation all up and down the coast.

These are boys' bands, to be sure, but they are big boys' bands and the wonderfully good work they do is to be expected of them.

The real little boys' bands are those of the F. H. O. A., which stands for Pacific Hebrew Orphan Asylum, of the Masonic Home, of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum and the Junior Band of the Columbia Park Boys' Club.

These are the really, truly little boys' bands, for the players in them range from 7 to 14 years of age, and the average is from 10 to 12 years.

The oldest little boys' band is, in point of priority of organization, that at the Pacific Hebrew Orphan Asylum, and it is the youngest as well when it comes to the ages of the players, for there are little chaps in it no longer than the trombone that is their pride.

The F. H. O. A. band was organized fourteen or fifteen years ago by Henry Mauser, who was then and is now the superintendent of the asylum, and it was his recognition of the educational and formative and ameliorative value of music that prompted him to add the training of a band to his many other duties.

He was its first musical director, its first leader, as well as its founder, and he says that finding enough boys under his charge to form a band was not such a difficult task as it might appear, for the Jews being an emotional people are also a musical people, and the little musicians were all about him ready for the call that would awaken the latent talent.

At its beginning the F. H. O. A. band

The boys play for all the celebrations and festivities at the asylum for visitors, and for charity at various concerts, for the cheering of the old folk at the Hebrew Old People's Home. In the asylum their influence, and that of the choir of forty voices, is very distinctly felt.

"Ours is a musical house," Superintendent Mauser explains, as the sound of a childish trio or quartet floats to you from where the girls are attending to their small dining-room duties, or little ones are sitting at their needle practice.

"The children sing at their work, and I think it makes them happier."

Just across the bay, over in Marin County, there's a famous little boy band that perhaps you have seen and heard at one or another of the entertainments given in the interests of some Roman Catholic charity.

It is the St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum band, and these ambitious youths enrolled in its membership, who will tell you privately, if you can get their confidence, that they could "make that League of the Cross Band look like 30 cents!"

Somebody always happens around inopportunely at "it," and you never find out how they could do it. You only learn that they could.

St. Vincent's band was formed twelve years ago, when Archbishop Riordan placed St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum under the management of the Christian Brothers, with Brother Michael as superintendent. Brother Michael, taking stock of his charges, found a good many of the boys with talent for music, and knowing, as most efficient educators do, the comfort and value of music to the lonely

and bereft, he set about getting instruments for the orphaned boys and forming them into a band. Through friendly contributions he gathered together enough to equip a band of thirty-five players and taught them himself, and with the aid of other musically educated brothers.

Until the past five years the band thus organized remained under the direction of a brother, but now it has the leadership of a paid instructor and is as thoroughly organized as a Sousa combination.

Each instrument of the band has one or more understudies, who receive daily instruction and who afterward play in concert, so that when a member of the first band leaves the school (14 years is the age limit for boys to remain in the institution) his understudy immediately takes his place. In this way the efficiency of the band is constantly kept up to its high standard and the ragged edges that the admission of a new player ordinarily makes are successfully avoided.

St. Vincent's Band has given many entertainments for the school and their friends, but has not made any money by the entertainments and has no fund. It has thirty actual members now, averaging in age about 12 years, and they are all youngsters with actual musical talent, some of them capable of very good solo work.

The New York Catholic Protective band

is famous among little boy bands, and Brother Zenophon, the present superintendent of St. Vincent's, is taking that as his model, and hopes to make his brass band equally famous on this coast.

A finer lot of small musicians or greater enthusiasts it would be hard to find than the little boy band of the Masonic Home at Decoto, in Alameda County.

There are sixteen of them in actual membership, but they play with the vim of forty strong, and they have half a dozen recruits ready to take the place of any player and play any instrument in the band.

The little band has been organized less than five years, but it has a spirit and enthusiasm that traditions of a century could not make heartier. It is the honor club of the Masonic Home, and any boy



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ST. VINCENT'S ORPHAN ASYLUM BAND

ANSPACHER BAND

PACIFIC HEBREW ORPHAN ASYLUM BAND

PACIFIC HEBREW ORPHAN ASYLUM DRUM CORPS



COLUMBIA PARK BOYS' CLUB JUNIOR BAND ON SUMMER TOUR

to play, and the result is that any time you go to one of the Columbia Park band concerts, or musical or vaudeville entertainments, you are likely to hear anything from Wagner and Verdi to ragtime, and hear it well played, too. At the most recent concert the boys gave there was the overture from the "Barber" by Seville, Sousa's "hundreds" march and the final aria from "Lucia di Lammermoor" on the programme, which also included selections from Wagner and Tchaikovsky, Verdi, Asher, Peters and Whitney.

The most original departure of the Columbia band is its summer walking tours, when it goes out for a 400 or 500 mile walk, giving concerts, vaudeville and minstrel performances by the way, and having such a vacation of idleness and outdoor life and sightseeing as the average boy only vaguely dreams of.

Last year, for example, the little boys' band of forty-two took a walk to Los Angeles. The baggage and necessities went along in two wagons. The boys themselves were divided up into working squads, one of cooks, another of waiters, etc. They wore their road uniform of khaki breeches and leggings and had, with oxford gray sweaters with bright red bands at neck and wrists and belt. They gave their entertainments in the town halls or opera houses of every town they stopped at and they gave their street parade before the entertainment, the boys marching, and every boy playing an instrument, and they stirred up so much enthusiasm and played to such good business along the line of tour that their receipts for the summer outing amounted to \$2300, of which \$1400 was clear profit that went to the paying of their own vacation expenses and to the maintaining of a camp of seventy-five of the club boys at Carmel-by-the-Sea in a boys' republic.

"That is doing pretty well for a little boys' band, isn't it?"

"With all these flourishing young organizations it is easy to see that the little boy band is a very real factor in boy-life, that its existence is a pleasure to itself and its friends, that it has come to stay, and that only the veriest curmudgeon of a musical critic could find it in his heart to say:

I never saw a kiddie band,
I never bore to see one,
But I can tell you, anyhow,
I'd rather SEE than HEAR one.