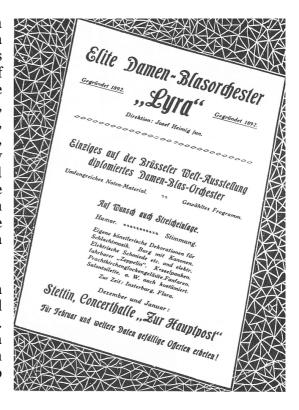
Damen und Damen - Ladies' professional travelling brass ensembles of the German Empire 1871-1918

Gavin Holman - November 2017

Travelling musicians and entertainers had been a part of European life for centuries, taking part in town fairs, pageants and being engaged for shows and circuses. In the German speaking countries of Europe in the 1890s through to World War 1 there appeared a large number of "Damen Kapellen", troupes of entertainers: brass/wind ensembles, string "orchestras", salon "orchestras", singing, dancing and theatre variety groups. These largely consisted of women, usually led by a man, and occasionally including males as players. These were professional groups and performed in theatres, as part of larger variety and vaudeville programmes, also at various concert venues in town and countryside.

The *Damen Kapellen* arose in the 1870s, though there were relatively few of them, most musical and entertainment groups being male dominated. Women were often seen performing in "Harfenkapellen" — harp ensembles — which usually consisted of violin, flute, guitar and harp in combinations, singing as well as playing.



Similar ensembles including brass instruments appeared. These were particularly popular in some environments – e.g. restaurants and outdoor events – where their music could be heard over the background noise. These brass groups had their origins in the military bands of the early 19th century which included woodwind and brass instruments, the brass being increasingly dominant as the instruments evolved, using piston valves and more efficient manufacturing techniques.

The military bands were followed in the latter half of the century by town bands with similar instrumentations. The relatively low cost, ease of learning and playing of the brass instruments, made them eminently suitable for the new women's ensembles (as also for the village and town bands). Indeed, many of these groups maintained the links to the earlier bands by adopting costumes modelled on military uniforms. Other costumes were based on traditional folklore dress and more normal female attire of the day.

It was not until the 1890s that the numbers of women's groups increased significantly, becoming favourite entertainers of the Imperial era. Each city had at least one group resident or as part of a touring company, in Dresden alone, there were up to ten *Damen Kapellen* of various types regularly performing after 1900. They took advantage of the economic prosperity around the turn of the century, the popularity of theatres and vaudeville shows, the demand from large restaurants, bars and exhibitions for entertainers, and the easing of the labour market for women. Their engagements generally lasted from two weeks to several months, depending on the venue and tour commitments of the ensembles, moving on to the next town for their new contract. These contracts were arranged through agencies or advertisements in

newspapers and the ensembles were required to have the appropriate permits and certificates for travel and performance.

Of course, the attraction of female performers to the largely male paying clientele was also a major factor. They were generally young and pretty, important prerequisites for a career as variety artists and public performers. There were individual solo instrumental artists around this time also, some who had "graduated" from one of the ladies' ensembles, others who carved a career for themselves separately.

On occasion, they suffered with discrimination and prejudice – some people were suspicious of their members having loose morals – indeed some were even regarded as prostitutes. However, this did not dampen their popularity which remained strong right through to WW1.

An analysis by Dorothea Kaufmann from adverts in "Der Artist" (a German version of "The Stage" or "Variety") shows an increase in the numbers of Damen Kapellen from 43 in 1894, peaking at 299 in 1913, then declining sharply in the early 1920s, running around 30 or so until WW2. The groups averaged seven to eight females and up to two or three males. After WW1 the groups tended to reduce in numbers to three/four female and perhaps one male on average. Although some groups restricted themselves to one city or region, most travelled widely, wherever the demand took them, even beyond the traditional German speaking countries.

The female brass ensembles were generally known as "Damen Blasorchester" or "Damen Trompeterkorps" and consisted of a variety of instrumentalists, almost exclusively brass (though some groups did double up on stringed instruments, drums or handbells - for example). In addition to their instrumental playing they would sometimes also sing and dance and go through various costume changes



Cornet à Piston-Virtuosin, Nationalund Zehen-Tänzerin und Soubrette.

as part of their performances. Fanfare trumpets were a feature of some ensembles.

The music performed ranged from the popular tunes of the day, military marches, and "salon music" to sophisticated arrangements of classical and operatic works. These were written and transcribed by the members, though perhaps more usually by the male "Director" of the ensemble.

The groups were largely from the lower-middle artisan class, often from families of musicians, varying in age from children (sometimes exploited as child prodigies) to married or unmarried women. For those that were based around a family, the father usually took the role as "Kapellmeister" with mother, daughters and occasional son included. The senior male member would generally conduct the business aspects of the group. Other relatives and friends/neighbours made up the ensemble. Most groups, however, had members that were unrelated and these were formed through adverts in the press or through loose associations in local communities.

Detailed information about most of the ladies' brass ensembles is not available without significant further research in the German language newspapers and entertainment journals, but many of them produced promotional postcards which provided their basic details, indicated their line up and variety of costumes and instruments. It is these that form the basis for the listings below.

The most significant research work in this area is Dorothea Kaufmann's book "...routinierte Trommlerin gesucht". This covers the whole range of women's entertainment groups in the period 1860-1930, and gives detailed accounts and analyses of the social, political, artistic and economic environments in which they performed.

The ensembles below are arranged by the descriptive name (or occasionally the "director") rather than the type of "kapelle" as the groups often varied how they were titled.

The images are predominately from promotional postcards the groups had published, mainly during the period 1895-1914 – the "golden age" of the postcard. Prior to this time cards had been printed but general had not been used postally – they were given out at engagements and used as "cartes de visite".

Where there are multiple images of a particular group you can often see the different types of costumes they used, and also the range of instruments played.

There is little information about the members of the groups, other than the directors, though a few individual postcards were issued of players, usually sadly only identified as "mitgleid des Damen Blasorchester" - "member of the band".

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Damen Trompeter Korps "Alpenveilchen" (director J. Reinstadler)







Fanfarenbläser d. Damen-Crompeter-Corps "Alpenveilchen" Dir.: J. Reinstadler





Fanfarenbläser d. Damen Crompeter Corps u. Gesangs-Ensemble "Alpenveilchen"



Damen Trompeter-Corps und Gesangs-Ensemble "Alpenveilchen"



Damen-Trompeter-Corps und Gesangs-Ensemble "Alpenveilchen" Direction: J. Reinstadler.



Damen-Cromperer-Corps u. Gesangs-Ensemble "Alpenveilchen" Dir.: J. Reinstadler.



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Damen Blasorchester "Alt Heidelberg" (director C. Oppermann)



Damen Trompeter Korps "Alt Leipzig" (director Arthur Klose. Based in Lepzig)



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Damen Blasorchester "Ariele" (director August Bornschein)





Damen Trompeter Korps "Ariele" (director P. Jentzen)



Damen Blasorchester "Ariosta" (director A. Schwarz)





Damen-Blas-Orshester "ARIOSTA" · Dir.: A. Schwarz

Damen Blasorchester "Askania" (director Felix Wishary)



Elite Damen Blasorchester "Berliner Schlager"



Damen Trompeter Korps "Bohème" (director A. Lohmann)







Brandt's Damen Streich und Blas Orchester (director Herr Brandt)













Herm. Brandt's Damen-Trompeter-Corps und Streich-Orchester.



h. Brandt's Damen - Trompeter - Corps

9 Damen Streich-Orchester 3 Herren

Damen Trompeter Korps "Bremensia" (director W. Twietmeyer)



Damen Blasorchester "Carmen Silva I" (director Paul J. Nentwig)



Damen Trompeter Korps "Diana" (director O. Jboldt)



Damen Trompeter Korps "Edelweiss" (director Jean Dohmen)

Advertised in 1913 as having 6 women and 5 men, with solos for cornet, trumpet, tenor horn, trombone and fanfares. Also singing and string music. 10 costume changes and also white dresses.



Damen Blasorchester "Elblust" (director Fritz Thiele)







Damen Trompeter Korps "Erato" (director H. Schröder)







Fanfarenbläserinnen des Damen-Blas-Orchesters "Erato" Direkion: H. Schröder.

Damen Trompeter Korps "Ernst Ludwig" (director Georg Schick)



Damen Trompeter Korps "Esmerelda"



Damen Trompeter Korps "Fledermaus"



Damen Blasorchester "Fortuna" (director Otto Noppe)



Damen-Blas-Orchester "Fortuna". Dir.: Otto Noppe.





Damen Trompeter Korps "Germania" (director A. Hardemann)





Damen-Trompeter-Corps "Germania" Dir.: A. Bardemann.

Goetzke's Elite Damen Blasorchester (director Herm. Goetzke)







Damen Blasorchester "Gut Heil" (director J. Bonse)





Damen Blasorchester "Hamburg" (director A. Reiss)



Damen Blasorchester "Hansa" (director M. Kraft. Based in Hamburg)

[No image for this group]

Elite Damen Blasorchester "Harmonie 1" (director Bruno Jähne)



Damen Blasorchester "Harmonie" (director Karl Seifert)



Damen Trompeter Korps "Humoresk" (director H.M.Bruck)





Damen Trompeter Korps "Husaren" (director Auguste Gäde - Gr. Storchstrasse 7 II, Magdeburg)



Husaren Damen-Trompeter-Corps Kapellmeister: Hug. Gade



Fanfaren-Quartett des I. Husaren Damen-Trompeter-Corps.



Damen Blasorchester "Künstlersterne" (director A. Fricke)



Damen-Blas-Attraktion-Orchester "Lewen-Lewen-Laten" (director Aug. Breest)







Dirigentin vom Blas-Attraktions-Orchester "Lewen – Lewen – Laten" Anneliese Breest

Damen Blasorchester "Lohengrin" (director C. Renter)





Damen Trompeter Korps "Lommatzsch" (director Karl Jenchens)



Damen Gesangs Ensemble und Trompeter Korps "Die Lustigan Wuppertaler" (director Karl Riehl)



Elite Damen Blasorchester "Lyra" (Founded in 1892. Active to 1914. DirectorsHeinrich Heimig & Josef Heimig & Frau N. Heimig)

Advertised in 1908 as having 10 women and 6 men, with two flutes, 4 clarinets, cornet, 2 trumpets, 2 forest horns, 2 tenor horns, trombone, bass and drums. "Great classical and modern repertoire of music, pieces from the newest operas – Die lustige Witwe; Ein Waltzertraum; Der Rastelbinder; Auf in's Metropol; Der Teufellachtdazu; Das mussman seh'n; etc.". Resident, at that time, at Marxloh b. Duisburg, Hotel Franziskaner. Their performances included historical army marches with 6 fanfare trumpets and drums; a sextet with 3 angel trumpets; choral singing; solos for flute, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, tuba and xylophone; and 8, discreet costume changes.















Damen Trompeter Korps "Maiblume" (director O. Müller)





Elite Damen Blasorchester "Maritana" (director Max Steinhorn)

[No image for this group]

Damen Blasorchester "Mignon" (director Ernst Wallis)



Damen Trompeter Korps "Monopol" (director Richard Meiser)



Erstklassiges Damen-Trompeter-Corps "Monopol", Kapellmeister Richard Meiser,

Damen Blasorchester "Noröna" (director Oscar Berntsen)

Damen-Trompeter-Corps "Noröna"



Dir. Oscar Berntsen.











Damen Trompeter Korps "La Paloma" (director A. Böhm)







Elite Damen Blasorchester (director H. Reingardt)





Damen Trompeter Korps "Rheingold" (directors Artur Schusky & August Griepenstroh)

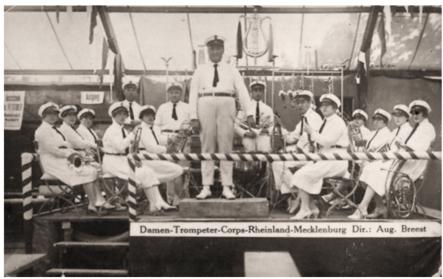






Damen Trompeter Korps "Rheinland Mecklenburg" (director Auguste Breest)













Damen Blasorchester "Rheinperle" (director Joh. Viehof)



Damen Trompeter Korps "Rhenania" (director F. Paul Hartwig)

In 1908 it was advertised as having 6 women and five men, with clarinets, 2 cornet à pistons, 1 trumpet, 2 horns, 2 tenor horns, bass & tambourine. The "best orchestra in this genre", providing "historical fanfares", cornet solos and quartettes, and choruses. A "selected repertoire of classical and modern masters, with costume changes – suitable for gardens" [and restaurants].



Damen-Trompeter-Corps "Rhenania". Dir.: F. P. Hartwig.



Damen Trompeter Korps "Rienzi" (director Otto Jantzen)



Joh. Rodes Damen Blas Orchester (director Joh. Rode)



Damen Trompeter Korps "Romaneska" (director H. Voigt)











Damen Salon Trompeter Korps "Sächs" (director Karl Niemand, Dresden)



Schwäbisches Blas und Streichorchester (director Geschwister Wagemann)



Schwäbisches Blas- und Streich-Orchester Direction: Geschwister Wagemann.

Damen Trompeter Korps "Sicher wie Jold"

The Dresden *Kapellmeister* Robert Janietz founded his ladies' ensemble "Sicher wie Jold" some time before 1909. His wife Rosa (b. 1883) and three of their daughters – all of whom could play several instruments – performed and sang. The youngest of the three, Marie Janietz, the "Mariechen", also performed as a soloist on the xylophone. Their fourth daughter Rosa was born in 1921 and went on a tour as a baby and toddler. The members of the ensemble often changed, as did its name. Men and stringed instruments were also part of the group from time to time, but brass instruments and drums were always the main instrumentation. The group, at its peak, consisted of six to twelve ladies, with five to eight men occasionally being added. The ensemble toured extensively through Germany and Austria, usually under the name "Janietz Elite Damen Blas Orchester."

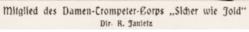
As the demand for, and numbers of Damenkapellen reduced through WW1 and into the Weimar period (1919-1933), the Janietz family business survived, largely due to Janietz's entrepreneurial and musical skills. However, by 1932, when the ensemble was advertised as "Attraktions- und Stimmungs-Orchester", the engagements were becoming fewer, and the rise of the Nazi party accelerated the decline as the women's ensembles did not fit with its image of Aryan male supremacy. In 1935 Robert Janietz disbanded his ensemble and moved with his family to a permanent residence at Kurhaus Waldfrieden in Finsterwalde-Niederlausitz.





Damen-Trompeter-Corps "Sicher wie Jold". Dir.: R. Janietz.





























Damen Trompeter Korps "Stephanie" (director H. Förste)





Damen-Trompeter-Corps "Stephanie", Dir.: H. Förste.

Kapelle "Sonnemann" (active in 1870)





Damen Trompeter Korps "Stradella" (director Oswald Roscher)



Damen Blasorchester "Tannhauser" (director Jos. Brunet)







Erstes Damen-Trompeter-Corps "Tannhäuser", pir.; P. REHAHN.

Damen Trompeter Korps "Teutonia" (director Franz Britting - based in Schwaben)



Schwäbisches Damen-Blas-Orchester "Teutonia". Dir.: Franz Britting.



Damen Trompeter Korps "Thuringia" (director Arthur Schmidt)









Damen Blasorchester "Traviata" (director Auguste Reiss)



Damen Trompeter Korps "Troubadour" (director Karl Riehl)

[No image for this group]

Damen Blasorchester "Vergissmeinicht" (director Joh. Rode & H. Reingart)







Damen Streich und Blas Orchester "Victoria" (director H. Mönch)



Viemand's Damen Trompeterkorps (director Herr Viemand)



Damen Blasorchester "Vilga" (director P. Lintzel)



Damen Trompeter Korps "Vindobona" (director F. Jos. Payer)





Elite Damen Blasorchester (director Fr. Weiher)



Damen Trompeter Korps "Weserlust" (directors A. Miericke and Paul Rother)













Damen Trompeter Korps "Westfalia" (director C. Rehfeldt)





Damen Trompeterkorps "Wilhelmina" (director Carl Scholtz)



Damen-Trompeter-Corps Wilhelma Direktion; CARL SCHOLZ.

Damen Blasorchester "Zufriedenheit" (directors Ad. Neumann & Carl Hofert)



Damen-Blas-Orchester "Zufriedenheit". Dir. Ad. Neumann.



Damen-Blas-Orchester "Zufriedenheit". Dir. Ad. Neumann.



Damen Blas Orchester "ZUFRIEDENHEIT,, Dir. Ad. Neumann



Damen Blas. Orchester "Zufriedenheit" Dir.; Carl Hofert

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