

# Brass bands in Africa – a brief introduction to a continent-wide topic

*Gavin Holman, February 2020*

Brass bands in Africa have been in existence since the 19<sup>th</sup> century after the various colonial powers had established their presence across the continent. Some were directly associated with the ruling authorities – e.g. military and police bands – others were established in communities or were associated with various missions and church establishments. They tended to be either “white” or native African in their make-up, with very little mixing between them – as often was the case in the wider community.



The history of such bands is very sketchy and limited, and the small amount of information I have collected so far is presented here. I hope that future researchers will be able to open up much more of this hidden history – as the original colonial explorers “opened up” the continent – in addition to exploring the wealth of bands that are currently flourishing in all the countries of the continent, from the military bands of Egypt to the church brass choirs of South Africa.

As with all early bands, their instrumentation was varied and often depended on what instruments were available to the players. The Moravian band movement in South Africa dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and bands were originally modelled on the British style brass band. After WW2 there was an increasing influence from the “Posaunenchor” bands in Germany and the Moravian bands became more like an extended brass ensemble.

The range of types of bands in Africa mirrors that elsewhere in the world, with the western-style brass and concert bands, marching and bugle bands, drum and fife bands and various type of ensemble. Some of these relate directly to earlier colonial era bands or band-types, others have flourished in the years since the various countries gained independence and forged their own styles – of instrumentation and music.

Here is a list of some bands, past and present, together with a sample of pictures of bands, and a bibliography of books, articles and theses.

# List of bands

## Angola

- Pungo Andongo Brass Band (Angola) - Active in the 1910s

## Kenya

- Lake Victoria Band (Dunga, Kenya) - Founded in 2015. Located near the city of Kisumu in western Kenya.

## Namibia

- Lord's Grace Youth Brass Band (Windhoek, Namibia) - [current band] Active from 2010

## South Africa

- **Arcadia Moravian Brass Band** (Port Elizabeth, South Africa) - [current band] - Founded in 1951
- **Atlantis Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [current band] - Founded in May 1989
- **Baruch Brass Band** (Cape Town, South Africa) - [current band]
- **Belhar Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Bellville Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Bishops Brass Band** (South Africa) - Active in the 1970s, founded by Graham Coote
- **Bishops Brass Society** (South Africa) - Founded by ex-members of the Bishops Brass Band in the 1980s, lasting until the late 1980s
- **Bloemendal Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [current band]
- **Cape Town Concert Brass** (South Africa) - Founded in 2000, by ex-members of Bishops Brass Society, with conductor Graham Coote, followed by Derek Sadler in 2003, then John Walton. Still active in 2006
- **Clarkson Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [current band]
- **De Beers Consolidated Brass Band** (Kimberley, South Africa) - Active in 1903. Members included W.J. Williams and bandmaster Mr Taylor.
- **Ebenhaeser Moravian Brass Band** (Windvogel, South Africa) - [current band] - Founded in the 1950s in Veeplaas. When the congregation moved to Windvogel in the early 1970s, many of the band stayed. A new band was started afresh in 1972
- **Elim Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **El-Shaddai Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [current band] - Founded in 2007
- **Elsies River Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Empangeni High School Brass Band** (South Africa) - Active in 2010, conductor Chad de Brain

- **Enon Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **FBA Tsunami Brass Band** (Thokoza, South Africa) - a church brass band active in 2006
- **Fordsburg Brass Band** (South Africa) - Active in the 1910s
- **Gelvandale Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Genadendal Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Goedverwacht Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Grassy Park Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Groenland Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Herrnhut Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Kraaifontein Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [current band] - Founded in 2000
- **Lansdowne Moravian Band** (South Africa) - [current band]
- **Mamre Moravian Band** (South Africa) - [current band] - Founded in 1880
- **Matroosfontein Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Mitchell's Plain Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Mossel Bay Brass Band** (South Africa) - Active in 1904, conductor John Paterson
- **Mvenyane Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Nigel Brass Band** (South Africa) - Active in 1893. Both Humphrey King (d. 1893) and R. Williams, formerly of Camborne, Cornwall, were members. The band was associated with the Nigel gold-mining company.
- **Pella Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **St Joel Brass Band** (Killarney, South Africa) – [current band] - a church brass band
- **St Paul's Brass Band** (Vosloorus, South Africa) - a church brass band active in 2006
- **St Paul's Brass Band** (Middelburg, South Africa) - a church brass band active in 2006
- **St Paul Apostolic Faith Mission Brass Band** (Pretoria, South Africa) [current band] - a church brass band
- **Salem Moravian Brass Band** (Port Elizabeth, South Africa) - [current band] - Founded in the early 1900s
- **Steenberg Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Thornham Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Uitenhage Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Wittewater Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]
- **Wupperthal Moravian Brass Band** (South Africa) - [no information]

## Uganda

- **Bukedea Schools Band** (Uganda) - [current band]
- **Iganga Community Brass Band Music School** (Uganda) - [current band]

- **Joshua School Brass Band** – (Bushikori, Mbale, Uganda) - [current band] - Consisting of players from Joshua Primary School and the community
- **Kabarole Brass Band** (Fort Portal, Uganda) - [current band]
- **Kabarole Youth Brass Band** (Uganda) - [current band]
- **Kapchorwa Schools' Brass Band** (Uganda) - [current band]
- **King's College Band** (Buda, Uganda) – active in 1933
- **Mbale Schools All Girls Brass Band** (Uganda) - [current band]
- **Mbale Schools Band** (Uganda) - [current band] - Founded in February 2008 at Highway School in Sironko. Moved to Mbale in 2010
- **Kamuli Community Brass Band** (Uganda) - [current band] - Founded in February 2016
- **Namabassa Community Brass Band** (Uganda) - [current band] - Active from 2009
- **New Happy Angels Youth Brass Band** (Uganda) - [current band]
- **Sacred Heart Brass Band** (Tororo, Uganda) - [current band]
- **Super Star Brass Band** (Bwaise, Kampala, Uganda) - [current band] - Active from 2015

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*Band at Ricatla, Mozambique, 1907*



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Régiment Malgache Band, Tamalave, Madagascar*



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Kivu Seminary Brass Band, Belgian Congo*



*Kroonstad Salvation Army Band, South Africa*





Musica da Escola das artes e officios  
Moçambique, A. O. P.

*Arts & Crafts Music School Brass Band, Mozambique*



On the Rand.

Native Band.

Braune & Lévy, Johannesburg. No. 1386.

*Unknown band, Johannesburg, South Africa*



*P.A.G. Band, South Africa*



*Royal Military Band, Kumasi, Gold Coast (Ghana)*



*A Seminary brass band, Togo, 1907*



*Unknown band, Cameroon, 1914*



*Unknown band, Bloemfontein, South Africa*



*Usambara Brass Band, Arusha, Tanganyika (Tanzania), 1923*



*Y.M.C.A. Band, Fumban – Cameroon*



*Fordsburg Brass Band, South Africa*



*Pungo Andongo Brass Band*



*Unknown band at Genadendal*



Sudanese Band

*Unknown band, Sudan*



*King's College Band, Buda, Uganda*